



Migration and Refugee Services

Administering Organization

The *Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages* program is offered through Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services, Hartford, CT. This program is funded through a grant set aside 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 Hartford metropolitan area.

Program Objectives

The *Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriage* program's primary objective is to provide training, resources and opportunities that will support and strengthen refugees and their families in their new home here in America. These trainings will provide refugee families skills that will enhance and support healthy communication and conflict resolution.

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 Program

Ethnic communities we on which we will focus in 2005 include Southeast Asian, Somali Bantu, Liberian, Bosnian, Sudanese.

Training Model Explanation

We have developed a culturally adjusted, four-session basic training using the principles of "Survival Skills for Healthy Families," a program developed by *Family Wellness Associates* of Scotts Valley, California. This program focuses on encouraging and supporting families and promoting healthy communities through the teaching of practical, interpersonal skills based on proven principles that strengthen support and empower families and individuals.

We have created a highly visual manual, designed specifically to be useful both with literate and illiterate clients. We are currently working on a Swahili translation, and on an "advanced" training. This is because of a request from clients who have gone through the first training. It will incorporate more details from Family Wellness. We also are collaborating with area agencies for complementary trainings in service areas such as parenting/childcare, marriage preparation and

financial literacy. We are convinced that our clients will respond most favorably to training options that allow them to interact with real people within the context of support/discussion groups, and relationships with teachers/mentors, not simply “trainings.”

Program Staff

The program has certified 1 individual in the Family Wellness model. The staff has extensive backgrounds and knowledge in working with the refugee communities in Hartford, CT area.

Defining Program Success

The *Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriage* program success will be based on predominately self disclosure on use of program materials within the home. 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. The program is successful if adults report that stressful family issues that predated the Family Wellness sessions have become less stressful or disappeared following participation in the program. Program success will be based on self disclosure on use of program materials within the refugee family’s homes.

Program Outcomes

The broader anticipated outcome/projected impact of Family Wellness trainings for refugees is that by supporting newcomer families with the opportunity to learn skills that have been demonstrated to strengthen families, these families, and by extension, newcomer communities, will experience lower rates of divorce, abuse, and unpaid child support.

Our seminar presenters have been certified by Family Wellness Associates after receiving extensive training. They know first hand the power of “Survival Skills” and are motivated to share it with others. In addition to providing culturally and linguistically adjusted Family Wellness-model trainings within these refugee communities, we will conduct and/or participate in local trainings with our partners in Healthy Marriages Grand Rapids and Bethany Christian Services. This will allow us to train the greatest number of community volunteers in the most cost effective manner. Please find below expanded program and participation goals and expected outcomes (or definitions of success).

Program Contacts

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Program Dates

The *Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriage* program in Hartford began in 2004; it continues to operate.