



## **New American Family Center Catholic Human Development Outreach Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids**

### **Administering Organization**

The New American Family Center (NAFC) is a service of the Refugee Program of Catholic Human Development Outreach (CHDO), Grand Rapids, Mich. CHDO is a multi-program agency serving persons in need so as “to create a society that is socially, racially and economically just.” CHDO achieves this with a dedicated staff of over 60 individuals and a strong core of hundreds of volunteers working together to provide education, advocacy and service programs to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, welcome the stranger, and reach out to those most marginalized. The goal is to help improve their quality of life, and move from dependency to self-sufficiency.

CHDO currently has eight programs.

### **Program Objectives**

NAFC’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.

### **Program Description**

We support the following model in our training efforts, using Family Wellness principles:

1. Intensive use of mentors and volunteers, from the ethnic communities, the community at large and the faith community. Not only human resources, but financial and in-kind resources are potentially available in our community for this project.
2. Development of training opportunities that include directed support and discussion groups. Giving people the opportunity to “discover” what is needed for their success, through guided interaction, is always more effective than simply “imparting” the information to them, whether through materials, classes or other “instructional” methods.
3. Specific training that encourages healthy refugee families in the following areas: Domestic Violence Prevention, Acculturation, How to Deal with the Generation Gap in Immigrant Families and Building Financial Stability as a means of ensuring healthy families.

### **Groups Served by Program**

Ethnic communities we on which we will focus in 2005 include Bantu, Liberian, Bosnian, Sudanese, and possibly Cuban and Vietnamese.

### **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, Cal. 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 five individuals in the Family Wellness model. Many of the staff have backgrounds and knowledge in working with the refugee communities in Grand Rapids.

### **Defining Program Success**

NAFC defines success in its 2005 program as follows:

- At least three of the persons from targeted refugee communities who have been trained in local “train the trainer” sessions will agree to help in the facilitation of at least two Family Wellness-model trainings or related activities each
- At least nine Community Partners will agree to serve on the New American Family Center Advisory Committee for a minimum of one year
- At least 50% of persons who participate in training groups will agree to participate in additional NAFC classes and activities
- At least 75% of participants in Family Wellness-model training sessions and related activities will self-report an improvement in their interpersonal communication skills.

### **Program Outcomes**

The broader anticipated outcome/projected impact of NAFC’s 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.

### **Program Contact**

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### **Program Dates**

NAFC is currently funded to provide the above described services through September 30, 2006.