

Catholic Social Service

Central and Northern Arizona

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Refugee Family Education Program

Administering Organization

The Refugee Family Education Program is offered through the Strengthening Refugee Families of Catholic Social Services Immigration and Refugee Services.

Program Description

The Catholic Social Service of Phoenix, Strengthening Refugee Families program is designed to empower families in working together through use of listening, communication, conflict resolution, anger management skills. The program provides participants the opportunity to learn new relationship skills, child discipline, communication, parenting all in culturally appropriate environments. The Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages program has expanded into an assortment of activities such as workshops, group sessions, family interactive activities, and family and marriage celebrations. Program evaluation has allowed for an ongoing assessment that generates clients' specific concerns. This unique program has then developed the flexibility to provide services in a variety of topics area, in locations throughout the community, with a diversity of languages and cultures through use of community leaders. Activities are offered at different times throughout the week and to interested groups of participants: youth, women (mothers), men (fathers), and elderly.

Program Objectives

This program evolves into a compilation of various activities being offered which exceed the original models parameters. It provides an educational series of culturally diverse trainings promoting the importance of strong, healthy family units through effective communication, knowledge of American laws and standards of adult and child welfare, integrating U.S. practices and customs into refugee homes and communities while preserving homeland cultures. The Refugee Family Education Program will help families better understand the many challenges they will face during resettlement in that areas of role reversal, gender issues, and household functioning. This program offers educational, social, culturally, and linguistically appropriate workshops designed to teach success in family functioning.

Two main curricula are being utilized for this educational purpose: The Refugee Marriage Education Program (RMEP) and The Relationship Intelligence (RQ).

1. RMEP Definition

The Refugee Marriage Education Program (adapted from the PREP model) seeks to enhance and promote healthy relationships by providing the skills, tools, support and knowledge necessary to create, and sustain healthy marriages. The program provides opportunity to develop skills that help people to develop and encourage happy and healthy relationships in all areas of their lives, spouses, children, extended family members, and within their community. The program will empower refugee families and marriages by enabling them to communicate successfully in order to build a stronger society that will support and encourage family formation.

Training Model Explanation

The Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP®) is a research-based approach to teaching couples how to communicate effectively, work as a team to solve problems, manage conflicts without damaging closeness, and preserve and enhance love, commitment, and friendship. PREP was designed to teach couples communication and problem solving skills found to be linked to effective marital functioning. PREP attempts to help individuals reduce or limit risk factors and raise protective factors. The program includes the following topics: interaction danger signs, gender differences, the Speaker/Listener Technique, problem solving, Ground rules for handling conflict, strategies for dealing with issues versus events, clarifying core beliefs and expectations, forgiveness, commitment, and how to preserve and enhance fun, friendship, and sensuality.

2. RQ Definition:

As defined by the founder of *Free Teens* Richard Panzer (2003), Relationship Intelligence is a review of ten curricula for teens on marriage and relationships. It consistently relates issues of relationship skills, conflict resolution, and character development. It offers students a direct argument well grounded in social science evidence that marriage does matter for lovers, children and society. The four sequential program lessons (Relationships, Personal Leadership, Interpersonal relationships, and Community Leadership) urged to orient teens's behavior towards their highest future goals as husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, and community leaders. The curriculum is delivered as is and has focused on the parent-youth workshops using parent-grams or facilitating interactions during presentation scripts.

Groups Served by Program

The Refugee Family Education Program serves refugees in Phoenix and the immediate surrounding area. Programs have been developed to work with adults, parents, single young adults and adolescents within the local refugee communities which include persons from Vietnam, Afghanistan, Haiti, and African Refugee from Congo, Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Burundi.

Program Staff

The staff in the program has been formally trained in the RQ model and PREP model for direct delivery of the modified PREP program (Refugee Marriage Education Program). The Coordinator of the program has the language and cultural diversity to serve a larger group of refugee populations within the community.

Defining Program Success

The program has generated an active youth project where we have received great compliments from parents. It has created a youth and elderly support system where they share experiences. Opportunities for open dialogue have arisen. The Refugee Family Education Program is successful when participants are able to self-report increase in their communication skills and a decrease in their conflicts and are able to problem solve constructively. The program is successful in maintaining a coalition to address the enormous needs of sustaining healthy refugee families.

Program Outcomes

- Increase communication skills that will enhance and strengthen refugee families
- Improve effective communication skills to strengthen cohesive refugee families
- Increase the number of facilitators trained as healthy family educators throughout the refugee communities
- Increase the number of mentor couples within the community that will assist, support, and encourage new arriving refugee couples
- Increase involvement of both parent in raising children
- Increase involvement of elderly in the refugee family education program
- Increase public awareness regarding refugees in the Phoenix area
- Increase public awareness and commitment to the development and sustaining of healthy marriages

Program Contact

Jeanne Francoise Nizigiyimana, Coordinator
Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages
Catholic Social Service
1825 West Northern Ave.
Phoenix, AZ 85021
(602) 997-6105 ext. 3323
JNizigiyimana@diocesephoenix.org

Program Dates

The Refugee Family Education Program began in 2003; it continues to operate.