



STRENGTHENING REFUGEE MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES PROGRAM

Administering Organization

The *Strengthening Refugee Marriages and Families* program is offered through The Office of Apostolic Services, Archdiocese of St. Louis, Missouri. The program is supported and directed through the efforts of a network of social service and community organizations who are involved with the refugee and immigrant communities in the St. Louis metropolitan area.

Program Objectives

The *Strengthening Refugee Marriages and Families* program aims to promote healthy refugee and immigrant families by enhancing and supporting healthy familial and marital communication, by developing understanding through education and collaboration with other groups committed to the welfare of refugee families.

Program Description

The *Strengthening Refugee Marriages and Families* program provides educational and skills-based workshops based upon the PREP model. PREP is a well-respected, research-based program that is adaptable for the Bosnian community. The program helps adults to practice better communication skills and conflict management. PREP also equips adults with necessary skills and information needed for a successful transition to a US marriage culture.

Groups Served by the Program

The *Strengthening Refugee Marriages and Families* program serves Bosnian adults primarily in the St. Louis metropolitan area. The adults attending the sessions are: married couples, widows and widowers, divorced adults and singles.

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 and manage conflicts. PREP was designed to teach couples communication and problem solving skills found to be linked to effective marital functioning. PREP attempts to help couples 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.

For our program, PREP is offered through three, two-hour sessions (6 hours).

Program Staff

Program staff conducting the classes, have been fully trained in the PREP model. Translators in the program are members of the Bosnian immigrant and refugee community.

Defining Program Success

The program is successful if participants are able to improve their communication skills through the Speaker/Listener Technique, be able to identify high conflict triggers, and be able to problem solve constructively. We measure the success of the outcomes through post participants' informal surveys given at PREP trainings.

Program Outcomes

- ◆ Provide outreach and education to the community about the *Strengthening Refugee Marriages and Families* program and its efforts to impact families in the Bosnian community
- ◆ Work to bring the PREP model to a larger audience, including other immigrant and refugee groups
- ◆ Increase marital satisfaction
- ◆ Increase family satisfaction
- ◆ Increase knowledge and education on relationship skills
- ◆ Increase protective factors
- ◆ Increase community awareness of the refugee population

Program Contacts

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Program Dates

The *Strengthening Refugee Marriages and Families* program in St. Louis began in 2003 and continues to operate.