

Head Start-Refugee Resettlement Agency Collaboration Toolkit

Talking Points

Head Start and Refugee Provider Communication Guide

Head Start and Refugee Resettlement programs provide essential services to young refugee children and their families; however, few programs are currently working together at the community level. This "Talking Points" Tool is intended to provide essential background information on each program as well as to suggest questions each can ask the other to ensure needed information is exchanged. It is hoped that this initial networking will lead to increased collaboration for the ultimate benefit of refugee children and families.

Why should Refugee Resettlement and Early Head Start/Head Start programs collaborate?

- **They serve the same populations.**

Early Head Start/Head Start (EHS/HS) programs and Refugee Resettlement agencies both serve young children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Virtually all refugees will meet the eligibility criteria for EHS/HS services upon arrival.

- **They can assist each other.**

EHS/HS and Refugee Resettlement programs can provide valuable information and resources to each other.

- **They can learn from each other.**

EHS/HS strongly encourages families to participate in center activities and programming, helping refugee families learn how to become engaged in their children's education in this country. Refugee family engagement also helps promote culturally diverse programming for EHS/HS.

Refugee Resettlement

- **Cultural information.** Refugee resettlement staff can provide information about the resettlement process and local refugee groups, including countries of origin, ethnic affiliations, languages spoken, refugee journeys, family and community structures, and cultural parenting practices.
- **Language access.** Resettlement staff either have the capacity to provide interpretation and translation services for refugee languages, or can direct EHS/HS staff to those who can.

Early Head Start/Head Start

- **Early childhood development and education.** EHS/HS staff can provide information about the importance of early childhood education, EHS/HS services, and how to access EHS/HS programs.
- **Access to comprehensive services.** EHS/HS can provide access to a range of critical services that can help young refugee children and their families adjust to their new home and get a "head start" on healthy development and success in school.

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Refugee Resettlement Providers: Talking Points

For engaging Early Head Start/Head Start programs

What should Refugee Resettlement agencies know about Head Start?

- **EHS/HS gives children a “head start”.** Head Start has served low-income children, ages 3 to 5, since 1965, by supporting their healthy development and success in school. Early Head Start was established in 1995 and serves pregnant women and children up to 3 years old.
- **EHS/HS provides access to comprehensive services for the entire family,** including prenatal care, nutrition, health and mental health care, education, and other services to support children’s successful transition to kindergarten.
- **EHS/HS conducts assessments of the needs and resources in their communities** every three years, with annual updates.
- **EHS/HS programs are responsive to their communities.** Although all EHS/HS programs follow national standards, each program also has flexibility in order to be as responsive as possible to local families and communities.
For this reason, some EHS/HS services are center-based while others are home-based; some are half-day, while some are full-day; and some may provide transportation, while others may not. Family Child Care is another option that may be provided in a family-like setting by some programs.
- **EHS/HS makes families a priority by:**
 - Responding to the culture, goals, and circumstances of each parent or guardian
 - Engaging parents in their children’s learning and in program decision-making as both staff and as volunteers.
 - Helping parents pursue their own education and career goals through such activities as family literacy training, English and/or GED classes, and assistance with job preparation and searches.

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK HEAD START PROVIDERS

Program information

- Please describe your program. Do you have home-based, center-based, family child care, half-day or full day programs, year-round?
- How many refugee families are currently served by your program?

Community assessments

- Are refugees currently included in your community assessment?
- Are refugee families included in your program’s selection criteria?

Family engagement

- What are the ways that families participate in your program? Can families participate while on the waiting list?

Community Partnerships

- Do you currently partner with any community organizations that can help with understanding the cultural backgrounds of refugees and immigrants?
- Do you currently partner with any community organizations for translation and interpretation services?
- Do you currently partner with any community organizations to support adults with English or GED classes?
- How do you help families access job training and/or gain employment?

How can we collaborate to support young refugee children and families?

Please visit <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/> for more information about Head Start and early childhood development.

To find an EHS/HS program in your area, please visit <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices/>.

Early Head Start/Head Start Providers: Talking Points

For engaging Refugee Resettlement programs

What should Head Start programs know about Refugee Resettlement?

- **Refugees are people who would prefer to return home but cannot due to persecution.** While most immigrants choose to leave their homes and come to the United States, refugees flee their homes fearing harm. As a humanitarian gesture by the United States government, a certain number of refugees are invited into the country each year.
- **Refugees have varied backgrounds:**
 - **Education:** Some have college or professional degrees while others have limited formal education and may not be literate in their own languages.
 - **Family connections:** Some come with or join extended family and community networks in the United States while others arrive alone. Families have often lost members during war or the migration process, and some children may arrive with extended family or unrelated adults caring for them.
 - **English ability:** Some have studied English before they arrive while most work hard to learn a new language.
 - **Adjustment:** Some adjust quickly to their new lives in the U.S. while others struggle to overcome the trauma of war or the challenges of adapting to a new culture.
- **All refugees resettling in the U.S. hope to find safety, stability and opportunity.** A warm welcome, including culturally relevant services, can help them start to feel at home again.
- **The vast majority of refugees adjusts successfully and contributes economically and socially in many ways.** Well-known refugees include Albert Einstein and Madeleine Albright, the first woman to be United States Secretary of State.

For more information about the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program, refugee populations and the organizations that serve them, please visit BRYCS' "About Refugees" page: <http://www.brycs.org/aboutRefugees/>.

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROVIDERS

Program information

- Describe the services you provide.
- On average, how many refugee children 5 years and under do you resettle each year?
- Which refugee groups are currently resettling in this area? Can you tell me about their general backgrounds and any special needs that families might have?
- What kind of childcare arrangements do refugee families typically use here?

Early childhood services

- Do you currently educate refugee families about early childhood development and education? About EHS/HS?
- Do you currently refer refugee families to EHS/HS or other early childhood services?
- Are you aware of other agencies or volunteers that help enroll refugee families in EHS/HS programs?
- Do you currently work with agencies that can help provide you with information about early childhood development and education?

Community partnerships

- Do you have the capacity to provide interpretation and translation services to mainstream agencies, such as EHS/HS programs? If not, do you know agencies that do?
- Do you provide or partner with other agencies that provide adult refugees with vocational training, English or GED classes? Do you provide or refer for employment services?

How can we collaborate to support young refugee children and families?