

Topic: Rights and Responsibilities/Cultural Adjustment

Activity: Child Supervision: A Critical Incident for Refugees

Objective

- ✓ Participants will consider the laws regarding supervision of children in the U.S.
- ✓ Participants will consider how laws may affect the way they supervise children

Lesson Time

30 minutes

Materials

- Critical incident (included)
- Optional: Flipchart paper, markers, tape

Introduction

In the United States, leaving young children alone without an adult is considered neglect and is illegal. However, refugees may be unfamiliar with this law, particularly those who spent extended periods of time in an enclosed refugee camp. Some refugees may be used to feeling that the community watches over and protects children. These participants may be accused of neglect and unintentionally face serious consequences.

Practice

(Note: Feel free to change names to reflect your participants.)

1. Put participants into small groups of 2-4 and ask each group to choose a spokesperson.
2. Read “Child Supervision: A Critical Incident for Refugees” aloud, pausing after each set of reflection questions.
3. In small groups, participants discuss the reflection questions. Listen in on the discussions to check for understanding.
4. After the last set of reflection questions, bring the large group together and ask the spokesperson from each group to summarize the main ideas from their group discussions. Discuss as necessary.

Reflection Questions

- What happened in this critical incident?
- Why are Saw’s neighbors angry?
- What will happen if the neighbors complain to the police?
- If you were Saw, what would you do?

Variations

- See <http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/RaisingChildren-Handbook.pdf> for the publication *Raising Children in a New Country: An Illustrated Handbook*. Page 8 (“Child Supervision”) and 9 (“Safety in Public Places”) offer useful illustrations.
- Give flipchart paper to each small group and have groups draw and present the highlights of their discussion.
- If literacy levels allow, prepare flipchart paper with reflection questions for each small group and have groups write and present their answers.

Child Supervision: A Critical Incident for Refugees

Saw* is a 30-year-old woman who lives in the United States with her husband and three children, who are 6, 8, and 10 years old. Because she does not have a car and the cheapest grocery store is not on a bus route, Saw walks a mile each way to buy food. It is difficult to bring her children along and carry the heavy groceries. Saw is used to letting her children play unsupervised back in the refugee camp, so she leaves them alone while she walks to the grocery store. Her children ride their bikes by themselves in the parking lot of her apartment building while she is gone.

Stop and reflect:

- What is the problem in this critical incident?
- What other options does Saw have?

After a few trips, Saw's neighbors complain that she is neglecting her children. They say the parking lot is dangerous for children to ride their bikes unsupervised and she should watch them at all times. They say they will complain to the police if she leaves them again. Saw feels sad that her neighbors are angry. She assumed that they would help with making sure her children were safe while she was away.

Stop and reflect:

- Why are Saw's neighbors angry?
- What will happen if the neighbors complain to the police?
- Is there anyone Saw can ask for help?
- If you were Saw, what would you do?

Note to Facilitator:

- Ideally, resettlement agencies have relationships with local police/child protection officers and are make an agreement to work together in instances when officers are involved.



* This critical incident is based on the information provided by managers of apartment complexes housing refugees. All identifying information has been changed to protect privacy.

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