



Secretariat for Catholic Charities Health and Human Services

Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program

Organization of the program

The *Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages* program is offered through Migration and Refugee Services, Catholic Charities in Cleveland, Ohio. This program is funded through a grant set up by the Administration of Children and Families, and the Office of Refugee Resettlement through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Office of Migration and Refugee Services. The program serves all refugees in the Cleveland metropolitan area.

Program Objectives

The *Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages* program hopes to promote healthy refugee families by realizing family and marriage strains, conduct workshops related to family adjustment, parenting, communication, problem solving, self-sufficiency and conflict resolution, and train refugees as mentors to new arrivals in their community.

Program Description

The *Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages* program provides educational and skills-based workshops based upon the Family Wellness model. The Family Wellness model was identified as being one of the most effective, simplistic models for use with refugee families, thus being easily adaptable for any community. Communication, problem solving, conflict resolution, life coaching and parenting skills are reinforced in this model. This program helps to bring families together at a time when stress is very high due to resettlement and acculturation issues.

Groups Served by the Program

The *Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriage* program currently serves refugees from, Afghanistan, Iran, Liberia, Somalia, Burundi, Congo, Ethiopia, Sudan and Rwanda living in the Cleveland area. The Family Wellness model has been used with families, couples, women's groups, and teens.

Training Model Explanation

Family Wellness model is a quickly learned and easily adapted program, which has proven effective in a variety of communities, cultures and languages. It is currently used for prevention and intervention in the areas of domestic violence, drug, and alcohol and child abuse. The model is based upon the best practices of psycho-educational research

and theory. Family Wellness format is a positive and empowering model that presents 6 sessions aimed at education and information about families, couples and parenting. The *Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages* program has adapted the 6 sessions into 5, weaving in the 6th session into the other 5 due to non-relevant material. Other pertinent information has been added to the 5 main sessions depending on needs of the current refugee group.

Program Staff

Program staff conducting the classes, have been fully certified as trainers in the Family Wellness model. All have received 30 hours of training in the model. Those who are conducting the classes are employees of Migration Refugee Services, Catholic Charities.

Defining Program Success

Program success will be based on self disclosure on use of program materials within the refugee family's homes. Due to the lack of literacy, focus groups and verbal questionnaires have been used to generate information from the refugee participants regarding the importance and feedback on the program.

Program Outcomes

1. Increase of awareness of refugee services available
2. Increase participation by other refugee communities within the Cleveland area such as Russian, Bosnian and Albanians.
3. Development of varied levels (beginning/ advanced) of Family Wellness education

Program Contacts

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Program Dates

The Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages program at Catholic Charities of Cleveland began in October 2003, and continues to function.