



Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services

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New Americans and Child Protection: Collaborative Efforts to Keep New American Children Safe in Their Home and in Their Community

By The International Institute
St. Louis, MO

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BRYCS is a project of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) 1-888-572-6500/ info@brycs.org/ www.brycs.org



Refuge Staffing: Monthly meetings between the International Institute and Children's Division to share information and problem solve when there are families known to both Agencies.

Child Protection and Refugee Workgroup:

Problem solving group to work on situations that create problems for New American families.

Boy Scout/Cub Scout and Brownie/Girl Scout Troops formed to work with New American children. Leadership provided by Children's Division and the International Institute. Provides wholesome activities that are both fun while teaching valuable skills to help them succeed in their new country.

Child Protection Forms translated into eight different languages so New Americans can understand the disposition of their hotline report in their native language. "What Language Do You Speak?" identification form has been developed for Child Protection workers.



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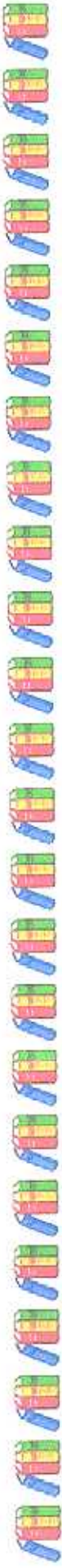
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NEW AMERICANS AND CHILD PROTECTION

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS
TO KEEP NEW AMERICAN
CHILDREN SAFE IN THEIR HOME
AND IN THEIR COMMUNITY



A Vietnamese Mother was letting her young children run unsupervised across a busy St. Louis street. When this was addressed with the mother, her response was that they had been taught to "dodge land mines", the last thing she was worried about was them crossing the street.



Child protection workers and refugee providers have often been at odds in their quest to provide both prevention and protective services to New American children. The Children's Division is working within the Child Protection laws. New American families come from cultures where parenting techniques differ from American laws.

In St. Louis City, the International Institute and the Children's Division have formed a strong multidisciplinary response when child protection is needed.

There are sometimes misunderstandings between the two disciplines and it's in everyone's best interest to form a relationship so these differences can be worked out amicably. **It can start with one person at each agency developing a rapport with someone at the other discipline.** Problems can then be addressed through liaison.



Child protection people need to develop staff with expertise and interest in working with New Americans. This can be done through training, joint visiting, staffings, discussions and experience in handling hotline reports on New Americans. Hiring staff who are from refugee cultures is also very helpful. Staff who handle hotline reports on New Americans need to be sensitive and often handpicked because of their experience and interest. Random assignment of these hotlines will not work.

Refugee service providers need to understand child protection roles and responsibilities and the laws and definitions of child abuse and neglect. They need to understand their role in the process and how they can help. Many refugee service providers are bi-cultural and are unclear about the C.A./N laws. Training, shadowing, staffings, discussion, and getting to know child protection workers will help achieve this.



Initiatives

Joint hotline response: when a child abuse hotline report has been made on a refugee family, the hotline investigator and a refugee social worker, along with an interpreter respond together to investigate and assess the report.

Cross Training: The Children's Division has received training on cultural issues and how that affects child protection and child safety as well as training on how to work with an interpreter. The International Institute has received training on child protection, how to identify abuse and neglect and then how to report and respond when it happens.

Ride Along Program: Child protection workers shadow International Institute workers in their jobs and Refugee Providers shadow child abuse investigators so that both staff have a better understanding of each others' work and responsibilities.

