



## CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON MIGRATION AND REFUGEE SERVICES

### STRENGTHENING REFUGEE FAMILIES AND MARRIAGES PROGRAM

#### **Organization and administration of the program**

The *Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages* program is managed by Catholic Diocese of Arlington, Migration and Refugee Services. Funding for the program is provided by the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and administered through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). Further administration of the program is provided by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS).

#### **Program objectives**

The objective of the *Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages* program is to assist in the integration and self-sufficiency of recently arrived refugees by providing early intervention, orientation, and education at different intervals, to help refugee families and individuals in maintaining healthy communication while integrating into a new culture.

#### **Program description**

The *Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages* program of the Catholic Diocese of Arlington, Migration and Refugee Services (CDA/MRS) is built on the Colorado-based *Power of Two Model* curriculum.<sup>1</sup> For training purposes, the program will use the model's training kit, and adapt it with the guidelines of the *Survival Skills for Healthy Families*, as developed by *Family Wellness Associates*.<sup>2</sup> The curriculum will be modified to serve the refugee populations in Northern Virginia, and will focus on better communication and listening skills, parenting skills, conflict resolution, problem solving, and negotiation. These skills will be developed through workshops provided by certified trainers and educators.

#### **Groups served by the program**

During the first year, the *Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages* program of the CDA/MRS will primarily serve 150 refugees from six countries (*Afghanistan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Somalia and Sudan*) living in Northern Virginia.

#### **Training model explanation**

*Power of Two Model* and *Family Wellness Guidelines* “teach practical skills based on proven principles that strengthen, support and empower families.” The training model is based on the belief that the skills necessary to enhance family relationships are simple, and can be learned and taught through proven teaching methods, such as coaching and role-playing.

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<sup>1</sup> Further information on *Power of Two* can be found at [www.poweroftwo.org](http://www.poweroftwo.org), or from *Power of Two Teaching and Marketing Manual* by: Susan Heitler, Ph.D., and Abigail Hirsch, MA.

<sup>2</sup> References within this section refer to Doub, George and Florence Creighton “What is family wellness?” *Family wellness instructor manual*. pp 1-3. *Family Wellness Associates*. 2000 and *Family Wellness Workbook* Doub, George, Florence Creighton and Virginia Morgan Scott.

### **Program staff**

All full-time program staff will be trained and certified as Family Wellness Instructors. Additional staff members working with the program will receive necessary training and additional information to ensure the quality of the overall program. It is expected that volunteers and local members of the community will be trained and utilized as an additional resource.

### **Defining program success**

The program will be successful if the participants of the program are able to demonstrate and utilize key concepts of the program to improve their home and family environments. Post-training questionnaires administered to the refugees will be used in a system of self-reporting and serve as another way to gauge program success. In cases of a language barrier or illiteracy the questionnaire may be administered orally with interpreter assistance.

### **Program outcomes**

- Build and strengthen communication and listening skills within refugee families and individuals during the transition process
- Give refugee families the skills necessary to resolve familial conflicts in a constructive manner, including alternatives to physical discipline
- Teach refugee families how to solve problems their families may encounter
- Help refugee families understand how to negotiate mutually acceptable compromises while accounting for their existing family structures.

### **Program contact**

Seyoum Berhe  
Grant Program Coordinator  
Catholic Diocese of Arlington  
Migration and Refugee Services  
80 N. Glebe Rd  
Arlington, VA 22203  
Phone: 703-524-2154  
Fax: 703-524-2741  
Email: [srfm@arlingtonrefugeeservices.com](mailto:srfm@arlingtonrefugeeservices.com)

Amal Elsheikh  
Program Coordinator  
Catholic Diocese of Arlington  
Migration and Refugee Services  
80 N. Glebe Rd  
Arlington, VA 22203  
Phone: 703-524-2154  
Fax: 703-524-2741  
Email: [srfm@arlingtonrefugeeservices.com](mailto:srfm@arlingtonrefugeeservices.com)

### **Program dates**

The *Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages* grant was awarded to Catholic Diocese of Arlington Office of Migration and Refugee Services of Virginia in October 2005.