

What Now? Post-High School, College & Career Readiness for Refugee Youth

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Objectives

- Gain insight into ways to prepare refugee students for college and career
- Acquire information on ways to involve refugee parents
- Learn about promising practices among programs serving refugee youth transitioning to college and careers

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Working with students approaching the end of high school:

- Help students understand the variety of options open to them:
 - 2 or 4 year colleges
 - Technical/vocational programs
 - Dual enrollment and other career training programs
- Provide mentorship
 - Community connection
 - One on one assistance with application processes
- Encourage teens to stay in school



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Preparation for college:

- Help teens think through career options and steps to get there
- Find or host bilingual programs on the college admissions process. This could be provided by local colleges.
- Other ways to partner with local colleges:
 - As part of ELL classes, visit the local community college
 - Invite former ELL students who are now in 2 or 4 year colleges to speak
 - If your local community college has an international student or ELL center, find out what they offer
- Consider existing programs such as AVID and early college high school
- Don't rule out advanced college prep courses
 - Parents may need help advocating for their children to be enrolled
 - ELL students may still be able to participate in advanced math courses

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Involving parents:

- o Host information sessions for parents.
- o Invite refugee or immigrant parents who have gone through the process to speak
- o Help parents understand the timeline for college applications and how that will impact their child
- o Parent centers within the school
- o Use Refugee School Impact funds for parent liaisons, etc.




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Career readiness:

- o Help teens explore local job training options
- o Assist students to enroll in CTE programs; joint CTE and ELL programs can be very helpful
- o Part time jobs can help newcomer students gain workplace skills and improve English
- o Military service




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Promising Practice:



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Shaina Holm
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Global Leaders



Mariel Sanchez
Program Manager:
Global Scholars

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About PAIR

Our mission: Empower refugee youth to navigate American society, reach their academic potential, and become community leaders through educational mentoring programs.

11 years supporting refugee youth in Houston, TX

400+ students with 200+ volunteers

Learners – middle school after-school program

- Social & emotional skills, English language acquisition, homework help
- After-school group mentoring and in-school individual mentoring

Leaders – high school after-school program

- Social & emotional skills, English language acquisition, schoolwork/homework help
- Leadership development, college access & future planning

Scholars - community-based program for Juniors and seniors

- Career exploration, preparation for post-secondary education

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High School Programs

Global Leaders

- Two high school sites, ~40 students/site
- Twice weekly after school sessions
- Group mentoring facilitated by volunteer college students
- Each session has incorporated team and relationship building activities to support community
- College access topics covered:
 - o Familiarization with physical school and offices of important admin staff
 - o Graduation requirements
 - o Standardized Tests
 - o College 101 (community, public, private, trade)
 - o Majors, degrees, and careers
 - o Keeping track of extra curriculars for college applications
 - o Summer Opportunities
 - o Application and email etiquette
- Relevant social and emotional topics
 - o Identity, traditions, goals, coping with stress, handling emotions, role models







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High School Programs

Global Scholars

- Community-based; 25-30 students from three high schools
- Individual mentoring: adult volunteers are paired with one student for one year
- Staff support students with individualized, intensive college access case management
- Activities focus on:
 - Building organization and time management skills
 - Researching post-secondary education programs and careers
 - Preparing for standardized tests
 - Creating a resume
 - Applying for college
 - Writing personal statements
 - Completing financial aid and scholarship applications
 - Professionalism, email, and interview etiquette
 - Financial literacy
 - Transitioning to college



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Challenges

- Diverse students with diverse needs
- Individualized program is resource intensive: time, transportation, staff capacity
- Systemic issues in public schools, in addition to college admissions and financial aid processes
- College access material is tedious
- Limited ability to change academic and standardized testing performance
- Reliance on volunteers
- Limited family support



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What Works

- Internal and external relationships: PAIR team, schools, refugee agencies, college access organizations, scholarship donors, other service providers
- Community building in programs
- Student-oriented curriculum: flexible and engaging
- Careful volunteer screening, training, and supervision
- Active home outreach
- Monitoring and evaluation systems to measure student and program progress
- Holistic approach to educational activities: learning and having fun!



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Promising Practice: Patient Transport Program

A partnership between Bethany Christian Services URM Program and Spectrum Health Hospital in Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Program Overview

- Patient transport staff are responsible for transporting all patients to and from examinations and treatments within the hospital
 - Field is moving toward requiring certification for this role
- 10 week training program consisting of two parts:
 - Classroom-based learning facilitated by certified BCS staff member
 - Hands-on internship at the hospital
- Formal application process and required interview
 - 10 slots were available

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Eligibility Requirements

- Affiliated with BCS URM Program, either as a current client or a recently discharged client
- 18 years or older
- High School diploma or GED preferred, but eligibility was extended to young adults who were on track to receive a GED
- Ability to read and write in English at an 8th grade level
- Basic computer skills (ie: use of internet, email, Microsoft Word)
- Ability to transport a minimum of a 200 lbs patient on a stretcher alone, and able to lift equipment and supplies weighing up to 60 lbs

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Mutually Beneficial

URM Participants/BCS

- Learn soft job skills, interpersonal skills, responsibility, and strong work ethic
- Opportunity for hands on learning through an internship
- Earn National Certification providing job stability and opportunities for advancement

Build community relationships

Spectrum Health

- Aid in the development of program participants entering the workforce
- Leverage recruiting power
- Diversify workforce
- Eliminate 4-6 week training period for new hires

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Outcomes & Lessons Learned

- Limited time was allotted for recruiting applicants prior to the start of candidate interviews
 - With only 15 applicants and 10 available slots, a few youth were accepted into the program who barely met eligibility
- 7/10 participants were offered positions at Spectrum Health Hospital at the end of the certification program
 - Regardless of whether youth were hired or not, all participants acquired important job skills.
- The program piloted in 2013, but was not offered again
 - Relationship was maintained by individuals at BCS and Spectrum Health, rather than being embedded in the organizations themselves

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Recommendations for Replication

- Draw from the connections of your staff, foster parents, and volunteers.
- Seek out networking opportunities in your community to learn more about other like-minded organizations and organizations needing to fill a void.
- Research local training programs that your clients may be eligible for and initiate a conversation. Be sure to also ask how you can help them!
- Ensure that various staff members from your agency are engaged in every meaningful partnership in order to minimize risk in instances of staff turnover.

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Questions?



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*Models are used for illustrative purposes

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