

REPORT: BRYCS Cross-Serving Trainings St. Louis, MO

A report on a BRYCS pilot site project collaboration

By Kerry McCarthy BRYCS Program Coordinator, LIRS December 2002





888.572.6500 info@brycs.org www.brycs.org BRYCS is supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement, under contract #90 RB 0009.



Introduction

Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (BRYCS) is a national technical assistance provider working to strengthen the services and systems impacting refugee youth and children. In the summer of 2002, BRYCS worked in collaboration with various organizations in the Atlanta area in developing and implementing two local cross-service trainings. This report provides a comprehensive summary of the training process and outcomes.

It is BRYCS' expectation this report will provide not only documentation of the trainings but will serve as a catalyst for future discussion, collaborations, and resource-sharing between public child welfare agencies, refugee service providers and refugee community representatives in the Atlanta area.

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I. CROSS-SERVICE TRAINING

Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (BRYCS) developed the concept of a Cross-Service Training through the work of the BRYCS Community Conversations project. ¹Two significant findings from that project were as follows:

- Often a disconnect exists between public child welfare and refugee-serving agencies in how
 they understand each other's operating systems and in their respective work with families
 and children.
- The myth within the refugee communities about child protective services "taking children away" has a significant impact on refugee parents and can indirectly affect how they perceive their role as parents in the United States.

As a result, BRYCS saw the need to bring together public child welfare agencies, refugeeserving agencies, and refugee community representatives to educate each other, strengthen dialogue, and build capacity for effectively meeting the needs of refugee families.

A. Definition

Cross-Service Trainings provide a forum for public child welfare agencies, refugee service providers, and refugee community representatives to share information about their operating structure and objectives. The trainings promote resource sharing and cross-agency communication to increase effectiveness in serving refugee families and children.

B. Goals

- To educate each other and learn more about public child welfare and local service systems that work with refugee youth and children and their families
- To discuss ways to share information and collaborate among service systems, specifically around issues affecting refugee families
- To distribute resource materials, network, and strengthen relationships among service providers.

¹ If you are interested in receiving a copy of this report, please send an e-mail to info@brycs.org.

II. PREPARATION

Preparation began for the Cross-Service Training in March 2002 leading up to the Trainings in July. BRYCS met with pilot site representatives in November 2001, representatives from public child welfare and refugee-serving agencies expressed interest in developing a Training in the city of St. Louis. South St. Louis has a high concentration of refugees that continues to grow.

A. Organizing the Cross-Service Training Taskforce

A key element in planning the Training was the creation of a Taskforce that had representation from public child welfare as well as refugee-serving agencies.² The Taskforce included representatives from the International Institute, African Refugee Services, Catholic Refugee Services, and the St. Louis Division of Family Services (DFS) Child Abuse and Neglect Unit. The Taskforce met by conference call and frequently communicated through an e-mail list.

The Taskforce was initially called an Advisory Group until roles became more clearly established and it was apparent that "tasks" were clearly required of the participants. Some participants in the Taskforce could not dedicate as much time as others; they preferred to have a role contributing ideas and suggestions and keeping informed of the planning process. The International Institute has developed a working relationship with the St. Louis City Division of Family Services to open communication when the DFS cases involve newcomer families. This pre-established relationship helped to expedite the development of the Taskforce.

B. Developing the Resource Manual

An important task in preparing for the Training was the development of a resource manual. The manual included agency descriptions of all public child welfare and refugee-serving agencies as well as descriptions of the operating structures of refugee resettlement and public child welfare.

The Taskforce created a template that each agency used to provide information; the templates were submitted electronically to BRYCS program staff. The template was derived from the BRYCS Clearinghouse program description form. Because some agencies felt the template required too much information, several revisions were made.

The resource manual was distributed to all Training participants. Participants generally felt that the manual was helpful and would be an effective way to follow up with agencies after the Training.

C. Outreach

A goal in the outreach for the Training was to ensure representation from DFS, refugeeserving agencies, and community-based agencies. The Taskforce was interested in

² The term "refugee serving agencies" includes mutual assistance associations and ethnic-based agencies as well as community-based agencies.

participation from a range of providers, from directors and administrators to those providing direct services, such as case managers. Mainly, the Taskforce worked through the e-mail list to communicate with other agencies about the Training and to recruit presenters.

D. Defining the Agenda

In defining the agenda, the following priorities were agreed on:

- Provide a thorough explanation of service systems through presentations by public child welfare, refugee resettlement, and mutual assistance associations (MAAs) and provide resources.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to work together in problem solving.
- Provide exercises to map the resources of participating agencies.
- Provide time for participants to generate ideas about next steps in increasing resource sharing and collaboration.

III. SUMMARY OF TRAINING

A diverse cross-section of service agencies attended the Training. Although the refugee-serving agencies and community-based agencies participating represented a diverse group of providers, not as many participants as originally anticipated attended. Several participants could only attend for part of the day. In terms of public child welfare representatives, however, participants included a large number of case managers and not as many supervisors as expected. The DFS Child Abuse and Neglect Unit was strongly represented, but the other DFS program departments, such as foster care, were not as well represented, perhaps because another project in BRYCS' St. Louis pilot site initiative was an April foster care training for the DFS foster care unit.

The Missouri state refugee coordinator and the director of the St. Louis DFS opened the conference with preliminary remarks.

Morning presentations involved explanations of the DFS system by representatives from the Child Abuse and Neglect Unit as well as the Permanency Planning and Foster Care units. The International Institute and Catholic Refugee Services provided information on refugee resettlement. African Refugee Service, Iraq House, and the Ethiopian Community Association of Missouri presented information on MAAs. Unity Health, Urban Behavioral Health Care Institute, and Provident Counseling presented information on refugee health care and mental health. The

BRYCS program coordinator from LIRS presented on the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors program, special juvenile immigrant status, and female genital mutilation.

The afternoon session was interactive and allowed participants to both problem solve and identify collective resources and services. Case studies involving refugee populations were presented to small groups, who were asked what resources they would use to meet each family's needs. This exercise gave participants a sense of the different service capacities within agencies as well as greater understanding about their service challenges. Moving out of this exercise, participants mapped the collective resources of the agencies in the room and placed them into different categories, such as mental health, parenting, neighborhood-based services, education, and respite/child care.

After identifying resources, participants discussed how agencies could better coordinate, collaborate, and share information. The outcomes are noted below.

People actively participated throughout the day and enjoyed meeting each other in person. The case examples were engaging to case mangers, but they felt that they did not have the authority to suggest systemic changes. This sentiment was slightly problematic when trying to brainstorm the potential for collaborations and partnerships. The July 11 Training involved a smaller number of case studies to allow more time for groups to process each case as well as to have more time to talk to each other.

IV. OUTCOMES

Participants identified the following outcomes in the July 9 Training. Participants in the July 11 Training generally agreed that these outcomes were desirable and possible to achieve.

- A continuing taskforce: Create a committee of service agencies working with newcomer families and DFS representatives (from all units) to meet regularly on the topic of refugee and immigrant families.
- Role of contracting agencies: Broaden the scope of contracts with agencies that provide services to newcomer families, particularly in the areas of mental health and parenting support.
- Neighborhood-based approach: DFS's neighborhood-based approach is increasing its use
 of informal support networks within communities. DFS should explore programs working
 preventively to support families within neighborhoods and to draw on the expertise they have
 developed.
- **Regional collaborations:** Because more newcomer families are moving into the counties, there is an increasing need to work in regional collaborations (city and county) and to think about the range of agencies involved in these collaborations.
- Community-based education and mentoring: Develop mentor families who can provide informal supports and advocacy for new refugee and immigrant families. Consider partnerships and strategies for welcoming newcomers.
- **Preventive programs:** Develop preventive programs to support newcomer families.
- **Resource development:** Develop linguistically and culturally appropriate material on physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect and on how DFS operates.
- **Program evaluations:** Evaluate programs and resources already designed for refugee and immigrant populations. What are the trends in St. Louis?
- **Involvement of refugee communities in human services:** Consider ways to promote human service work within refugee and immigrant communities.
- **Job shadowing:** Consider opportunities for "job shadowing" at both refugee service provider agencies and at DFS to orient and educate staff about the different systems.

V. EVALUATION

BRYCS received a total of 18 evaluations forms from the two Trainings. Generally, the feedback was positive.

To the question: "On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the overall effectiveness of the training in fostering collaboration and communication between service providers?" the average rating was 7.8.

The following responses to the question "What was helpful about the training?" were frequently received (i.e., mentioned a minimum of three times) following both Trainings:

July 9 and July 11 Trainings

- Knowledge of resources and the resource manual
- Understanding of different services and service providers

Participants wrote suggestions about additional information they would like in the future.

Additional Information Needs:

- Trauma
- Cultures and traditions of refugees
- How to use interpreters
- Refugee employment
- Survivors of torture treatment
- Health
- Case studies

VI. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING THE CROSS-SERVICE TRAININGS

• Participating Agencies

Planning began in February 2002 and ended with the first Training in July 2002; the process was intensive and required a strong time commitment from agencies. Agency commitment was especially difficult in light of local economic factors influencing agencies, such as the decline in new refugee arrivals and severe budget cuts in DFS offices.

Recommendation for Future Trainings: Present a list of clearly defined preparation tasks and roles in the initial formation of the Taskforce. Agencies can then determine their level of commitment from the outset.

• Resource Manual: Production and Updating

Agencies found it difficult to condense descriptions of their agencies according to the template developed for the resource manual. They suggested several changes, which resulted in several revisions. Some agencies submitted their pamphlets and agency brochures, expecting that BRYCS would complete the template; however, agencies were responsible for editing their template and ensuring that their agency information was current and complete, which required additional time from participating agencies. Additionally, service providers had different computer operating systems and technical capacity, so other challenges were involved in gathering uniform information. Developing the manual required significant time from the BRYCS program coordinator from LIRS at a critical time right before the first training.

Recommendation for Future Trainings: This task should be centralized either in one agency or through an outside contracted agency because it is a time-consuming yet important preparation task. It is important to identify from the start which agency may be able to take ownership of the manual and update it in the future.

• Local Relationship Building

Coordinating all the different schedules of service providers was a challenge. Deciding on the agenda, developing an outreach strategy, and developing the manual were extremely difficult to do via group consensus. It was difficult to bring the Taskforce into one conference call; as a result, feedback was provided through e-mail, which was not always effective and may have slowed the decision-making process. BRYCS working remotely with the local agencies had its drawbacks, and Taskforce members expressed a preference to have some of the meetings in person rather than by conference call.

Recommendation for Future Trainings: Allot more onsite time with the local service providers in planning the Training. Doing so will help energize the Taskforce and provide more opportunity for agencies to meet in-person prior to the Training.

Range of Training Participants

The agencies and the roles of participants within those agencies varied widely However, not all units in DFS were fully represented, and the Training would have benefited from a greater number of directors and supervisors. Through conversations with participants and through

the evaluations, it appeared that direct service workers wanted more case studies and specific cultural information. The Training was created to include managers, directors, and case mangers in order to touch on all the aspects of service level and decision making. It was difficult to meet all the specific training needs of the participants.

Recommendation for Future Trainings: Each training should span 2 days. The first day could be devoted to providing general information and presentations, and the second day could involve dividing the participants into specialized training groups according to their level of intervention with families and children.

VII. NEXT STEPS

The Training was a beginning, and the expectation is that participating agencies will continue to build on what was begun in the Training.

A. Building on Outcomes

The outcomes suggested by participants at the end of both Trainings serve as a framework for connecting public child welfare and refugee-serving agencies. Participants appeared to be eager to move ahead with the outcomes related to increasing training opportunities and with forming a committee to discuss areas of potential collaboration and resource sharing.

B. Curriculum Development and "Train the Trainer" Forum

Developing a training takes time, resources, and commitment from the agencies involved. BRYCS is currently developing a curriculum outlining the process for developing a Training locally. The curriculum will take the lessons learned from Trainings implemented in St. Louis, MO, and Atlanta, GA, and will provide a lead agency with guidance and resources for developing their own Training. BRYCS plans to host a forum to bring together representatives interested in organizing their own Trainings. BRYCS will be available to consult with representatives as they implement the curriculum.

C. Newsletter Distribution

A newsletter about the Trainings in St. Louis, MO, and Atlanta, GA, will be distributed to all agencies who participated in the Trainings. This will be distributed to participating agencies either in hard copy or electronically. This report will be available electronically to any interested agency.

VIII. CONCLUSION

From the start, public child welfare and refugee-serving agencies in the St. Louis area identified the need to implement a Training and were interested in the potential benefits of increasing effectiveness in providing services to refugee families. The planning process allowed service providers to engage in networking and relationship building, which in turn helped create a congenial atmosphere leading up to the day of the Training.

Agencies participating in the Taskforce went above and beyond expectations and provided suggestions, ideas, space, staff time, and energy to the project; they thereby contributed greatly to the Training's success. Many participants expressed that simply having the opportunity to bring all the different service providers into one room for a full day was beneficial.

Participants also indicated that the role of BRYCS as a third party steering the process was effective in creating a neutral point between various service systems. Service providers are extremely busy and do not have the time to organize a Training of this magnitude themselves. BRYCS provided a venue to help initiate dialogue on cross-system collaboration and resource sharing.

Participants were very receptive to working together because of the common agreement that the goal of the Training was to increase effectiveness in serving refugee families. It was evident that many agencies could potentially collaborate and share resources with each other, particularly in the area of neighborhood-based services and prevention programs. At the Training it was suggested that DFS attend the monthly Refugee and Immigrant Consortium meeting, and DFS agreed to send representatives to the meetings. The DFS director in St. Louis City is clearly willing to explore the potential for collaboration and partnerships with agencies and communities that serve refugee families.

IX. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A. Agenda

St. Louis Cross-Service Training July 9 and July 11, 2002 8:30 - 4:30 St. Louis Province Motherhouse 6400 Minnesota Avenue St. Louis, MO 63111

Opening: 8:45-9:15

- 1. Introductory remarks by State Refugee Coordinator-Pat Wilde Green
- 2. Child Welfare Director from St. Louis City Division of Family Services -Tena Thompson
- 3. BRYCS Program Coordinator, Kerry McCarthy

Becoming a refugee: 9:15-9:30

UNHCR video-"To be a refugee"

Refugee populations in St. Louis: Who, where, what, why and how are they doing? 9:30-10:45

Presenters will provide information about refugees in St. Louis and discuss the role of resettlement agencies. Discuss challenges refugee families may have and how refugee service providers are addressing them.

- 1. How refugees arrive in the U.S. (International Institute and Catholic Charities)
- 2. Resettlement agencies-What they do. (International Institute and Catholic Charities
- 3. Refugees in St. Louis Where are they and what are the challenges? (International Institute and Catholic Charities)
- 4. Agencies providing services for refugees in:

Healthcare-Unity Health

Mental Health-Urban Behavioral Health Care Institute, Provident Counseling

Youth and Children Programs-(International Institute and BRYCS)

Refugee Youth/Children Special Situations-

Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Programs, Guardianship, Special

Immigrant Juvenile Status, Female Genital Cutting.

BREAK 10:45-11:00 (Refreshments Provided)

Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs): 11:00-11:40

Presentation on role of Mutual Assistance Associations, their role in the community and services they provide. Presenters from African Refugee Service, Iraq House, Ethiopian Community Association of Missouri.

Child Welfare: How does it work? 11:40-12:30

Presenters from Division of Family Services will take audience through the process a family goes through when they enter the child welfare system.

12:30-1:30 Lunch (Provided)

Case scenarios and service identification/mapping (interactive session): 1:30-3:30

Participants will be divided into groups with equal representation of refugee service providers and DFS workers in each group and are given the task of brainstorming ways to handle particular cases. Through this activity, participants will learn more about the resources and services their groups members currently access and talk about additional ways to handle some situations in order to serve a family most effectively.

Participants will work to create a visual picture of service access and identify areas for increasing service capacity. In addition, we will be able to look at the services we have in common.

Break 3:30-3:45 (Refreshments provided)

Next steps: 3:45-4:30

Recap the day's events and summarize, through participants' responses, what was learned in the day.

Next steps/possibilities will be suggested from everyone.

B. Feedback from Missouri State Refugee Coordinator Patricia Wilde-Green

Did you meet the goal of the Cross-Service Training?

I would say a definite yes. BRYCS brought refugee service providers, DFS people, and community representatives all together in one room and they talked and exchanged information about their clientele and what each agency does and started the lines of communication and collaboration. A job well done.

What do you think was effective about the training?

The mere fact that all interested parties were brought together to brainstorm about how to better serve the people that all are committed to serving.

What can be improved upon?

There's nothing that I can think of that would improve the training except more of it and keep expanding the circle of attendees.

What do you think will be different in terms of service delivery as a result of this training?

I would hope that a better understanding, tolerance and compassion would be exhibited by all parties in the future. Service delivery should definitely be easier, more effective and more complete because there has been a network established, a face to go with a name, a resource to call on when needed.

What recommendations do you have for future trainings such as these?

I would like to see similar training statewide/nationwide or at least in Kansas City. The Refugee Program is such a unique and worthwhile program, that the more educated people are and the more networking/collaborating that can be done, the better it will be for all concerned. If a county office has a refugee client walk into their office looking for services and the staff doesn't know that much about the refugee and doesn't have resources to access, everyone loses in the long run. The client doesn't receive services, the staff person doesn't fulfill the job duties and the community possibly loses a valuable resident. No one's lives are enriched by the mere experience of getting to know or help someone in need.

C. Feedback from DFS

Response from Director of Division of Family Services, St. Louis City Tena Thompson

I believe the cross-training was effective and a wonderful beginning of what I hope will be additional training and opportunities to collaborate with the refugee service providers. The reviews which I did receive from you, were very positive and reflected that many of the attendees received new information from the training.

I would have liked to have seen better attendance from the refugee service providers. I would like to recommend that we consider, at our next "joint" event an opportunity for the participants to sign up for a "walk in my shoes" day or 1/2 day where we could cross-shadow one another.

I would also like to learn more from the police as to their identification and out-posting of one officer with the International Institute—advantages/disadvantages. Would that be something that child welfare would like to do?

The resource table was a big success. I would like us to consider individual resource tables at a future event, where the service provider agencies could have materials and a manned station so individuals could ask questions—CPS folks would do the same.

I think we need to broaden our invitee list in the future to the "wider child welfare system"—hospitals, schools, clinics, day care center, child care providers, the police department, fire men, emergency response teams etc.

Next steps have been concentrated within the CA/N unit and I believe it would be helpful if we broaden that with more participation from again, the broader child welfare system members.

Division of Family Services, St. Louis City, Manager of Child Abuse and Neglect Unit Fran Johnson

The training was great! It certainly met my expectations. We were able to share info. and make connections that we did not have before. I think there were a lot of good ideas generated and a real momentum started. We don't want to lose that effort. I have been unable to attend the refugee consortium but was able to send someone to one of the meetings and they were well received. We have done some work since the training, but have not had a task force meeting. It's on my radar screen to get started probably in Oct. (All the front line supervisors that I supervise have been on extended sick leave so I've been trying to supervise all 26 people myself . . . so I've gotten little of "my" work done.) We have made some progress on some prevention work in that we are starting a Boy Scout Troop for Bosnian refugees and Lara from the International Institute is starting a Brownie Troop for Bosnians. We also have a meeting with refugee providers scheduled to look at sexual abuse prevention. So even though we haven't done as much as I would have liked we have made some progress.

I'm not sure how we would have made the training better. What is different after this training is our base of resources is much broader. We have other people to work with as well as Lara at the International Institute.

Other training I would like to see is some work with particular cultures . . . for example with our Boy Scout Troop, when we attend district camping weekends church service is a part of that. However the church that is normally available is Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish. We will need to make different arrangements for the Bosnian children. Food choices may be different. Some kind of training about cultural issues is usually the first thing that staff ask about. You know, things like should I accept a meal or drink, do I take my shoes off at the door. Etc.

D. Resource Manual

(Separate Document): For a copy, send an e-mail to info@brycs.org

E. Template for Agency Profiles

Program Description Template

For: Developing a resource manual to be distributed to participants in cross-service training.

Intention: Other service providers can learn about who you are, what you do and your resources.

Program: (formal name, ex. "Family and Schools Together"; or informal or generic "Parenting Program" – whichever is available)

Date Program Started:

Organization Name: (ex. "YMCA International Services")

Organization Address:

Contact: (title only, no personal names; ex. "Youth Outreach Coordinator")

Telephone: Fax Number: Email:

Web site:

Type of Organization: (Ex. Resettlement agency, community-based agency, etc.)

Staffing: (include how many staff, title and contact information)

Goals/ Objectives/ Purpose of the Program: (Ex. Mission statement)

Description: (include how the program is structured, format, content covered, strengths, evaluation process, follow-up; ex. "8 weekly 1 hour classes at the YMCA covering a different topic each week. Topics include substance abuse, gangs...Role playing and handouts are used to supplement class discussions and videos...Translators are provided...")

Resources: (materials used in the program; ex. curriculum guides or videos; provide details whenever possible)

Groups Served: (audience for the program; ages, ethnicity; ex. Multiethnic groups of parents and their children (ages 6-12) that include Sudanese, Afghans, etc.)

Geographic Area Served: (ex. Houston metropolitan area)

Funding: (ex. matching federal dollars and in-kind dollars)

Languages Spoken by Staff:

F. Cross-Service Training: Stages

Stage I. Information Collection

Child welfare agencies, refugee serving agencies, and refugee community associations

- A. Identify people within child welfare and eligibility services to participate in training.
- B. Identify coordinating team for cross-service with representatives.

Stage II. Material and Training Development

- A. Develop evaluation tool.
- B. Set training agenda: consolidate information from Stage I into one manual:
 - Key things to know when working with a refugee family
 - Key things to know when working with child welfare agencies
 - Identified resources
 - Create one blueprint for the county system, plugging in service agencies participating in training.

Stage III. Training Implementation

Stage IV. Follow Up (Ongoing)

- A. Establish protocol for updating manual and continuing with training.
- B. Write report on development and implementation of training. Identify key contact people to ensure training continuity.

G. Participating Agencies

African Refugee Service **CARE Partners** Catholic Charities Refugee Service Ethiopian Community Association of Missouri Grace Hill South Health Center International Institute of St. Louis Iraq House Juvenile Court-St. Louis City MERS Goodwill New City Fellowship Refugee Resettlement Program-Missouri South Suburban Journals St. John's Mercy Neighborhood Ministry St. Louis City Division of Family Services St. Louis Community College of Meramec **United Nations Association** Unity Health

H. Cross-Service Training Newsletter (Separate Document)

For a copy, send an e-mail to info@brycs.org.