

Considerations for the Resettlement of Refugees from the Darfur Region of Sudan



Presented by the Mohawk Valley
Resource Center for Refugees

For the Cultural Orientation Resource Center, Center for
Applied Linguistics Web Conference Series

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Attitude and Language

GREAT Attitude

Language

- Speak Masalit and Garaba
(Western Sudanese) Arabic
- Modern Standard Arabic
interpreter cannot communicate
effectively

Service Strategy

Agency:

- Utilization of Masalit/Arabic Interpreter

Community Partners:

- Local Sudanese Community and Lutheran Church



Education

Limited Education and/or Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFEs).
Struggle with dates, counting, numbers, vocabulary, etc.

Service Strategy

Agency:

- Concentration on basic skills - colors, vocabulary, dates, numbers....
- May need interpreter in class
- Exploring effective instructional setting – classroom vs. one-on-one

Community Partners:

- Utica School District
- Project SHINE (College) Volunteers
- Local college's Occupational Therapy services
- Looking forward to working with community colleges, BOCES (Boards of Cooperative Educational Services in NY State), and other service providers.

Life Skills

Life skills are similar to those of many rural, nomadic communities with limited exposure to Western conveniences, etc. Have observed issues around the use of toilet paper, grocery shopping, money, etc.

Service Strategy

Agency:

- Connecting new arrivals to established families
- ESL classes teaching life skills
- Friends helping with shopping
- Have watering can in bathroom (for those not cleansing themselves with toilet paper)
- Wearing appropriate winter attire

Community Partners:

- Exploring with Resource Center for Independent Living to offer basic life skills classes



Family Composition and Gender Roles

- Large families, many single mothers
- Traditional understanding of gender roles and responsibilities
- Understanding of family units not constrained by standard American guidelines
- Can perceive questions by Department of Social Services and others about familial relationships as invasive
- Non-Western perceptions of accountability for children
- Extended family living and support traits

Service Strategy

Agency:

- Educate about Western concepts of family and the reasons service agencies ask about familial relationships.
- Explore gender roles and challenges
- Purchase very large pots and pans to accommodate cooking / eating

Community Partners:

- Utica Police Department - Explorer Program
- Safe Schools
- Underground Cafe

Employment and Transportation

Community is eager to learn and to go to work.
Family size and composition has made early self sufficiency difficult.
Steep learning curve for driving as the ability to pass written test is difficult.

Service Strategy

Agency:

- Exploring teaching targeted members of the community to drive so they can help others with transportation needs

Community Partners:

- Oneida County Traffic Safety Commission
- Utica Schools
- One Stop Center
- Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID)
- Mohawk Valley Community College, etc.



The bottom line:

**They're coming with a
POSITIVE ATTITUDE
and a
MARVELOUS SENSE OF HUMOR!**

