

Appendix 1: Tools for Trainers

This toolkit can help in training refugee resettlement staff about the U.S. child welfare system. Included below is a list of questions to test one's knowledge of the child welfare system, along with four case studies and accompanying questions to guide discussion.

A. Test Your Knowledge of the Child Welfare System

[Answers listed after the case studies]

1. True or False: Child welfare laws are the same in every state.
2. What are the three main goals for children involved with the child welfare system?
3. Name three types of child welfare services typical in the U.S.
4. Name two important U.S. child welfare laws.
5. Name and describe 4 types of child maltreatment defined in child welfare laws.
6. Which of the following are types of substitute care for children who cannot safely remain with their families?
 - a. foster care
 - b. kinship care
 - c. group home care
 - d. residential treatment
 - e. emergency shelter care
 - f. all of the above
7. What is a mandated reporter?
8. What should you do if you think a client is abusing their child?

B. Case Studies

The following case studies are copied from the BRYCS document *Foster Care at a Cultural Crossroads: Refugee Children in the Public Foster Care System (Roundtable Report)*, <http://www.brycs.org/clearinghouse/clearinghouse-resource.cfm?docnum=0760>. Each case study relates the story of a refugee family involved with the U.S. foster care system. Case specific questions follow each case study, in addition to the two general questions listed below. Trainers and supervisors can use these case studies to generate discussions about refugee families and the U.S. child welfare system.

- In these case studies, what strategies could be used to foster collaboration between public child welfare services, resettlement agencies and ethnic organizations?
- If it was your family described in these cases, what information or services would be most helpful to you, and provided by whom?
- If you were a resettlement caseworker involved with each family described, how would you work with CPS to assist in each case? What advice, coordination or cultural information might be helpful?

Case Study 1

Two Asian sisters were reported to Child Protective Service (CPS) as victims of sexual abuse by their father. The girls were part of a large family that came to the United States as refugees more than 20 years ago.

Kinship care was not viewed as a viable option, since extended family was seen as complicit in the abuse. Due to the number of children, the siblings were split between four different foster homes. The three youngest children were placed with an Asian foster family of different ethnicity. Although there were some similar customs, this placement was ultimately problematic since there was a great deal of mistrust between the children's family and the foster parents.

The two abused girls were then placed together in a culturally matched foster home. This placement allowed for shared culture, language, and customs; however, these same characteristics allowed the birth parents to influence and intimidate the foster parents and to have continued contact with the girls. The girls were blamed by family members for splitting up the family, which led to feelings of guilt.

One of the girls was more introverted and did not talk about her problems and concerns. Ultimately, she was placed in a psychiatric facility due to mental health problems. Her birth parents convinced her to refuse her psychiatric medication.

To minimize the parental pressure on the girls and the foster family, the two sisters were eventually moved to an American therapeutic foster home. The birth parents were then less likely to call the girls by phone, and the daughter with mental health concerns was able to receive more intensive foster care and mental health services.

Questions Specific to This Case

- What were the benefits and drawbacks to using a culturally matched placement in this case? How can you know which type of placement will be best for a child?
- What should be considered in making placements for abuse victims within a small ethnic community?
- What assumptions can occur in placing "Asian" children in "Asian" foster homes or "African" children in "African" foster homes? Are such assumptions problematic, and if so, how can they be minimized or challenged?

Case Study 2

Shireen, a 10-year-old Muslim girl, was resettled with her parents and older male siblings. Originally from the Middle East, she arrived in the United States in 1996 as a refugee. She had 10 older siblings and 1 younger sibling.

When Shireen was 16, her school called her home to say that Shireen was being suspended from school. Shireen had been accessing inappropriate Internet sites at school in order to communicate romantically with boys. Shireen's mother and brothers came to the school to talk with the school administrators and to pick her up. Because Shireen's mother did not speak much English, the school explained to her brothers why she was being suspended.

When Shireen returned to school on Monday, she had bruises on her arm. She told the school principal that her brother had beaten her up because it was contrary to their culture for her to be dating or communicating with boys on her own. The school reported this to CPS, so that when the family came to pick Shireen up from school in the afternoon, they were told that she was already under the protection of CPS. When the family returned home from the school, CPS investigators were already at the house to interview the family about what had happened.

Shireen was placed with a Christian, American foster family, and the court ordered that the biological family could not have any direct contact with Shireen. After six weeks in foster care, Shireen attempted suicide. In a suicide note, she stated that she did not like living in the foster home because there were too many rules. She apparently expected that she would have more freedom in an American home than in her family's home.

Following her suicide attempt, Shireen was transferred to a group home. She preferred the group home to the foster home because she had more independence. However, she became violent with the group home staff on two occasions. The fights resulted in two short-term stays at a juvenile detention facility.

After seven months in care, supervised meetings were arranged between Shireen and her family. When in the presence of her family, Shireen said repeatedly that she wanted to return home. However, her requests were more conflicted when speaking alone with child welfare staff. A plan to return Shireen home with her family for a 60-day visit was terminated when Shireen said at the last minute that she did not want to return home.

Questions Specific to This Case

- What would be important factors to consider in arranging the best possible placement for a child like Shireen?
- What kind of preventive or preparatory work could be done in this community to prepare for cases like Shireen's in the future?
- How can public child welfare agencies and refugee serving agencies work together to address intergenerational conflict between refugee parents and teens?
- What would you have done similarly or differently to best serve this family?

Case Study 3

An East African family came to the United States as refugees in 1995. Since that time, the family has lived in three different states in the Midwest. The family was intact at the time of arrival in the United States, but the father has since been sent to prison for threatening the family with a gun during a parental dispute.

Since becoming a single parent, the mother has been arrested twice for driving while intoxicated. In addition, the mother failed to seek medical attention for one of the children and was charged with neglect. The children were placed in foster care for four months before being returned home to the care of their mother.

Recently, the family was again reported to CPS by a neighbor who was concerned that the children were being neglected. When the CPS worker arrived at the home to investigate the charge, the mother became enraged and threatened to take her own life and the life of her children. At that point, the children were removed from the home and placed in foster care.

There are six children in the family, ranging in age from 4 to 16. All of the children remain in the care of CPS. The five youngest children are split between two foster homes, and the eldest child has run away from both foster care and group home arrangements. The second oldest child, age 14, is beginning to run away as well. The four youngest children appear to be adjusting relatively well to foster care.

Other local refugees from the same ethnic background have been divided in their reaction to this case. Some community members have been critical of CPS and the U.S. child welfare system, while others have begun to view the intervention as a protection for the children.

Questions Specific to This Case

- How might the local East African community be a resource in serving this family?
- What cultural misunderstandings with this family and the wider East African community are likely to arise in the removal and placement of the children? How could these misunderstandings be minimized?
- How can the child welfare agency help ensure that the children are supported in maintaining their original culture and language?
- What role could a refugee caseworker play with the family, the East African community, and with CPS?

Case Study 4

A mother and father from Asia were granted asylum* in the United States. They live with their teenage son, who was born in their country of origin, and a seven-year-old son, who was born in the United States. As is customary in this ethnic community, the younger son was sent to his grandparents in the country of origin from infancy until he was ready to begin school in the United States. This practice is common due to the busy work schedules of most parents in the United States; the practice lets children learn their mother tongue and be cared for by their grandparents.

The mother works during the day, and the father works at night. Thus, when the seven-year-old boy returns from school, the father is at home, but often sleeping. One evening, the father awoke and found the boy missing. After searching for him, the family realized that the boy had been routinely leaving the house without permission while the father was asleep.

The father punished the child by hitting him with a thin bamboo stick, a common discipline technique in his home country, and sent the child to bed without supper. The mother says that she also hit the child, but not hard.

The next day at school, a teacher noticed bruises on the child. The school then contacted CPS to file an abuse charge. The CPS investigator who visited the home was accompanied by a Mandarin interpreter, although the parents' first language is another Asian dialect. The family was assigned a caseworker of Asian descent, although the caseworker is not of the same ethnicity as the family and does not speak the same language as the family. Court proceedings were interpreted into Mandarin; however, the family remained confused because that is not their primary dialect. The child was very confused as well because he primarily speaks the parents' local dialect. The family did not understand what was happening and what the court was deciding about their son, due to the language gap.

Ultimately, the father was charged with neglect and the mother was charged with abuse. A court order was issued barring the mother from visiting the son. The child was placed in a kinship care placement with an aunt, where he remains. The court has recommended parenting classes and mental health counseling for the mother, but culturally appropriate services have not yet been located.

Questions Specific to This Case

- How did the child welfare agency attempt to provide culturally sensitive services? How were they appropriate or inappropriate?
- Put yourself in the teacher's shoes. What would you consider in determining whether to contact CPS or child welfare services about this family? What supportive services might be helpful?
- What would you have done similarly or differently to best serve this family?

- What broad cultural or societal pressures are affecting the child-rearing abilities of this family? How can community-based organizations and public child welfare agencies work together to address these issues?

**Asylum is for people who request refugee status after they have entered the United States, whereas refugee status is given to people before they enter this country. Once asylum status is granted, asylees are eligible for most of the same public benefits as those who have refugee status.*

Answers to “Test Your Knowledge of the U.S. Child Welfare System”

1. F
2. Safety, permanence, well-being
3. Child protective services (CPS), foster care, adoption, family preservation, wraparound services
4. Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA); Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)
5. Physical abuse; emotional abuse; sexual abuse; neglect—physical, educational, medical or emotional; abandonment
6. F
7. Someone mandated by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect.
8. Discuss this answer with a supervisor.