

Section I. Introduction

Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (BRYCS) has developed ***Growing Up in a New Country: A Positive Youth Development Toolkit for Working with Refugees and Immigrants*** in order to support service providers in their efforts to develop quality programming for the newcomer youth in their communities.



Refugees and immigrants between the ages of 13 and 19 are an important and growing part of American society, and they have a vital role in the future of this country. More than a third of all refugees resettling in the United States today are under the age of 18, and children of immigrants now number close to one-quarter of all children and youth in this country. Recent research has not only identified unique risk and protective factors for these youth, but some studies indicate that how well these youth do today will affect the success of future generations.¹ Culturally competent, effective programming that helps to develop the strengths of these youth is therefore critically important.

Although the refugee and immigrant youth services field is still developing, great strides have been made in the past few years. This progress is reflected in the resources currently available for working with newcomer youth, the youth projects documented by agencies specializing in serving refugee and immigrant youth, and those mainstream programs that have been successfully adapted to serve these youth.

Since BRYCS promotes a “strengths approach” to working with refugee children and youth, the growth in use of the “Positive Youth Development” approach—or one that emphasizes helping kids grow into successful and mature adults rather than just preventing problem behaviors—is promising in many ways. This approach helps service providers to:

- Recognize and build on refugee and immigrant youth's unique strengths in addition to the potential they share with all youth
- Engage successfully with refugee and immigrant communities, since programs that focus on assets are more appealing to newcomer communities, as well as to youth in general
- Create youth services that make a difference, since recent research has demonstrated that “the programs that are most effective are framed in terms of the constructive assets they seek to build, rather than the negative behaviors they seek to avoid”²

¹ Dennis Hunt, Lyn Morland, et.al. (January 2002). [Understanding, Preventing, and Treating Problem Behaviors Among Refugee and Immigrant Youth](#). The Center for Multicultural Human Services. See page 16 of this Toolkit for this resource, which includes an overview of research on refugee and immigrant youth.

² Thaddeus Ferber, Elizabeth Gaines, and Christi Goodman (October 2005). [Positive youth development: State strategies](#). *Strengthening State Policy: Research and Policy Report*. National Conference of State Legislatures: Author. P. 3.

This “Toolkit” pulls together articles, resources and programs which can assist agencies in adopting a Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach to working with newcomer youth.

Mainstream and newcomer service providers alike should benefit from these resources and examples of “promising practices” in youth programming. The Resource Charts are organized according to stages of the program development cycle, and include the following “Toolboxes”:

TOOLBOX #1: *Background on Positive Youth Development*

TOOLBOX #2: *Assets and Needs Assessments*

TOOLBOX #3: *Program Planning*

TOOLBOX #4: *Program Design*

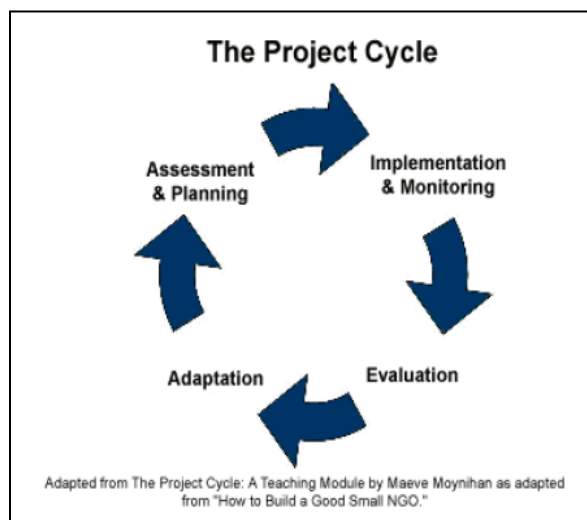
- 1) *Leadership/Empowerment*
- 2) *Afterschool*
- 3) *Mentoring*
- 4) *Employment*

TOOLBOX #5: *Fundraising*

TOOLBOX #6: *Program Implementation*

TOOLBOX #7: *Program Evaluation*

TOOLBOX #8: *“Promising Practices”*



It is important to keep in mind that, although these sections are listed as discrete stages, they are actually integrated processes. For example, Program Evaluation is listed last; however, it should be integrated into Program Planning and every stage thereafter.³ The majority of the resources in this Toolkit are brief, practical, and available for free download to encourage ease of use by busy practitioners.

BRYCS is providing this Toolkit to enable service providers to learn more about the Positive Youth Development approach, to develop new programs, and to enhance and sustain existing programs. Most of all, it is hoped that this effort will encourage and support the development of more effective programming for refugee and immigrant youth, so that all youth may reach their potential.

³ See the BRYCS publication, “Fundraising for Refugee-Serving Agencies”, listed on page 32 of this Toolkit, for more information about the program development cycle.