



Strengthening Refugee Marriages Program

Administering Organization

The Strengthening Refugee Marriages program is offered through Catholic Charities of Nashville, Refugee and Immigration Services, who are working closely with The Office of Family Life Ministries, and Kurdish Human Rights Watch.

Program Objectives

The Strengthening Refugee Marriages Program aims to support and promote healthy marital and family communication, interaction, and understanding through education, advocacy and collaboration.

Program Description

The Strengthening Refugee Marriages Program provides skill-building training and educational workshops, using the Family Wellness model, to refugee families in support of sustaining and developing healthy refugee families. In addition, the program provides training and technical assistance for community organizations (i.e. social service agencies, ethnic and mutual assistance associations, faith communities) in the Family Wellness model and provides effective adaptations for use with diverse refugee communities.

Groups Served by Program

The Strengthening Refugee Marriages Program serves refugees in Nashville and the immediate surrounding area. Programs have been developed to work with adults, parents, and adolescents within the local refugee communities which include persons from Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Kurdistan, Iraq, Iran, Vietnam, Cuba, Bosnia, Togo, Sierra Leone, Liberia and others.

Training Model Explanation

Family Wellness Associates reviewed the best of social science and psychological research and theory to create a curriculum illustrating the "rules" that inform roles in healthy families they called Survival Skills for Healthy Families. Since 1980, thousands of families have learned and practiced skills necessary to listen and communicate effectively, solve problems and pass on values. Survival Skills uses simple exercises, role-play and coaching to educate and guide skill acquisition. The Strengthening Refugee Marriages Program uses materials from the Survival Skills for Healthy Families Manual that have been adapted by program staff for use with refugee communities.

Program Staff

All Program staff are certified Family Wellness instructors, receiving 30 hours of training in the Family Wellness Model. Those that facilitate the Family Wellness model to the refugee community should meet the needs of the community through linguistic and ethnic diversity in order to provide a broad-based education model.

The program also utilizes individual volunteers and mentor couples, who intend to bring learned skills back to share with their own communities in order to reach a larger networks of refugee communities.

Defining Program Success

The Strengthening Refugee Marriages Program is successful if adults self-report on post-session interview questionnaires that they feel more satisfied in their interaction with their spouse and other family members.

Program Outcomes

- 150 refugee participants will receive training in the Family Wellness adapted curriculum including communication skills and related topics relevant to healthy family functioning in FY 2003 and 2004.
- Program staff will provide outreach and education to the community about the Strengthening Refugee Marriages Program and its curriculum, as well as recruit community members to conduct information and education sessions within their own constituencies.

Program Contact

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Program Dates

The Strengthening Refugee Marriages Program began in 2003; it continues to operate.