

Topic: Employment

Activity: Socializing at Work: A Critical Incident for Staff Training

Objective

- ✓ Staff members will be able to identify some of the employment-related challenges their clients might encounter in the U.S. workplace
- ✓ Staff members will identify some ways of helping their clients prevent and address challenges in the U.S. workplace

Lesson Time

35 minutes

Materials

- ☐ Copies of “Socializing at Work: A Critical Incident,” 1 per participant (included)
- ☐ Flipchart paper, markers, and tape

Introduction

Some aspects of the U.S. workplace may be very different for your clients from what they were accustomed to prior to arriving in the U.S. Helping your clients understand the importance of these differences and consider ways to work well with their employers and colleagues may help facilitate the resettlement process.

Practice

1. Put staff members into small groups of 3-4. Ask each group to choose someone to report back later to the larger group.
2. Distribute copies of “Socializing at Work” to each participant. Ask staff members to read the critical incident to themselves or have someone in their group read it quietly to the group.
3. Instruct the groups to develop solutions or tactics they might use to work with a client in this situation. Some ideas might include the following:
4. Encouraging your client to discuss the matter further with his supervisor, stressing his aptitude for the position and committing to working as a team with his colleagues; encouraging your client to make a greater effort to get to know his colleagues better; suggesting your client talk with his colleagues on a one-on-one basis which might not be as overwhelming; encouraging your client to improve his English so he feels more comfortable socializing with his colleagues; suggesting your client practice by spending time with neighbors outside of his ethnic group; encouraging your client to spend more time with his coworkers and supervisors during breaks, etc.
5. Bring the large group together and ask group reporters to summarize the main points of their small-group discussions. Record these on flipchart paper and discuss as necessary.
6. Lead a discussion addressing any of the following Reflection Questions that you feel may not have been adequately addressed during the previous discussion:

Reflection Questions

- What happened in this critical incident? What can Nuru do now? How could he have done things differently?
- Do you know anything about Nuru’s values that may impact his choices?
- How would you handle this situation? What would you advise Nuru to do?
- What resources are available to you and Nuru?
- How could you use this critical incident to coach clients?

Socializing at Work: A Critical Incident

Nuru was hired at a company and started receiving positive feedback his second week on the job. His direct supervisor felt he was doing well and working hard. Most of Nuru's colleagues were young and socialized outside of work together, including Nuru's supervisor. Nuru, who felt very shy and uncomfortable at work, preferred socializing after work hours with people from his ethnic group. Thus, he was not making friends at the workplace.

After some time, Nuru learned of a new position at his workplace which would be a promotion for him. He expressed his interest in the position to his supervisor. Nuru's supervisor told him that he felt Nuru was not interested in working as a part of a team since he had not established friendly relationships with colleagues. Since the new position would require Nuru to lead many of those same other colleagues, his supervisor was reluctant to promote him.

For this same critical incident in a lesson plan designed for use with refugees, see <http://www.cal.org/co.domestic/toolkit/employment/index.html>.

Our thanks to RefugeeWorks and its Employment Training Institute participants for the information on which this critical incident is based.