

What participants have to say

Mirelle came from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2000. “The Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program is important to me because it has helped me to protect my family’s good values. I have to think about the future of my children, because they will be the future of this world. My husband and I are the role models for my children; if we aren’t working together, they won’t.”

Fadumo came from Somalia in 1998 as a single mother with five children. “My family system and structure had changed my children’s behaviors, attitudes, culture, respect for elders and respect for me as their mother. My children and I consistently fought over little things; it reached a point where the relationship between my children and I was in trouble. Through attending the Family Enrichment program, I learned how to communicate with my children, listen to them, and respect them. Without the Family Enrichment program I would still be struggling with my family.”

Regarding teaching teens the importance of making healthy choices, Nadine, from the Congo, explained, “This program is life planning, for my future and how to be someone important in life, and how to respect myself and others.”

What is the Mission of the Healthy Marriage Initiative?

“To encourage marriage and promote the well-being of children, I have proposed a healthy marriage initiative to help couples develop the skills and knowledge to form and sustain healthy marriages. Research has shown that, on average, children raised in households headed by married parents fare better than children who grow up in other family structures. Through education and counseling programs, faith-based, community, and government organizations promote healthy marriages and a better quality of life for children. By supporting responsible child-rearing and strong families, my Administration is seeking to ensure that every child can grow up in a safe and loving home.”

— President George W. Bush



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Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages



How is USCCB/MRS involved?

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Office of Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) is implementing a three-year grant (FY'03-FY'06) from the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration of Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement. The Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages program within USCCB/MRS funds several programs across the country, using one of three nationally recognized family enrichment curriculums (PREP, Family Wellness, and Power of Two) with a variety of refugee communities.

The Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages program is designed to assist refugee families whose domestic relationships may have been affected by trauma and by cultural changes during the resettlement period. Activities are designed to help refugee individuals, families, youth, and couples acquire skills to strengthen the family's self sufficiency, and to develop healthy, stable marriage and family practices that will sustain them. Refugee families will also be able to access information helping them integrate their cultural practices with the rights and responsibilities delineated by U.S. laws and social customs.



How does the Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program help participants?

- Teaching practical skills in the areas of Communication, Listening, Conflict Resolution, and Problem Solving
- Providing practical skills to help adults remain in control of their children through healthy parenting and child discipline techniques
- Presenting practical tools for managing challenges within families regarding cultural conflicts, financial management, and balancing roles and responsibilities.

What other organizations are involved?

Boat People S.O.S.
Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC)
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)
Kurdish Human Rights Watch (KHRW)
Lao Family Community Development
Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service (LIRS)
Orange County Social Services Agency

How does USCCB/MRS assist?

USCCB/MRS provides technical assistance in all areas of program development, implementation, community collaboration, and service delivery. USCCB/MRS conducts onsite visits to assist programs with delivering services according to federal and faith-based guidelines. Additional assistance is provided to develop initial relationships with other community service providers working to strengthen families and marriages.

USCCB/MRS collaborates with a broad range of service providers and professionals to assist us in implementing a quality service for refugee families. Some of our partners are Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services (BRYCS), Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), The Catholic University of America (CUA), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS). These collaborations give us the opportunity to exchange knowledge, develop best practices, and create strong and lasting relationships for the future.

