



BRYCS Presents...  
Wednesday Webinar Series



## Child Abuse Issues with Refugee Populations

PART 2:  
Refugee Resettlement and Child Welfare:  
Working Together for Child Protection

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 Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services

BRYCS is supported by the Office of Refugee Resettlement ACF Grant # 90 RB 0032

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 Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services

- A project of Migration and Refugee Services of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
- National Technical Assistance Provider on Refugee Child Welfare for the Office of Refugee Resettlement
- Goals
  - ✓ *Prevent* the need for child welfare interventions through refugee family and community strengthening strategies – *strengths-based approaches*
  - ✓ *Improve access* to appropriate and effective interventions when needed by promoting collaboration between refugee and public child welfare services at local, state, and national levels

*BRYCS provides national technical assistance to organizations serving refugees so that all newcomer children and youth can reach their potential.*

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## BRYCS Provides...

National Technical Assistance on refugees and child welfare



Web site and Clearinghouse at [www.brycs.org](http://www.brycs.org):

- ✓ Over 4,000 resources
- ✓ BRYCS Briefs, Promising Practices, & Resource Lists
- ✓ Monthly "What's New"
- ✓ BRYCS Publications
- ✓ Monthly Email Bulletin Alert

**Consultations:**

- ✓ Experts available by telephone (888-572-6500) & email ([info@brycs.org](mailto:info@brycs.org))
- ✓ Discussion Listserv
- ✓ Topical trainings by request
- ✓ National Technical Assistance Network

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**Your trainer for this Webinar is**  
**BRYCS Consultant and Expert**  
**on Child Abuse and Culture**






Lisa Aronson Fontes, PhD  
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**BRYCS Webinar Series on**  
**Child Abuse & Neglect – Goals**

1. To facilitate the efforts of refugee resettlement staff to help orient refugee families to U.S. child protection laws and to recognize and address potential child maltreatment
2. To help refugee resettlement agencies understand and conform to the legal requirements around reporting of suspected child maltreatment
3. To facilitate collaborations with child protective services that assure child safety while protecting families' rights to their cultural integrity

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**BRYCS Webinar Series on**  
**Child Abuse & Neglect**

- Today's presentation builds on the previous Webinar on *defining* child maltreatment when working with refugee families
- In Part 2 today, we'll discuss mandated reporting and ways that refugee resettlement and child welfare agencies can work together to benefit refugee families
- Please note that *all BRYCS Webinars* will be recorded and available for viewing at any time via our Web site

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## The United States Child Welfare System

- Federal and State laws protect children
- Parents are responsible for the health and well-being of their children and are free to raise their children as they want
- If a parent harms a child or leaves a child at risk of harm, the government will intervene
- There has recently been a shift towards family- and community-centered services

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## The U. S. Child Welfare System (cont'd)

*Complex system of services, including:*

- Prevention services
- “Differential Response”
- Family support/preservation services
- Range of interventions, including strategies such as Family Group Decision Making
- Kinship and foster care (“resource families”)
- Adoption, permanency planning
- Training of child welfare workers

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## Child Protective Services (CPS)

- State agencies with local offices
- Someone calls in a report of suspected abuse or neglect
- CPS will decide whether to investigate



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## How does the CPS investigation work?

- CPS workers may call doctors, teachers, and others who have contact with the family including refugee resettlement professionals
- May need releases of information signed by parents or guardians
- Follow your agency's protocol
- Cooperate with your local child welfare agency



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## How does the CPS investigation work?

- They may visit the home and interview the child, parents, siblings and neighbors
- In the home, they may look in the refrigerator for food and note general hygiene of home
- They may visit the school to interview the child
- There are state and local variations in procedures



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### Child Protective Services (CPS)

*In this case scenario, the social worker from CPS arrives at the home of a recently arrived refugee family. He has brought with him an elder from the refugee community who can provide interpretation and information about the culture for the CPS worker. The elder can also help the family understand what is happening, support them, and ensure the process goes as smoothly as possible.*

**From BRYCS' Raising Children in a New Country: An Illustrated Handbook**



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### Based on the investigation, CPS:

- May determine there is insufficient evidence of abuse and not open a case
- May investigate and believe child is not at risk. Case closed (*length of time that the report is kept on file varies by locale*).
- May open a case and assign an ongoing protective social worker to work with the child and family over time
- May not substantiate abuse or neglect, but instead provide voluntary support services to the family

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### If a case is opened...

- The child may remain in the home (most common) and the family will receive services that might include counseling, parent aide, parenting classes, and help obtaining other services.
- The child and possibly siblings may be temporarily removed from the home and placed with a known or unknown foster family.
- A person in the family who is suspected of having committed an offense may be asked to leave the home or, if the offense is severe, may be arrested.

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### What is a mandated reporter?



A mandated reporter is someone who is required by law to report suspicions of child abuse & neglect to child protective services.

*Find out and follow your agency protocol, but you must report concerns.*

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### Who is a mandated reporter?

- Varies by state. Usually includes anyone who has contact with children in the course of his or her work, including social workers, counselors, medical professionals, teachers & other school personnel, clergy, police & firefighters.
- In many states, volunteers may be legally exempt from reporting.
- Refer to our [Highlighted Resources](#) list for mandated reporters by state



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### Refugee service providers are typically mandated reporters

- As such, if they encounter suspected child abuse or neglect in the course of their work, they must report to CPS.
- Mandated reporters are often required to give their names and contact information; in many states they may report anonymously.
- Reports should be filed quickly (24 or 48 hours).
- In many states, they must also file written report.

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### How to report:

- Call your local CPS
- Check the BRYCS [Highlighted Resources](#) list for a link to the telephone numbers to call for all states
- State your name and that you are a mandated reporter
- Give your contact information



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## What to report: General information

- The child's name and age
- The names and ages of other children in the home
- The names of the child's caretaker(s)
- The child's address and phone number



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## What to report: The risk

- Why you believe this child is at risk or has been abused or neglected (what you know, how you know it)
- Who the suspected perpetrator is
- Where you believe the abuse/neglect occurred, including the address if you have it (*You may need to call more than one CPS office*)
- When you believe the abuse occurred
- State if the abuse or risk is ongoing



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## Other important information:

- Lack of English language skills and need for interpreter
- Country of origin, length of time in the U.S.
- Significant migration history, including prior traumas
- Poverty issues
- Caretaker absence
- Evidence of domestic violence or substance abuse
- Disabilities in child or caretaker
- Child missing school
- Previous allegations in another state
- Other details that might support allegation
- Call even if your information is incomplete



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## What happens after you report? Possibilities:

- "Nothing"
- An investigation but you will not hear about it
- You may be contacted for additional information
- The family may find out you reported them and get angry
- Children may receive protection and families may receive needed services
- You may need to report multiple times or enlist other reporters
- You may save a life
- You may believe an intervention is too extreme



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## Child Welfare worker roles and backgrounds will vary

- Crisis team/Hotline staff
- CPS investigators
- CPS ongoing workers
- Foster Care and Adoption Specialists



*Offer to help child welfare workers to understand the family's culture and circumstances*



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## Working with Child Welfare

- Get to know your local office practices.
- What do they consider sufficient to investigate or open a case?
- How do they work with other agencies?
- Do they want a written report?
- How do they work with interpreters?
- Is voluntary services an option, and what are the implications?



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## Working with Child Welfare

- Get to know individual workers – have at least one contact.
- Let them get to know you and your agency.
- Offer informal invitations to visit your agencies, or hold joint coffee hours or lunch.
- Consider creating resettlement-child welfare joint hotline responses.
- Teach them about refugees and the resettlement system and learn about their services and procedures through formal or informal cross trainings.

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## Working with Child Welfare

- Develop a cooperative relationship with individuals.
- Respect their expertise.
- Appreciate the challenges and limitations of their position and program.
- Inform them about resources that are particularly helpful with this community.
- Affirm that you have the same goals: the safety and well-being of vulnerable children and families.

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## Helping families work with CPS

- Explain the CPS process to reduce fear.
- Explain need to cooperate, speak openly, tell the truth.
- Explain possible “next steps”.
- Explain possible CPS services.
- Tell families when you are making a report.



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## With whom should you speak to establish links?



Contact **BRYCS!**

We can help you connect with your local child welfare agency and establish a contact there .



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## What Child Welfare agencies might have to offer:

### Possible access to:

- Federal benefits, such as WIC, food stamps, housing
- Emergency financial assistance
- Childcare subsidies
- HeadStart, Early Intervention
- Summer camps
- Parent aides
- Medical, mental health care and parenting classes
- Additional services vary by state and county



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## Barriers to working well with CPS

### From both sides:

- Fear
- Frustration
- Lack of familiarity with organizational cultures
- Linguistic misunderstanding
- Interpersonal manner
- Different sense of time



BRYCS Photo



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## An example: Timira's family

### Who is Who

- Family from East Africa
- *Timira*: 25 yr old, pregnant, single mother, has 3 children
- *Susan*: CPS worker
- *Yasmin*: Refugee Resettlement caseworker



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## Timira's family (cont'd)

### CPS Intervenes

- Timira's family moves into uncle's overcrowded house (family of 6).
- Children visit neighbors during school hours, say they are hungry; neighbor calls CPS.
- CPS calls Refugee Resettlement agency.
- Together, Susan (CPS) and Yasmin (RR) visit the uncle's home and discover cramped living quarters and empty refrigerator.



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## Timira's family (cont'd)

### CPS and RR Work Together

- Emergency housing and food stamps
- CPS worker to help Timira's children enter school and HeadStart
- Referral to health clinic for prenatal care
- Weekly CPS visits, then monthly



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## As a trusted adult you may receive disclosures of abuse: How you respond matters!



- Be empathic and understanding.
- Ensure they understand that, because of U.S. law, you need to let others know if a child is in danger.
- Follow your agency protocol, making sure CPS or the police are contacted immediately.

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## Responding to a Disclosure - *Do Not*

- *Do not* ask a lot of questions; you may ruin the legal case.
- *Do not* act shocked or appalled - appear neutral.
- *Do not* communicate disbelief (e.g., "Are you sure?" or "Really?").
- *Do not* promise confidentiality. Instead, say that you may need to tell others to keep the child safe.

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## Maintaining Professionalism



- Discuss allegations only in professional contexts. Avoid gossip; these are sensitive issues.
- Avoid jumping to conclusions.
- Do not lie or conceal evidence to protect anyone. This may be a crime.

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## Thank you!



We'll have some time for questions now.

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## Contact Us!



**Web site:** [www.brycs.org](http://www.brycs.org)  
**Email:** [info@brycs.org](mailto:info@brycs.org)  
**Phone:** 1-888-572-6500

Don't forget to download the [Highlighted Resources List!](http://brycs.ddivbeta.com/highlighted-resources.cfm?childwelfare&list=19)  
<http://brycs.ddivbeta.com/highlighted-resources.cfm?childwelfare&list=19>

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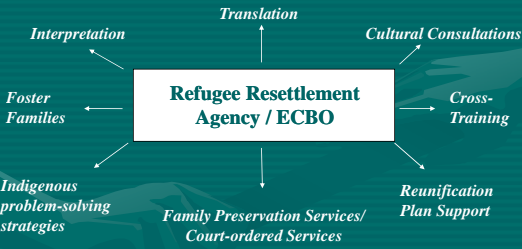
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## Collaboration with CPS



**Refugee Resettlement Agency / ECBO**

*Interpretation*      *Translation*      *Cultural Consultations*  
*Foster Families*      *Cross-Training*  
*Indigenous problem-solving strategies*      *Family Preservation Services/ Court-ordered Services*      *Reunification Plan Support*

Morland/BRYCS (2006)

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