



Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services

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## Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriage Program: Implementation & Best Practices Manual

By USCCB

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UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS  
OFFICE OF MIGRATION AND REFUGEE SERVICES



*Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriage Program*

# IMPLEMENTATION & BEST PRACTICES MANUAL

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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
Background .....	1
Family- and Marriage-Strengthening Initiative .....	2
Goals of This Manual .....	3
<b>1. Curricula</b> .....	5
Family Wellness .....	6
Power of Two .....	6
Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) .....	6
Adapting a Curriculum .....	7
Curriculum and Staffing .....	8
<b>2. Challenges, Successes, Implications</b> .....	9
Recruitment and Retention .....	9
Collaboration .....	10
Funding .....	11
Language .....	11
Evaluation .....	12
Finding Staff .....	12
Meeting Space .....	13
Administrative Support .....	13
Schedules .....	14
Cultural Differences and Acculturation .....	14
Transportation .....	15
<b>3. Staffing</b> .....	17
Essential Qualities for All Staff .....	17
Internal Refugee Staff .....	18
Staff With Qualifications in Other Fields .....	19

---

Additional Staff Roles .....	21
Building a Team .....	23
<b>4. Promising Practices .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Flexible Curriculum .....	28
Volunteers .....	29
Recruiting Staff .....	30
Collaboration .....	30
Incentives .....	31
Involving Men .....	31
Evaluation and Feedback .....	32
Group Format .....	32
Preparation .....	33
Recruitment .....	34
Central Support .....	34
<b>5. Contact Information .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>6. Resource List .....</b>	<b>43</b>
Curriculum Materials .....	43
Information About Refugees .....	44
Program Development .....	45

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# INTRODUCTION

Service providers in many cities across the United States are developing a new and exciting initiative of family- and marriage-strengthening services for refugees. Although the U.S. government has funded resettlement and placement (R&P) services, along with services related to immediate basic needs, for many years, the education and mental health needs of refugees as they adjust generally have not been acknowledged or understood until recently, nor have services been available to address those needs. Refugees as a group are exceptionally resourceful and resilient people, but they have suffered severe trauma and are coping with intergenerational cross-cultural stress without ongoing assistance. Those strains inevitably begin to show in the form of family disruption. Although mainstream social services have offered various resources and collaborations, family- and marriage-strengthening services for refugees are essentially a new effort that is still being developed.

This manual reviews programs that have broken new ground in providing services over the past 3 years. Its goal is to offer ideas and resources to strengthen existing family- and marriage-strengthening services and help new programs add these innovative services to their existing work with refugee families.

## Background

Refugees and other immigrants have changed the face of America in the past 20 years as an increasing variety of ethnic groups have arrived and settled in communities large and small. Refugees come from countries to which they cannot return because of a “credible fear of persecution” resulting from their ethnicity, religion, or political beliefs. They come here having survived unimaginable trauma to themselves and their families. They often have lived in several other countries, either in refugee camps or other temporary locations, which can be incredibly stressful on families, couples, and children. After a long screening process under the auspices of the United Nations, they are given refugee status and resettled to a new country, where they create a new home. Some refugees come to the United States to join other family members, but many arrive as “free cases,” without family or friends. They are referred to a U.S. city and a resettlement agency whose staff or volunteers meet them at the airport; find housing and employment for them; provide basic “cultural orientation” to U.S. customs, rules, and responsibilities; and assist them in locating resources such as schools and medical services. Resettlement agencies also provide minimal financial assistance for up to 180 days to help refugees become self-sufficient, productive residents of their new country.

In addition to this basic assistance, newly arriving refugees are introduced to community volunteers and cultural and religious organizations, which continue to help them along their path of resettlement. Few ongoing emotionally supportive services have been provided over the years, even though the acculturation process, parenting, and children’s rapid Americanization and other stresses often create family turmoil and increased family breakdown and isolation. Until recently, language and cultural differences were considered insurmountable barriers to offering mainstream social services to refugee families struggling with these issues.

Refugees are enthusiastic and grateful for the initial assistance they receive; at first glance, they seem to settle easily into their new life. Many people have observed the astounding success of the many refugees who are able to start businesses, provide a home for their family (sometimes buying a house), and raise children who excel in school—all by starting in low-paying jobs. Those accomplishments have obscured the extent to which refugees need supportive services. As refugees experience emotional fallout from past trauma and loss, they often become frustrated and alienated from their communities, their peers, and their Americanized children. These subsequent emotional challenges may create periods of depression and an inability to cope successfully with new situations. Many refugee children embrace American culture and may feel caught between two irreconcilable ways of life.

Each refugee group brings different experiences of trauma and transition as well as different cultural norms regarding family and community structure and practices. Many come from groups with authority-oriented cultures and are unprepared for the individualistic values and stresses of American life. Refugee children, however, tend to adopt American culture, language, and values and quickly become accustomed to their new surroundings. If a family's cultural values and family decision-making processes include extended family and clan members and emphasize a male-dominated hierarchical structure, conflict often results. American dating customs, for instance, are an occasion for great family stress and division. Similarly, when women are employed outside the home, roles of men and women often become severely strained because expectations of household responsibilities, female caretaking, and submission are challenged. Some cultures practice multiple marriages, which are not accepted in the United States. Many other core family customs differ from expectations in the United States and present challenges both to refugee families and to their American service providers, teachers, health providers, and law enforcers. Often, the source of conflict is not understood on either side.

Further complicating understanding on the part of service providers, the ethnic composition of refugee groups changes from year to year. Groups that come from agrarian and isolated societies within their home countries often have cultural and linguistic traits that differ vastly from those of American culture.

## Family- and Marriage-Strengthening Initiative

A new understanding of the refugee experience has emerged, leading to the realization that new educational approaches are needed to help refugee families succeed in the United States over the long term. Service providers now know more about the ongoing effects of trauma and intergenerational conflict among refugees. It upsets parents that their children are growing up without experiencing the old customs and, in most cases, without truly understanding the trauma of having to flee the home country. Refugees who arrive from countries that have been less exposed to Western customs and lifestyles face additional acculturation challenges. Anyone who spends time with refugees is forever changed by their stories and awed by their resilience and ability to manage the transition to a new culture. It does not detract in any way from those strengths to recognize that a refugee family, like any other family, may be overwhelmed by its problems. Those problems often become more evident and pressing years past a family's successful initial resettlement in the United States.

In 2002 the Healthy Marriages Initiative of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), piloted the Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages (SRFM) education program to “improve the well-being of children and families,” especially that of low-income children, by providing support for services to strengthen marriages and two-parent families. The HHS Initiative is focused on providing skills-based education to help couples who have chosen to marry gain access to marriage education services, on a voluntary basis,

to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain a healthy marriage. The ACF Healthy Marriage Initiative encourages all programs to collaborate and coordinate with domestic violence services providers in their local area. The SRFM programs are not domestic violence programs, but they are all asked to be aware of their local domestic violence service provider. All the programs have domestic violence protocols and are aware of the special, specific needs of domestic violence victims.

Through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), pilot projects were funded for programs developed by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Office of Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS). Several sites across the United States piloted marriage and family education curricula for refugees. The classes emphasized skills-based education on topics such as communication, listening, conflict resolution, and problem solving. The programs used several curricula, formats, and innovative approaches, and they incorporated opportunities to learn from refugees themselves by using community resources and other strategies to meet the needs of different refugee populations. Since 2003, several other organizations have joined the effort to provide this valuable family education. Each organization has taken its own approach to providing services to strengthen refugee families.

This manual reviews programs developed by USCCB/MRS at 11 sites, and it provides in-depth descriptions of four programs that were visited and observed by the manual's author. Additional information is included about services offered by HIAS and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS). The programs described in this manual were developed over the past 4 years under the pilot and original SRFM grants described above. As ACF proceeds into new grant cycles, the emphasis on marriage has been strengthened, and it is not yet clear how planning for refugee services will be affected. In any case, the experience and lessons learned from these groundbreaking programs will be helpful to all who want to provide family-strengthening services to newcomers. They also will be instructive to organizations and programs seeking to expand funding sources and collaborations.

## Goals of This Manual

The goals of this manual are as follows:

- To provide information about the refugee family- and marriage-strengthening initiative and educational programs developed
- To describe various approaches taken in specific sites
- To give information and guidance about challenges of these new services and the sites' responses
- To suggest some basic strategies for developing SRFM programs, based on lessons learned from current programs
- To provide information about resources for service providers developing new programs or augmenting existing services.

The manual is intended to provide ideas and resources to encourage communities with refugee populations to offer family- and marriage-strengthening education to refugees who may be struggling with their family's adjustment. Refugees' history of trauma and ongoing cultural adjustment, as well as their great resiliency, call for special approaches to this education.

Refugee services have usually been provided separately from mainstream social services in the United States, largely as a result of the belief that cultural and language barriers would be insurmountable. Another prevailing belief has been that separate social services staff would be needed and that refugees have a general resistance to services that require



them to discuss family issues with outsiders. Results to date of the SRFM programs suggest otherwise, however, and indicate that more integrated and flexible refugee services can, in fact, be effective and well received. Mainstream social service resources and group skills have proven valuable when serving refugees in an informed culturally sensitive format. This manual describes approaches to family- and marriage-strengthening education ranging from incorporation into traditional refugee resettlement programs to innovative formats independent of any social services agency.

The manual is designed to share ideas and contact information among service providers and communities already providing family- and marriage-strengthening education for refugees. It is also intended to help organizations that are initiating a new program. This manual is intended to serve as a resource not only for traditional refugee programs but also for mainstream family- and marriage-education programs expanding their offerings to other communities. The focus is on educational services with the recognition that refugees need many other essential services and that educational services can never be entirely separated from ongoing acculturation assistance.

Chapter 6 offers other information that can help craft a response to unique community needs. No magic formula will meet the family- and marriage-education needs of all refugees in all communities.

Programs should be creative, get to know and learn from the refugees in the community, and use the resources at hand to offer refugees the best of what mainstream services have to offer while enabling them to share their own cultural gifts. It is hoped that the ideas and experiences of these pioneer programs will stimulate ideas for creating the services most appropriate to the needs and resources within readers' own communities.

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# CURRICULA

## 1. Curricula

The three most commonly used curricula in the SRFM programs are Power of Two, Family Wellness, and Prevention and Relationship Education Program (PREP). These and several other national curricula are currently being used and adapted by sites in the USCCB, LIRS, and HIAS partnerships. Local programs adapt the curricula on the basis of cultural factors and the particular needs of program participants; they often combine segments of different curricula depending on the nationalities attending and preferred styles of teaching program components. The Illinois Refugee Family Strengthening Project has published an adaptation of the Power of Two curriculum, which specifically addresses issues such as the need to engage refugee participants in a discussion of cultural differences in communication styles and family roles and to incorporate culturally appropriate examples for discussion.

Note that none of the sites surveyed use a curriculum in its entirety or exclusive of other resources. Existing national curricula were developed for American-born, primarily middle-class families. They required distinct adaptations for use with refugee families, even those who have been in the United States for many years. They almost always require translation or interpretation. In addition, the SRFM program, in its current format, requires a minimum of 4 hours attendance, whereas most curricula were developed for a considerably longer number of sessions. For SRFM programs, a shorter service period was negotiated to accommodate refugees' availability and work schedules.

In addition to the need to tailor a curriculum to meet the shorter time frame, it often is necessary to streamline it further to include cultural adaptation and extensive discussion of topics and ideas that are unfamiliar to certain cultures. For instance, American laws regarding child abuse, domestic violence and the expectation of parental involvement in schools are often puzzling and an unwelcome change from refugees' home culture. Facilitators may have to explain these American ways and the consequences to parents and their children if they continue with physical punishment or do not respond to requests to interact with school personnel. Other practices, such as establishing credit, marriage laws, and looking at a person who is talking to you, are new cultural norms to some ethnic groups.

Even when refugees have been in the United States for several years, they often continue to grapple with acculturation issues that are not included in basic curricula. One of the most pressing issues for many refugee groups is parenting. Intergenerational and intercultural parenting issues involve American laws about physical discipline of children; stresses that arise when older children want to follow American friendship and dating practices; and role reversals, which occur when parents have to depend on their children for interpretation and community contact. Families usually face increased conflict involving gender roles. Male–female roles become severely strained as women go to work, are not as available for traditional homemaking and hospitality roles, and want to become more involved in decisions about the family and finances, as in the American style. In contrast, recently arrived refugee families are dealing with basic survival needs, such as jobs and housing, and are struggling with past trauma, which is still raw and unresolved. For those participants, group topics might center on basic issues such as identifying community resources.

Note, too, that SRFM programs focus on the American standard of monogamous marital relationships, but many refugees bring cultural traditions of multiple marriages and experiences of single parenting (from losses during a war or subsequent divorce). Many groups include participants who are not married or do not attend as couples because of

culture, religion, or custom or simply because of conflicting work schedules and child care needs. All the groups observed in preparing this manual included many single refugees as well as married refugees and couples attending together.

Following are brief summaries of the three most commonly used curricula in SRFM programs along with reasons for their selection by program staff. Keep in mind that no one curriculum is used exclusive of other resources. All provide intensive, detailed training for facilitators, and facilitators in all sites have received certified training in at least one curriculum. All programs cover four core topics of communication, listening, conflict resolution, and problem solving.

## Family Wellness

Developed by therapists drawing on family systems theory, the Family Wellness curriculum focuses on “survival skills for healthy families.” Techniques such as coaching and role-playing teach skills and “rules.” The curriculum emphasizes modeling, group interaction, and facilitators’ use of their own experience. Family Wellness is the most widely used curriculum among the USCCB sites.

Programs that use Family Wellness as their main curriculum cited the following strengths:

- Adaptable to different cultures and family structures
- Accepted by elders in refugee communities
- Emphasizes the whole family, with a strong focus on roles for parents
- Flexible: program authors encourage facilitators to adapt the curriculum
- Emphasizes useful skills, including interactive techniques.

## Power of Two

Power of Two is a marriage-strengthening curriculum. Susan Heitler, the author, worked with Tatyana Fertelmeyster, coordinator of the Illinois Refugee Family Strengthening Project, Jewish Family and Community Service, to produce an adaptation for refugee populations. The 2003 adapted version begins with a segment called “Coming to America as a Couple/Family” and focuses on the marital relationship. It provides succinct rules, such as “say it,” and structured exercises using “situation cards” followed by discussion.

Programs that use Power of Two as their main curriculum cited the following strengths:

- Availability of a refugee-adapted version
- Focus on marital relationship skills
- Good curriculum components on conflict resolution and anger management
- Emphasis on educational skills development rather than a therapeutic approach
- Most widely used among HIAS sites.

## Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP)

PREP was developed on the basis of research in the field of marital health conducted over a 25-year period at the University of Denver. The program focuses on teaching skills designed to limit conflict in the marital relationship and, ultimately, divorce.

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Programs that use PREP cite the following strengths:

- Focuses on the importance of marriage
- Encourages discussion of values and spirituality
- Flexible enough to deal with cultural issues and events
- Provides practical information and exercises to reinforce skills taught.

## Adapting a Curriculum

How a local curriculum is configured depends on a number of factors:

- The refugee population being served, its family and community patterns, and expressed needs
- The length of time refugees have been in the United States; long-term families tend to focus on intergenerational conflict, and new arrivals generally focus on basic needs
- The particular background and training of facilitators.

Collaborating with ethnic group leaders and researching the refugee populations within the community are necessary initial tasks. It is important to understand the cultural traditions and values of each ethnic group, family structures and style of communication and learning, and traditional roles of family members (especially male–female roles). Making alliances with elders and other community leaders to develop an individualized outreach and recruitment plan in the community will place program development on the right footing.

Programs surveyed commonly added the following components in response to questions raised by participants and group discussion:

- General information on resources for family skills and cultural orientation to life in the United States
- Information about parenting, intergenerational conflict, and child discipline
- Information about U.S. laws concerning child abuse, domestic violence, immigration status, and fatherhood responsibilities
- Health resources and information
- Financial management education and information about credit cards, banking, budgeting, saving, and paying bills
- Resources and information on the U.S. education system, including schools' and teachers' expectations related to parent roles, homework, and student behavior.

Topics are added by inviting local guest speakers, such as teachers or law enforcement personnel, to speak to groups and answer their questions. This approach serves the dual purpose of making local organizations more accessible to refugees and helping the speaker understand the needs and personal strengths of refugees, who often are reluctant to approach U.S. organizations and authority figures for assistance. The guest-speaker approach invites dialogue and builds a sense of mutual respect in addressing immediate and emerging refugee needs.

In addition, facilitators often select one or two sections of a different curriculum to enhance the primary curriculum, such as the anger management sections from *Power of Two* or the communication skills section from *Family Wellness*.

## Curriculum and Staffing

Before implementing a family- and marriage-strengthening program, organizations must articulate their own goals in the two fundamental program components of curriculum and staffing.

### **Curriculum**

Once the basic program goals are clearly defined (e.g., strengthening marriages, teaching communication skills) a firm understanding of the population is necessary to identify who will be participating in the program. For example, if married couples will usually attend together, PREP may be the most appropriate curriculum; in contrast, when only one member of a couple will likely attend or the group will consist primarily of widows, singles, and divorced participants, another curriculum may be more appropriate. It may be helpful to review the strengths of the three commonly used curricula listed earlier.

The curriculum selected will determine the style of classes and the focus of information given to participants. For example, if the program wants to include the whole family in some sessions, the most suitable curriculum might be Family Wellness, but if the emphasis is on the marital relationship, the PREP curriculum might be best. Remember that the topic emphasis is only one factor in choosing a curriculum; the other is the refugee population in your community. Does the community consist primarily of married couples? Will they attend separately from each other? Will they bring their children? What is their view of marriage and family life? Agency staff should answer these and other questions when planning a program.

### **Staffing**

The skills and commitment of facilitators, as well as the support facilitators receive from colleagues and supervisors, are the most significant ingredients for program success. Among the programs surveyed, two basic styles of staffing emerged. Some programs are staffed by people whose most important qualifications were that they are part of the refugee community, understand the culture and the language, and are aware of or have experienced the problems refugees face in adapting to life in this country. Other programs are staffed by people who have little or no experience working with refugees yet are highly trained and experienced in working with groups in an educational or therapeutic format. Such staff work in teams with interpreters or case managers who share the language and culture of refugee participants.

Either model can be effective if the facilitator brings cultural sensitivity, good communication skills (including nonverbal skills); strong interpersonal skills; effective groupwork capabilities; and a warm, caring attitude grounded in a strong commitment to helping refugees succeed. Whatever curriculum is chosen, remember that staffing plays an integral role in the success of a program. Even the best curriculum will not work with the wrong staff, but good staff can make most any curriculum work.

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## 2. Challenges, Successes, Implications

Staff in the SRFM programs have faced similar struggles throughout their program history, and everyone surveyed cited several of the same challenges. Many programs developed creative strategies to handle those challenges and have learned from each other. Most solutions to program challenges inevitably come back to the creativity, sensitivity, and flexibility of staff and their ability to build a collaborative team.

This section identifies and addresses the following challenges identified in interviews, observation, or both:

- Recruitment and retention
- Collaboration
- Funding
- Language
- Evaluation
- Finding staff
- Meeting space
- Administrative support
- Schedules
- Cultural differences and acculturation
- Transportation.

### Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment challenges differ depending on whether the target groups are newly arriving refugees or those who have been in the United States for several years. In either case, personal contact (preferably home visits or face-to-face conversation) by the facilitators seems to be the single most effective recruitment strategy. To recruit recent arrivals, if the facilitator is not a member of the R&P staff, it is important to establish a strong relationship with someone who is able to provide names and addresses of the arriving refugees. Case managers generally are too busy to do this, but an administrative support person might provide the inside information needed to connect with newly arriving refugees. If groups are provided for newly arriving refugees, the best support will be from the case managers because they have an essential role with the refugees and are people whom the refugees themselves trust and rely on for information and guidance.

A successful program, of course, depends on participant recruitment and retention. Facilitators must demonstrate genuine caring for participants' needs by listening to them and providing useful information and support. Group observation revealed that communicating a listening and caring attitude was not necessarily related to language but had more to do with the facilitator's skills and ability to involve participants in meaningful group discussions.

Many programs expressed difficulty in getting men to attend the sessions. The willingness of men to attend varied among different nationalities. It was encouraging that the groups included Bosnian, Turkish, Somali, Liberian, Sudanese, and Rwandan single and married men who actively participated. Often the key to increasing male participation is in

obtaining the approval and support of elders and leaders throughout the refugee community. Once that has been established, men throughout the community feel that their role and authority in the group has been established. Therefore, exploring male–female dynamics, roles, and customs in the United States is not less threatening, especially when the facilitator demonstrates understanding of the group’s traditional roles and supports their struggle to adapt.

Sometimes recruitment is facilitated by relationships with schools, health clinics, and other refugee service providers. Refugees, like their U.S. counterparts, are committed to their children doing well. If their children are getting support for acculturation in the schools, parents often are receptive to attending groups themselves when they think doing so may help their children’s development and success. Cleveland and other sites, for example, provide programs for children in schools. When the parents are pleased with the help their children receive in the groups, they are more receptive to attending adult SRFM groups.

Recruitment is especially challenging for refugees who have been in the United States for several years. Refugees in that category tend to be more scattered and to have developed more complicated schedules. Yet, reaching them is crucial because they most likely have begun to experience the kind of pressures that disrupt marital and family relationships. When a program is allied with refugee community leadership and some participants have found the curriculum and facilitation helpful, refugees will spread the word, and attendance will become steadier. Using this strategy, one program has had to develop a waiting list.

R&P program staff often have contacts within long-term refugee communities because they themselves have arrived with those cohorts. Such staff can help spread information about the SRFM groups. Some programs have developed effective referral networks using coordinators, facilitators, refugee elders and leaders, interpreters, and volunteers; this team approach allows recruitment to go in many directions at once.

## Collaboration

Collaboration on all levels is essential to recruitment and to providing effective and useful services. However, programs often stumbled with developing and establishing effective collaborative relationships with refugee leaders and other refugee service providers, including the resettlement program within their own agencies on occasion. Many case managers frequently feel overburdened, and the additional responsibility of an SRFM program appears to be the least of their concern. In addition, case managers sometimes believe that refugee families do not need or want family-strengthening services.

Finding a way into the communication channels of the established refugee community may require forming independent relationships in the community as well as gaining acceptance by the larger agency. Recruitment is more challenging when the sponsoring organization or agency does not embrace and fully support the program. Nevertheless, strong networking skills are essential and will be rewarded in the long run, as we observed in St. Louis, where the facilitator joined a group of providers of services to the Bosnian community and developed relationships with many Bosnian leaders. If a referral network must be created from scratch, it may delay development of collaborations and scheduling of the initial classes, but it is by no means an insurmountable barrier to program success.

The challenges of acceptance and collaboration are two sides of the same coin. Collaboration generates acceptance through staff demonstrating a genuine desire to work together to meet the needs of the refugees. Collaboration by

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definition is an equal partnership in which all parties are able to see value in what the other brings and are not threatened or patronized by the collaborative work.

The strength and breadth of the collaborative process contribute significantly to building a strong program. Effective collaboration improves relationships on many levels: between the facilitator and refugee community leadership; among other program staff; and among program staff and translators, volunteers, and other refugee service providers in the community. For example, it is important that respected members of the refugee community know about and understand SRFM as a program that seeks to strengthen their role in their new home, not as something that will expect or force them to change or give up their own cultural traditions. Likewise, the refugees need to feel that they have an advocate for helping them identify and understand how to work with community services, schools, and health services. The program cannot ignore that at any point in resettlement, a refugee will have questions and concerns about getting services and understanding American institutions. If the community and refugees do not see the program as being responsive to their dilemmas and embarrassments, they may see the program as irrelevant to their “real life” and a waste of time.

It is important that facilitators and coordinators take the time to build healthy relationships with resettlement staff and ensure that they understand the goals and purpose of the program. Be clear that the SRFM in no way is intended to compete with their services or add an extra burden to their work. Establishing positive relationships with the resettlement staff is crucial; otherwise, recruitment strategies may be unintentionally undermined. Many programs offer SRFM curriculum training to resettlement staff; doing so enhances skills for working with challenging clients and families in their everyday work and gives staff a firsthand experience of the program. Many staff welcome the opportunity to provide input and understand what the program is all about.

## Funding

Funding is a hurdle for every social service program, especially a new one. Funding for refugee services takes two forms. One form is a subsidy from a larger agency (for example, Catholic Charities) that is able or willing to give from discretionary funds. The second form is community fundraising and grants.

Refugee services often have been viewed as self-sufficient and restricted to the special services funded by ORR and USCCB. That perspective is starting to change as refugees become a larger part of the U.S. population and organizations that serve them increasingly become eligible for funds for “at-risk” or minority populations. As the SRFM programs develop and experience success, it is hoped that they will become a regular part of ORR’s discretionary funding. Some programs already have been able to identify local foundations and other funding sources to support SRFM, particularly if the larger agency is involved in program implementation and management.

To gain access to other sources of funding, it is usually necessary to work within the fundraising and grantwriting plans and priorities of the larger agency. When program staff build a strong relationship with the agency’s administration, it helps administrators see the value of the program in the context of both the community served and the agency’s priorities.

## Language

Many programs cited language as a barrier, but observations of the programs found it not to be as large a barrier as expected. Several programs operated successfully without native-speaking facilitators through the use of well-trained

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translators. Refugee communities that have been in the United States for a year or more may not need as much translation because participants have become comfortable communicating in English.

When an interpreter was necessary, the groups observed were fluid and effective as long as the facilitator and interpreter were well trained and understood their specific roles. Facilitators were able to identify qualified interpreters from within the community if they had already established strong rapport with community members. Other common sources of locating interpreters were through universities, health care systems, other social services, and school systems. An important element to success is finding an interpreter who meets the standards discussed in Chapter 3 and who can work regularly with the same facilitator.

Many programs find it helpful to translate the curriculum or key components into handouts for participants. The usefulness of this approach depends on whether participants are literate in their own language or English and whether the culture is able to use or is used to using written materials as learning tools. Understanding cultural learning styles helps with tailoring program tools and teaching techniques. For example, many African cultures rely almost exclusively on learning through verbal participation; therefore, skits, oral practice, and discussion are the most useful techniques for these participants.

## Evaluation

Most programs want an objective view of whether their services are really helping refugees. Although the number of participants is an indication of success, it is not always easy to determine what is making a difference in the lives of participants and their families. Ongoing program evaluation is not widespread within all social service sectors, and evaluation of programs serving newcomers entails special obstacles. The National Catholic School of Social Services, the National Research Center for Children and Family Services, and USCCB, in collaboration with Catholic University of America (CUA), are developing an evaluation plan for SRFM.

In the meantime, the best evaluation available for SRFM at this time is participant feedback. In almost all programs, refugees respond most positively to the sections of the curriculum covering communication, values, and parenting. Additional indicators of program success are attendance at multiple classes and referrals of friends and family. This informal information gives some indication of what is effective in the program and provides information that the program can use to strengthen its family education services.

## Finding Staff

Many programs found it difficult to find a facilitator who has the language, cultural, and professional background required to meet all the demands and responsibilities of the job. Even though SRFM provides training in the chosen curriculum, arranging for the facilitator's training may be complicated by program changes, staff changes, and transitions. For example, curriculum training may not be available at the time a new staff member is hired.

One approach to developing staff is to build a team and have different staff share program roles and responsibilities. It seems to be much easier and more adaptable in the long run to identify part-time staff with the needed qualities and credentials rather than rely on finding one person. The team approach has other advantages: It brings together the strengths of different people and skill sets, provides support for team members, and does not put the burden of responsibility and creativity on one person. Staff who work in strong teams cited the support from team members as

being invaluable in figuring out solutions to issues that arise in developing a new program. A team also provides more flexibility when one member of the staff leaves or new nationalities are to be included.

Volunteers are significant components of program staff. Some volunteers are refugees trained in the curriculum as educators, some are VISTA volunteers, and some are community and church volunteers. They enhance the range of work that can be accomplished and can help with many areas such as recruitment, logistics, translation, child care, and transportation, depending on their talents and interests.

Additional insight on staffing can be found in Chapter 3 of this manual.

## Meeting Space

Space is a scarce commodity for any social service program providing groups. Some programs have found either that their parent agency cannot provide appropriate meeting space for groups or that the agency is not located in an accessible place for refugees. Problems with access require that the program find space that is near refugee residences or easily accessible by public transportation. This problem has been resolved in an assortment of ways.

Some programs have found that developing a closer and more informed relationship with agency administration results in better understanding and acceptance of the program and brings access to better accommodations for the groups. Others have experimented with using public places, such as schools and libraries, near or in refugee neighborhoods. That solution has the added benefit of making those places more familiar to and comfortable for refugees. A secondary benefit is that the program inevitably acquaints staff of public institutions with the refugee communities and their strengths, challenges, and assets, thereby expanding the welcoming environment.

For some cultures, especially Bosnian, it seems to work well to meet in refugees' homes. Doing so provides the comfort and strength of being on "home ground" and generally is suitable for small groups of friends, neighbors, and relatives. This approach also is beneficial when the refugee community is spread throughout the community in various neighborhoods. When this format is used, often an agreement is made that no elaborate refreshments will be provided by the homeowner or the facilitators to provide boundaries, allow the program to concentrate on the subject matter at hand, and avoid burdensome obligations for the hosts.

Another space consideration is the need for child care. In one program, groups within the agency have been able to accommodate children in the same room inside the circle of adults with less disruption than might be expected. Other program groups have asked participants to leave children with other family members or have held groups while children are at school. Still other programs have been able to obtain additional space or access to another room within an apartment to allow the children to play near their parents; infants remain with their parents in the group. When possible, programs have provided a small stipend or recruited volunteers for children to be cared for in another room while parents meet, particularly on weekends and evenings.

## Administrative Support

Several coordinators experienced a lack of support and understanding from administrative staff. Depending on how involved they were in initiating the program, administrative staff may not understand the benefits of the program

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within the broad scope and priorities of the organization's services. Family education services are new for refugees, and some administrative staff may be skeptical as to whether they are really needed or will be well received. Their attitude also may develop because the program has needs that differ from those of other agency efforts, such as interpreters, cultural sensitivity, and curriculum adaptation. Unfortunately, some staff have reported that many programs serving poor people who arrive in the agency reception area with children and other family members see the additional people as disruptive and are not welcoming. It can only be hoped that advocacy and education will eventually break through this bias. Meanwhile, the strategy that works best is to build alliances within the staff and administration that provide opportunities to observe and learn about the program. Several facilitators reported that this personal advocacy and contact opened doors to understanding and support over time.

## Schedules

At first, program developers often feel thwarted by trying to schedule groups to fit into refugee schedules. Refugees work different shifts and are overwhelmed with adjusting to new customs, transportation, and distances. Most programs experiment with different times and settle on the times that work best, usually evenings or weekend mornings. They also sometimes find that it works better to schedule one 4-hour session with a refreshment break than to require more than one session, although that approach sacrifices the opportunity for practice and feedback about what is learned. Some programs offer different schedules at different times, depending on the response of a particular nationality.

The programs observed for this manual use many different scheduling combinations, all of which worked, including one 4-hour weekend session; two 2-hour evening, daytime, or weekend sessions; and longer series of 2-hour daytime sessions. Some programs even provide individualized mentoring sessions or discussions when staff drive refugees to other services. It may sound simplistic, but to some extent it appears that once the program establishes its value among the refugee community, staff have demonstrated a thorough effort to listen to refugees' needs, and a schedule is created that appeals to many, participants will come.

## Cultural Differences and Acculturation

Cultural differences and acculturation are challenges that programs face on many levels. First is the question of staffing: Is it better (if it is even possible) to have facilitators of the same culture and language as participants, or to use professional group educators or therapists who work with interpreters? Second, each refugee group brings very different cultural backgrounds and expectations about acculturation in America. Third, people differ as to their beliefs about what acculturation means and how acculturation goals fit into SRFM education goals. The first and most basic challenge for any program, after defining its goals, is to develop a strategy for addressing each issue.

Each program examined for this manual developed a strategy with regard to these three basic challenges. The staffing pattern is probably the most critical decision in program design (see Chapter 3). Decisions about staffing must flow from and be consistent with decisions in the other two areas concerning acculturation.

There are solid reasons for preferring that refugees have a separate meeting place and program with staff of the same culture. This approach assures refugees that staff have a thorough understanding of their own culture and background because they have experienced the same trauma and now model success as American citizens or permanent residents. Some people believe that this approach is necessary to avoid pressure to leave behind cultural traditions and practices

and become “too Americanized.” Curriculum concepts and examples can best be presented by other refugees who have actually lived the choices and dilemmas presented, and refugee participants will be more accepting of the program’s new ideas if they are introduced by someone from their own culture. Finally, refugee facilitators offer powerful role models that give hope for achieving success in the United States.

Other people have found that refugees are responsive to facilitators who come from outside their culture and can interpret the American culture in depth, as long as they show real interest in and understanding of the refugees’ culture and its importance and role in their lives. They also like having an American contact and friend who makes them feel that they have a real connection and advocate in their new community. If the nonrefugee facilitator is a skilled professional and works as a team with a skilled interpreter (if needed), often the curriculum ideas can be presented more fully and group interactions managed in ways that facilitators with less experience may not be able to do. An added advantage can be the increased ability to maintain staff continuity when serving groups of different refugee nationalities.

As time goes on and these services become more established, therapists and educators of the refugees’ own nationalities will be trained in group process, as occurred at one site.

To a large extent, staffing choices are grounded in the philosophy of acculturation espoused by the agency and the program. Often this is an unspoken philosophy that may require some probing examination and discussion to ascertain, but the program will be stronger if acculturation goals are understood, agreed upon, and articulated. For example:

- To what extent should refugees be expected to adopt American ways and “fit in?”
- Should they be encouraged to stay together in residential areas where they can maintain their own language and customs?
- Should they maintain the values and culture most important to them while learning and adopting American customs that enable them to get ahead in American jobs, organizations, friendships, and education?

The last approach is a delicate and individualized balancing act, but it has the advantage of not only enriching the whole community but also strengthening refugee families by reducing alienation from their children, who inevitably look to American culture in shaping their own values.

A part of this dilemma cited by some programs is the pressure staff feel to meet the many basic needs that some refugees continue to have, even after many years in the United States. Sometimes those needs stem from disillusionment born of unrealistic expectations of life in this country. As a result, it is important that program goals be clearly defined and stated, and staff must learn how to set boundaries. In addition, staff need to be informed about other community resources and participate in collaborations that enable them to help refugees access services not available in the program.

## Transportation

Solutions to the problem of space either bring new problems of transportation or solve them. If participants have to travel to groups, most programs provide either van transportation or bus passes. If good public transportation is available in the area, it is better to provide bus passes and teach use of the bus system, because doing so promotes independence. In the observed groups, it seemed that participants were more prompt and groups started more smoothly when participants came on their own than when they were transported by others.



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# STAFFING

## 3. Staffing

A program may have the most appropriate curriculum, a ready pool of participants, the perfect meeting place, and every other element (transportation, child care, incentives) ready to go, but it is the competence and quality of staff that will make the difference between a very successful and a moderately successful program—or even the end of a program. Critical staffing considerations are outlined below, but many of the most salient staff qualities are fairly intangible. This manual includes a section on administrative staff, because it is important to hire and support effective staff who have the intangible qualities (e.g., a creative and flexible style of operating) that enable them to fit into a dynamic program.

This chapter covers the following aspects of effective and successful staffing of a refugee family- and marriage-strengthening program:

- Essential qualities for all staff
- Internal refugee services staff
- Staff with qualifications in other fields
- Additional staff roles
- Building a team.

There is no perfect system, and drawbacks often are the flip side of advantages.

### Essential Qualities for All Staff

Some of the intangible yet most necessary qualities for staff are common to staffing patterns for all social service providers: *inherent warmth and enthusiasm, cultural sensitivity, good communication skills, leadership, creativity and flexibility, and the ability to work as part of a team.* Those key qualities are not always observable in staff to provide these important and sensitive services.

The above staff strengths are particularly needed in a new program such as SRFM, which presents many challenges that are less acute in more established programs. For example, each ethnic group brings different traditions, experiences, and communication styles. In addition to group leadership skills, the successful facilitator must have the qualities listed above as well as the ability to adapt curriculum content and group format creatively and flexibly, often without knowing ahead of time what challenges the group will bring, especially when the program is limited to only two sessions. In one group, for example, several members wanted to talk about their refugee trauma, which had been reawakened by recent events. It was only the skill and flexibility of the facilitator that enabled this volatile material to be respected and used to teach about effective communication skills while referring the class to appropriate resources for coping with the present trauma.

It is unlikely that an agency will be able to hire skilled staff from each nationality as arrival populations change, but a facilitator who brings strong group skills along with the above qualities can build an effective team with other staff who can translate and help with the “culture broker” role. A mutually supportive relationship between the interpreter and

the facilitator can help enhance the cultural sensitivity needed for effective teaching and interpret concepts about communication and relationships that may be alien to participants. Many family- and marriage-strengthening programs provide innovative examples of teams that consist of several people with different backgrounds and skills who share essential staff qualities.

## Internal Refugee Staff

It often has been the practice in refugee resettlement programs to reassign staff as needed when populations shift, programs change, arrivals fluctuate, funding is reduced for one program and increased for another, or as a reward for good performance. This strategy has worked to retain effective bilingual, bicultural staff throughout the many fluctuations in resettlement that all programs experience.

### Advantages

In new family- and marriage-strengthening programs, seasoned staff sometimes have the advantage of already knowing the population they want to serve in the new program, including extended families and intergenerational relationships. They also know who the community leaders are and, indeed, may themselves be leaders in their community. These staff, who often are longtime case managers, also intimately understand the culture of participants and the difficulties they face in adaptation, especially in the sensitive areas of marital stress, parenting, and other family challenges and frustrations.

Experienced staff are well aware of the difficulties of adjusting to a new culture and have an unmatched credibility when they bring examples of their own struggles and how they have overcome them while maintaining their culture and family. They can communicate with refugees from the depths of their own experience and in a communication style that resonates with group participants from a similar background.

### Challenges

Although reassigning or promoting from within may give staff variety and new challenges (or avoid laying them off when budgets are cut), the same skills that they exhibit with individual clients in resettlement work may not translate into the enthusiasm and skills needed for facilitating family- and marriage-strengthening groups. SRFM groups are designed to be educational, but the intensity of some of the cultural and emotional issues often requires the skills of a therapist who can set respectful boundaries, make referrals if necessary, and manage the group process in ways that facilitate learning and provide a therapeutic experience, if appropriate. It is important to think hard before assigning staff from an established resettlement service to a new and dynamic program such as SRFM.

Drawbacks of reassigning resettlement staff to facilitate family- and marriage-strengthening groups generally have to do with training. It probably will not be enough to send staff for training in the curriculum, as essential as that is. They also must be provided with ongoing training, professional supervision, and training in group facilitation skills. In effect, they are being expected to step into an entirely new professional role that requires extensive training and experience. Although they have been providing effective concrete and personal services to families and individuals who face emotionally charged challenges in housing, jobs, community resources, health services, and transportation, now they are expected to quickly learn how to lead and manage a group, to handle sometimes disruptive emotional issues that arise in a group setting, and teach difficult concepts. It is a completely different area of expertise, one that requires a set of skills and training that is commonly found in educators, therapists, and some social workers with graduate-level

training that included supervised internship. Most curriculum training provides some basic groupwork training, but it is seldom sufficient to equip someone who has no previous experience or training in these disciplines.

### **Strategies for Success**

Two strategies to support staff who are doing this kind of groupwork for the first time are (1) to provide supervision by an experienced group facilitator from elsewhere in your organization and (2) to team the new staff person with an experienced facilitator. Either approach can bring new opportunities for interagency coordination and collaboration.

For staff transitioning into the new role of group facilitator, supervisors should attend to how to set clear goals and boundaries for group process (including confidentiality) as well as how to manage the flow of participation. They will need to develop techniques to cover relevant curriculum material for the whole group without being diverted by inappropriate personal issues or domination by disruptive and controlling participants. It may take some time to learn to balance the skills and relationships mastered in the familiar role of case manager with the demands and skills of the new role of group facilitator, educator and, sometimes, therapist. Teaching “say it” from a curriculum will probably not be enough. Expertise and experience in group process is needed to make this teaching meaningful and useful for the whole group. Although what happens in good group process should be helpful to all the participants, many individual needs are best helped outside a group setting.

A frequent complaint of case managers is that some refugees make so many demands on them that they become overwhelmed and feel that they are never able to do enough or to leave their job behind. This problem of dependency and setting boundaries does not necessarily become less acute in groupwork. A good supervisor can help the facilitator set clear boundaries, making it clear that certain matters need to be addressed outside the group setting.

Sometimes the very fact of being close to a culture and struggling to find a balance between the old and new may make it difficult for the facilitator to maintain objectivity. For example, when a case manager/facilitator is still feeling the demand for unlimited hospitality to newly arrived family members (but is learning to say, “No, I have to work at that time”), she may become impatient with a more recent refugee who is not yet ready to relinquish those traditions, despite her desire to change and “acculturate.” Sometimes refugee leaders do not realize that they have not worked out their own ambivalence about certain aspects of acculturation. They may have changed many practices in their own lives but have forgotten how difficult all the steps and setbacks were. Maybe it is just hard for them to accept that other refugees are not committed to the same goals or process that they are.

These difficult but important issues need to be considered and discussed openly as part of planning SRFM services. It is essential to provide support for the struggles of a staff member adapting to this new role and to recognize that the new work will be challenging, sometimes in unforeseen ways. It will be different in significant ways from their previous role, even though the goal is the same—to help refugees to adapt and succeed in their new culture. Support should be given in the spirit of recognizing that all involved are learning together and helping to shape a new and important service for refugees.

## **Staff With Qualifications in Other Fields**

Some SRFM programs are successfully employing professionals who are educators or therapists who have little or no previous experience working with refugees and do not speak their language. This is a new approach for refugee services,

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which have traditionally employed refugees who have been in the United States for some time and are members of the same ethnic and language group as the more recent refugees they serve.

It could be said that bringing in other professionals is still an experimental approach, but it seems to be a promising one in that it opens up a new pool of potential staff and helps to integrate refugee services into ongoing mainstream social services.

Use of skilled facilitators with interpreters also provides flexibility when ethnic and language groups change. To some extent, it signals recognition of population shifts in which newcomers make up a growing percentage of the population and are increasingly prominent members of local school and business communities. Perhaps this offering of new services traditionally available only to English-speaking persons born in the United States is just another facet of globalization.

### **Advantages**

Groupwork to help families is an established practice in the social services and education fields and typically requires professional training as a therapist or family life educator. Many people, in both the refugee and the mainstream service communities, have believed that the approach of these professionals was not welcome in refugee cultures and, in any case, was not feasible without language capability. Those restrictions have not proven to be true in several SRFM programs. It is ironic that the goal of refugee services generally has been to integrate refugees into American life, but there has been widespread resistance to developing ways to make many mainstream social services available to them.

Although the degree of trauma, strength of cultural traditions, and pressures of acculturation may be unique to refugee groups, expressions of family emotional and spiritual needs often are similar among different cultures. Experienced therapists and educators are trained to recognize and work with these expressions in a group setting and to manage difficult emotional issues and interactions in ways beneficial to group members through dynamic group interaction. When they also are skilled in working with professional interpreters, they can effectively respond to refugees' needs, and refugees will respond positively by continuing to attend groups and referring their friends. Although those facilitators do not share the cultural background and experiences of refugees, the tradeoff is that refugees often are eager for the opportunity to establish relationships with Americans who can help them understand how Americans think and why U.S. culture is the way it is. This desire is particularly true in the sensitive areas of social interaction addressed by SRFM groups.

Most professional therapists, social workers, and educators who are trained to work with groups also are well informed about community resources that may be useful for refugees. They can add contacts and ideas that may broaden the group's perspective and can model positive and productive cross-cultural interaction with their openness to new ideas and flexibility. In this way, SRFM groups help break down the isolation felt by many refugees.

The observed facilitators in this category were sensitive, flexible, and highly skilled. They also had the advantage of a degree of objectivity that enabled them to put refugee responses and processes into a universal perspective. When trained in a specific curriculum, they were able to bring their own training and experience to enrich the curriculum material.

### **Challenges**

Clearly, using staff with qualifications in other fields is no more a magic formula than any other approach. Educators and therapists may enlarge the pool of potential facilitators, but other factors must be considered. Not all professional educators or therapists have the flexibility, cultural sensitivity, and innovative spirit to work with people of another

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culture in a way that fully respects diverse traditions and seeks to help newcomers preserve their values while succeeding in the new culture. Facilitators must be willing to do independent research and be open to learning from the refugees themselves and from their own mistakes. It is not always easy to spot these qualities ahead of time, particularly because cross-cultural staffing is still a relatively new endeavor.

Outside SRFM facilitators in current programs are independent contractors, increasing the risk that they will leave the program and not be easily replaced and thereby jeopardizing continuity within the program. In fact, at least one SRFM program has closed because of such a situation. As more therapists and educators enter the area of cross-cultural work, however, it will be easier to fill vacancies. Also, refugees themselves will begin to be trained in these fields, as was observed in one site visited.

### **Strategies for Success**

Although it is not a “magic bullet,” hiring of outside staff is a promising development and should be considered when designing a new refugee family- and marriage-strengthening program. If appropriate staff are not available within the agency, administrators must be willing to identify and hire outside facilitators who have strong groupwork skills as well as the flexibility and cultural sensitivity essential to working as a team with members of diverse ethnic groups. Educators and therapists already working in other agency programs may be able to team up with interpreters and others to bring family- and marriage-strengthening services to refugees.

## **Additional Staff Roles**

### **Interpreters**

Whether refugees or outside staff are facilitators, interpreters will probably play an increasing role in family- and marriage-strengthening groups. Some African refugees speak different dialects even when they come from the same country, and some communities do not have enough refugees who speak the same language to form their own group, so refugees with more than one language are brought together in the same class. In Dallas, we observed a group in which interpretation was provided in English and in two Sudanese dialects.

Facilitators who work with an interpreter require special skills; in addition, professional interpreters are trained to follow certain rules and procedures. In general, it is best to use interpreters with this specific training rather than untrained community volunteers or friends and family members. Using family members or community volunteers can place an unintended burden on them to establish boundaries and maintain confidentiality, which is difficult when they interact with some of the participants in other roles in their daily lives.

On the facilitator’s part, it is important to always address the participants and not the interpreter, pausing at manageable intervals to allow for complete interpretation and to maintain a smooth flow of communication. Similarly, facilitators should look at and listen to the clients, even though they do not understand their words. Skill in understanding and responding to nonverbal language is important in this setting.

The interpreter should interpret faithfully what is said by facilitators and participants and should not add comments or opinions during the translation (although being available to the facilitator for cultural and resource information outside the group is a big plus). The interpreter should not interrupt the flow of the group by inserting opinions that distort the interpretation. The interpreter also should be held to the same strict professional standards of confidentiality as the facilitator. It is helpful if the interpreter can be trained in the curriculum to understand the goals and content of the

group as well as to prepare for the use of any specialized vocabulary, but the roles of interpreter and facilitator should be kept distinct and mutually supportive. Doing so requires open communication between the facilitator and interpreter.

The programs observed for this manual presented many variations on the interpreter's role. Probably the closest to ideal was an interpreter who clearly knew and respected the participants' culture and provided a fluid interpretation, almost as though the facilitators themselves were speaking in a direct dialogue with the group. This interpreter helped educate the facilitators about the group's culture and acculturation issues, but he stuck to the role of translation in a professional way during the group sessions.

Another group had more than one interpreter; the facilitator was good at maintaining eye contact with participants and paused after an appropriate time to let each interpreter translate for the group. She always addressed the group itself or individual members who contributed to the group. In still another group, however, the interpreter got into extended discussions with group members or the facilitator, expressed her own opinions or commentary, and at times appeared to compete with the facilitator to relate to participants or to be the "expert."

When participants have questions, the interpreter should repeat them to the whole group and translate the answers. Interpreters should not answer the questions and engage in "sidebar" discussions with individual participants. Such discussions defeat the basic goal of interpretation, which is inclusiveness and open communication and discussion. Similarly, when participants engage in discussion, it should be interpreted to the whole group to facilitate group participation and ensure that all participants feel they are respected and included. This inclusiveness also reduces the feeling of dependency on the interpreter or concern about being left out of the discussion and missing important information.

The skilled and committed professional interpreter will be an essential part of effective team facilitation. A smooth flow of communication is most likely to occur when the facilitator and interpreter work together as a team. The facilitator must be open to learning (separate from curriculum translation) critical information the interpreter can supply about customs and participants' reactions to group topics. This cultural sharing may take place in separately scheduled meetings or in short "debriefing" meetings after groups. Interpreters also help with recruiting in some programs.

Refugees have too often been forced to rely on their children, other family members, or friends for translation, even when professional outside interpretation is supposed to be provided. Clearly, such situations put everyone concerned in an awkward position regarding confidentiality and the assurance of accurate translation. Because a skilled interpreter is necessary to most programs' success, high-quality interpretation and the same commitment to confidentiality as the facilitators is owed to participants and should be given careful attention in program planning. Although it is sometimes difficult to locate trained interpreters, program planners should keep in mind the risks they take when using untrained community volunteers. Universities, hospitals, and ethnic organizations often can help identify trained interpreters in the community.

### **Administrative Staff**

The important contributions of the program coordinator and other administrative staff are easy to overlook because these staff members often have little or no direct contact with the program participants. Their commitment and support, however, can make or break a program; at minimum, their support is crucial to program sustainability. The agency executive director or resettlement director usually defines staffing needs and qualifications; interviews and hires staff; sets funding priorities; and provides ongoing support in the form of supervision and inclusion of the program

in planning, recognition, and rewards. Administrative staff also determine what space is available and what planning and financial information is shared with program staff. One program visited had just been included in space and budget planning after a change in administrator; both administrative and program staff found this inclusion beneficial in helping with growth and planning for the program.

The administrative role of the SRFM coordinator should be given careful attention. If the program is to develop and be sustained, a coordinator with a clearly defined role is necessary to serve as liaison to the administration of the larger organization. This role involves advocacy for the program and refugee families, promoting the program in the community, and recruitment of participants. Sometimes the coordinator and the facilitator are the same person, but often a different person will be needed to provide the necessary skills to fill this role.

Administrators who are open to staff input and supportive of their work tend to hire staff who work well in that environment and are flexible and innovative. Staff, however, must appreciate that administrators usually oversee other programs and must answer to a board of directors; administrators therefore sometimes must make difficult choices that seem unfavorable to their program. Willingness to engage in creative dialogue is therefore essential. Some SRFM program staff interviewed for this manual receive strong administrative support, and some do not. Without active investment in program growth and stability by administrative leadership, staff are stifled; the results are minimal program strength and an emphasis on obstacles rather than solutions.

Because family- and marriage-strengthening education with refugees is still regarded as an experimental and untested service, it requires open communication and the creativity and mutual support of everyone involved. Whether program administration sees this as a first step in an ongoing effort to expand services to refugees and integrate them into available resources or as a temporary source of supplementary funding will make the difference in whether innovation can build on its successes. As service populations in mainstream America change and diversify, SRFM can even be seen as being on the cutting edge. A few years from now, social workers and others may look back and ask why it took so long to offer these services to newcomers.

## Building a Team

Many people with a variety of skills come together to build a team to help strengthen refugee families and marriages. Although the facilitator may be the most public and visible member of the team, he or she cannot make the program a success without the active participation of administrators, interpreters, other members of agency staff, funders, and the community.

### **Within the Organization**

The relationship with organization heads, MRS, and R&P staff varied among the SRFM programs interviewed or visited. In some sites, there was a close relationship: R&P case managers were active members of the team, and they sometimes acted as facilitators or provided referrals, transportation, and other support to ensure understanding and attendance in the groups. This was particularly true in programs whose SRFM groups target newly arrived refugees.

The coordinator or other administrator who originally conceived the program, developed the budget, wrote the grant, and provides reports is an important team member even if he or she does not attend groups. We noticed, however, that the sense of team was stronger when administrators attended groups at least occasionally. When friction existed

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between the facilitator and administration, the program usually had problems in recruitment and retention as well as limited community collaboration. This pattern is a good indication of how essential it is for program success that this relationship be open and cooperative.

### **Within Collaborations**

Broad collaborative relationships often are part of the team effort. For example, elders and other leaders in the refugee community and school personnel may be essential advocates and recruiters. It is important to work with as many community cultural organizations as possible to get their input about their community's needs as well as their ongoing support and feedback. Those groups include churches, mosques, synagogues, mutual assistance associations, ethnic organizations, and coalitions.

Schools often are important channels of information about the SRFM groups, and they present opportunities for intergenerational activities and learning. Developing relationships with key school personnel such as social workers, ESL teachers, and principals can be a source of considerable strength and sustainability for SRFM activities. In Cleveland, elementary and middle school refugee youth participate in groups on culture and communication, providing a basis for recruiting the students' parents, who usually are eager to follow up for themselves on the education and support their children receive.

Some programs serving new arrivals build collaboration among resettlement agencies to offer the groups to all refugees in the area. Grand Rapids organizes a monthly 2-day cultural orientation for refugee arrivals from all resettlement agencies in the area and incorporates components of the Family Wellness curriculum into the orientation. Many programs also include presentations by representatives of resources that refugees encounter in the community, such as libraries, transit systems, law enforcement, and social services.

For effective and ongoing collaborative relationships to develop, it is best to maintain personal contacts in collaborating organizations and keep them informed about program developments. It is important for contacts in outside organizations to feel that their contributions are helpful and appreciated so that their time is not wasted and they are not being "used" unfairly by the program.

### **Within the SRFM Program**

The program we observed in St. Louis has developed a unique team. The facilitators are experienced in groupwork, one as a therapist and the other as a family educator. One works as co-facilitator with her husband; the other works alone. Neither facilitator speaks refugees' languages or has previous experience working with newcomers. Each facilitator works with different interpreters, and the interpreters are seen as helpful and essential members of the team.

The program serves primarily Bosnian refugees who have been in the community for several years; it therefore cannot rely on the R&P program for referrals. Instead, program staff have enlisted a member of the community who is well respected and in touch with community leaders as the primary recruiter and culture broker. In addition, the program participates actively in ethnic coalitions and has provided training and support for family-strengthening groups in an agency serving African refugees. It is a fascinating and innovative team model that illustrates how creatively a quality program can be developed in the face of barriers often thought to be insurmountable.

Several facilitators stressed the advantage of working as a team with another facilitator or interpreter. In Cleveland, the facilitators have similar backgrounds as art therapists and considerable experience working together, so they can support each other smoothly as each takes different roles and displays different styles of group leadership. One facilitator is clearly more task-oriented and focused on concrete learning objectives, and the other often observes and facilitates group process. They work with a professional interpreter when needed. The facilitators respect each other and together provide educational and emotional support resources to the group. They believe that the co-facilitating format is critical. When observed for this report, they were working with a Turkish group, but they work with several nationalities. This program is so popular that it actually has to limit the size of groups, so the team concept really is working! Other facilitators stressed that the ideal is to have both a man and woman serve as co-facilitators.

Some of the programs seemed almost completely independent of other refugee program staff or larger organizations, but a closer look revealed them to be members (often the creators) of a strong team with several members and clear roles. As much as the qualities of staff themselves, the quality of teamwork emerged as a significant ingredient of program success. Integration of skills and contributions among a well-defined team appears to be a necessary ingredient for program success. Totally independent programs that lack supportive guidance and boundaries seem to be limited in their ability to expand and explore their full potential. All programs are encouraged to include team building as part of program planning.



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# PRACTICES

## 4. Promising Practices

The following examples of current SRFM practices are described briefly as suggestions to stimulate your thinking. Program can tailor the suggestions to fit local circumstances. Examples cited are those that current program coordinators and facilitators consider to be key ingredients in their success or learning process. These suggestions are intended to help programs plan in the direction of creative exploration and solid development. Again, it is critically important to carefully evaluate local needs and resources, then use creativity to design a program that best fits the situation. Whatever program design is developed, never underestimate the ability and motivation of refugees to integrate new ways of learning into their daily life and problem solving.

Four programs were visited in the course of developing this manual. Additional information comes from other programs that also are doing excellent work but were not observed firsthand. What stands out is that no one magic formula exists for all settings. Instead, a variety of successful approaches together demonstrate the value of flexibility and sensitivity to local needs and possibilities. These services are new; keep an open mind, and seek new models.

When examples of practices described here seem useful, program developers are encouraged to contact the program directly for more details and to ask questions that are important to the individual site's specific needs and resources. Information in the Resources chapter (Chapter 6) will help identify potentially helpful programs. Information and contacts for current programs and new ones that are being developed also can be obtained by getting in touch with the national voluntary agencies (volags) listed in the table at the end of Chapter 5.

This section provides brief examples of practices in the following categories:

- Flexible curriculum
  - Cultural appropriateness
- Volunteers
- Recruiting staff
- Collaboration
- Incentives
- Involving men
- Evaluation and feedback
- Group format
- Preparation
- Recruitment
- Central support.

The examples are intended to stimulate thinking; they are not a full description of the practice cited.

Be creative. And be realistic.



## Flexible Curriculum

Much planning time and effort is focused on choosing a curriculum. Although the curriculum is a key ingredient of every program and is an important decision, what is done with the curriculum is what really counts, especially for refugee groups. Usually, refugee programs are designed with fewer sessions than the curriculum's original design.

Once the basic curriculum is chosen, two other program elements determine its success: (1) curriculum adaptation and (2) staff leadership. Jewish Family Services in Chicago, for example, has created special adaptations for refugees of the Power of Two curriculum (see Chapter 1 for a discussion of mixing curriculum components).

Many programs include parenting components in response to the almost universally expressed need for this information. Refugees want to know about many aspects of American culture related to parenting, such as discipline, the education system, health resources, and requirements and laws. Many schools and other institutions also see this information as important for refugees. Many programs integrate SRFM curriculum material into ESL, cultural orientation, support groups, case management, and other ongoing refugee services.

### **Cultural Appropriateness**

Most staff found that the examples in all curricula were more applicable to middle-class families born in America than to refugees.

Several programs host American and ethnic holiday observations as a means of celebrating family time together and teaching aspects of American culture. Holidays also are an opportunity for cultural sharing in which refugees teach Americans about their own culture and values.

Many programs provide translations of handouts, which may be sections excerpted from the curriculum or other useful materials, especially on parenting and communication. This approach provides something tangible to use at home, shows respect for the participants' language, and ensures better understanding of material presented (see the language section in Chapter 2). Several programs have translated all or part of their curriculum into the languages of their participants. The usefulness of this effort needs to be weighed in relation to the learning style of participants and whether they can read and use written materials.

Although some programs, particularly those that use the PREP curriculum, focus primarily on the marital relationship, others have found that many participants are single parents or widows or have been in polygamous relationships and are not receptive to the traditional American ideas of marriage because of their family situation or cultural traditions. In those cases, broad curriculum materials about relationships and communication are emphasized. Certainly, relationship and communication skills are highly beneficial for a marital relationship, but they are life skills that are productive and positive for all relationships.

Following are some examples of curriculum adaptation that program staff cited as key to their program's attraction for refugee participants.

- In Cleveland, staff drew new illustrations to incorporate appropriate clothing and skin tone for the refugee participants to make the curriculum more sensitive.
- In Grand Rapids, Hartford, Cleveland, St. Paul, St. Louis, and elsewhere, staff use realistic life examples of current refugee concerns, issues, and challenges to make the curriculum subject matter relevant and interesting.

- In Hartford and Cleveland, staff used dance or drumming—a familiar cultural idiom that transcends language—as a means of inviting refugees to communicate and role-play. This added element incorporates culturally appropriate modes of communicating and working cooperatively toward program goals; it also provides an opportunity to teach elements within the curriculum (such as listening and communication) while setting a nonthreatening, open, and relaxed tone for the class.
- In Dallas, a financial management component from another curriculum was added in response to a discussion in which refugees expressed a particular need in the areas of household budgeting, financial management, and the role of family members in those activities.
- In St. Louis, although domestic violence issues are not directly included in the curriculum, facilitators hand out brochures at the end of the first session with a brief explanation of American laws and a recommendation that they keep the brochures to give to a friend or anyone who might need them.
- In Dallas, a special group is offered to men on the topic of fatherhood to address the different cultural expectations for male roles and economic and moral responsibilities of being a father in America.
- In Cleveland, St. Paul, and Phoenix, the length and number of SRFM sessions is adjusted for the needs of different ethnic groups and work schedules. The number of 2-hour sessions offered ranges from 2 to 15, allowing the group to develop long-term support or focus on designated needs and skill building. As you develop your program and identify curricula, it is important to assess what format will be most appropriate for potential participants. Give particular consideration to how familiar or alien the relationship concepts being taught to them are.
- In Dallas and Indianapolis, mentoring and other individualized teaching and guidance are provided using curriculum information and techniques when a group is not available or when a family is in crisis in order to prevent imminent family fragmentation.
- In St. Louis, participants receive translated curriculum worksheets and do-it-yourself relationship guidelines.

## Volunteers

Most programs involve volunteers in various capacities. Volunteers can help support paid staff and provide valuable training to refugees or other members of the community who want to become meaningfully involved in contributing to their community. The downside of using volunteers, of course, is that they are not accountable in the same way paid staff are and often have conflicting demands that limit their commitment. Several programs reported that they provided training to volunteers who did not subsequently become regularly involved, so the program's investment did not result in additional resources for the program.

If volunteers are to remain loyal to the program and find satisfaction in their involvement, it is important that they have regular contact with staff who keep them informed about the program, include them in meaningful activities and, above all, provide appreciation and recognition for their contributions.

Programs that use volunteers assign them to a variety of tasks, including group leadership, recruitment, transportation, child care, and advocacy. Following are some examples of how programs used volunteers.

- VISTA volunteers are assigned to the Grand Rapids program, and interns from local university programs help in Cleveland.
  - In Dallas, refugee volunteers provide child care and transportation.
  - The Dallas, Grand Rapids, Oakland, and St. Paul programs provide formal training in the curriculum to the leaders and elders in the refugee communities from which participants are recruited and subsequently involve them in sharing group leadership.
-

- St. Paul provides a financial incentive to other organizations to send their leaders or volunteers for curriculum training so that they can offer groups to their clients.
- Houston provides regularly scheduled, six-session train-the-trainer programs for volunteers, who then conduct Family Wellness sessions and mentoring.

## Recruiting Staff

Because recruitment is the most important decision to be made in any program, Chapter 3 of this manual is devoted to discussing staffing issues. Program developers should be realistic about the unique needs of their program and to think creatively about staffing it. In particular, do not overlook the value of a team approach to ensure both language capability and expertise in group education.

## Collaboration

Collaboration in the communities offering SRFM takes many forms. Developing and nurturing strong collaborative relationships that serve the particular needs of each community is a significant factor in enhancing services through recruitment, input from ethnic leadership, flexibility and responsiveness of the program to refugees' needs, and maximizing resources available for the program.

Many programs work with apartment complexes, libraries, and schools to obtain meeting space that can bring the program into the neighborhoods where refugees live.

Often groups include presentations about community resources such as transportation, health clinics, employment programs, Red Cross, and other services that refugees need but may not understand or know how to access. Inviting representatives of those service providers to meet with SRFM groups helps build mutual understanding and often results in small gift incentives, such as bus tokens. It also presents useful opportunities to practice communication and conflict resolution skills taught in the curriculum.

Below are some examples of how SRFM programs successfully collaborated with other community entities:

- St. Paul Catholic Charities contracts with the Somali Confederation for actual delivery of SRFM services. Collaboration with Somali leadership enables the organization to provide access and services for the large, organized group of Somali refugees in the area. Catholic Charities remains closely involved so that they will be able to make the services available to other nationalities in the future, possibly through collaborations with other ethnic groups.
- In Cleveland, the SRFM program offers weekly sessions in public school ESL classes. The program uses Family Wellness techniques and art therapy. In the art therapy component, students might draw what it is like to be a refugee in school, then explain their drawing to the class in English. Follow-up programming includes parent groups and consultation to school personnel about the refugee experience. Other programs recruit participants through schools, involve school personnel in meeting with parents, and provide consultation to help school personnel and parents bridge communication gaps, improve school understanding of refugee needs, and help refugees understand the American education systems.
- Indianapolis provides cultural orientation for school staff as well as an open house for teens and their parents.
- Phoenix and Grand Rapids have school personnel explain expectations of parental participation, discipline, and laws to parents.

- In St. Louis, much of the program is built on collaboration with schools, the Bosnian coalition, the African Refugee Service, Archdiocesan family life programs, the Healthy Marriage Coalition, social service agencies, and community leaders. The program is led by an independent agency that collaborates with the Archdiocese to sponsor the services.
- Phoenix has negotiated a creative win-win arrangement to use meeting space in an apartment complex in exchange for incorporating apartment maintenance and etiquette topics into the examples used in the communication component.

## Incentives

The ideal recruitment tool is word of mouth, and satisfaction with a useful program is the ideal motivation for retention; even so, incentives are particularly useful for a new program whose benefits are still unknown—or even somewhat suspect among community members.

Most programs offer some kind of child care arrangement, either by inviting the children to participate in a parallel program or onsite child care. Often, child care is not as necessary as it might seem because refugees commonly prefer to make their own arrangements with neighbors or relatives.

Below are some examples of how SRFM programs used incentives to enhance recruitment and retention:

- Several programs offer grocery or other store coupons, \$20 to \$25 in value, to participants who finish a succession of sessions.
- In cities with good public transportation, bus passes are provided instead of van transportation. This approach has the added value of giving refugees practice with the transportation system and encouraging them to use it regularly.
- Some programs offer certificates for discounts in certain stores, particularly thrift shops sponsored by the agency or a collaborating organization.
- In Cleveland, participants are offered good-quality used children's clothing, children's books, or household items at the end of each session.

## Involving Men

Both because of their work schedules and because of cultural traditions that separate men and women for intimate or sensitive discussions, many programs offer separate sessions for men. The need for this accommodation depends on the ethnic group and other less tangible factors to do with how groups are structured. The groups observed for this manual, including those for Turks, Bosnians, and Sudanese, had men who attended either as part of a couple or on their own. Couples who attended together generally did not sit with one another. Men and women participated actively in these groups. Many staff commented that once men came to the groups, they and their spouses reported that they become more communicative, and some staff speculated that men have more social outlets than women in many cultures and therefore initially feel less need for the groups.

Below are examples of how programs successfully involved men:

- St. Paul offers one session on communication for unemployed men, who are recruited by male staff.
- Phoenix recruits male mentors to work with men who are reluctant to attend the groups.
- Dallas uses male mentors to work with men who are having marital or family conflicts.

## Evaluation and Feedback

No program staff reported that they were satisfied with evaluation procedures. Programs are able to rely on continued attendance and word-of-mouth recruitment, indicating satisfaction among those who attended and recommended the group to their friends. However, programs that are seeking evaluation tools want to be able to demonstrate actual behavioral change as a result of the groups, and they are looking forward to the evaluation tools being developed by CUA & USCCB.

Following are several examples of how programs incorporated evaluation techniques:

- St. Paul conducts an oral evaluation at the end of the program, but staff do not feel confident in the results because of refugees' demonstrated eagerness to please group leaders.
- Dallas convened a focus group of former participants to ask them what they found most useful and what changes they would recommend to attract future participants. Participants reported that the program had strengthened trust between marital partners and helped them discuss difficult issues such as budgeting and parenting.
- Grand Rapids conducts oral evaluations in which three possible responses are represented by three different stones, which can be deposited anonymously in a basket, in accordance with the cultural tradition of participants. This format makes accurate and effective responses for program changes difficult, however.

## Group Format

The program's flexibility and responsiveness to community needs often are made evident in how program formats are designed. Each program needs to assess—and periodically reassess—ideal as well as practical location options, number of sessions, time of sessions, potential participants, and other factors that will determine the optimal format to ensure program success. Because no program uses a single curriculum in its entirety or offers the maximum number of sessions for which the curriculum is designed, staff must be creative and flexible in designing a format that will meet pressing refugee family needs. It also must be possible to include the required topics with available resources of staff, time, and space.

Variations in format include whether SRFM groups are standalone or provided as part of another refugee service, number of sessions, location, and group composition. Many sites provide SRFM services in different formats for different nationalities or to meet other needs of participants. When groups primarily consist of recent arrivals, SRFM curriculum topics are often provided as part of cultural orientation.

Most programs establish a minimum goal of how many hours they will use to present their curriculum (usually 4 to 8), and they vary the schedule format. Common formats include daytime sessions, 2-hour evening sessions, and single extended weekend sessions that include lunch.

It is important to meet in a place where refugees feel safe and comfortable. Although agency spaces or public places have their advantages, programs may want to consider meeting at participants' homes.

Following are examples of how programs varied their format:

- St. Louis program staff found after meeting for a while in the public library that attendance and comfort were higher for Bosnian groups when they met in refugees' homes.

- In Grand Rapids, cultural orientation groups are offered to refugees within 1 to 3 months of arrival. Refugees from three volags in the area meet together and receive information about transportation, employment, social services, and other topics of immediate need as well as two segments of the Family Wellness curriculum.
- In Cleveland, groups meet for 2 to 15 two-hour sessions, depending on how unfamiliar the SRFM curriculum concepts are to the participants and how much repetition and background are needed for the refugees to achieve meaningful learning and to become comfortable with applying the concepts to their daily lives.
- In Dallas, some of the staff are trained as mentors and use SRFM concepts with individuals or couples when a group is not available or the situation is too intimate or volatile for the group setting.
- In Cleveland, children attend with adults and sit in the center of the circle with quiet activities provided by the facilitators. Sometimes this works, and sometimes it is disruptive, but the disruptions often are used to teach and model communication and discipline topics.
- In St. Louis, children are present in homes during evening sessions but stay in another room.
- In Oakland, where most SRFM participants have been in the United States for several years, curriculum segments are integrated into ESL classes and groups that meet for other services in schools and churches. Program staff have found that refugees have too many jobs and other commitments to add attendance for an entirely new group.
- Oakland, Phoenix, and other programs provide cross-generational SRFM sessions for youth, parents, and grandparents. Those groups focus on communication and cultural values.

## Preparation

Regardless of how participants are recruited, many facilitators, particularly those who do not already work with potential participants, say that they find extensive preparation in addition to familiarity with the curriculum to be helpful. Although there is no substitute for personal relationships and direct learning from people of another culture, systematic exploration of books, articles, and websites—on topics including history, geography, religion, and language—can yield important information about an ethnic group. This “homework” provides a framework that enables program staff to be sensitive to the group and understand the behavior and attitudes of the group. It also helps avoid painful cultural faux pas.

Staff all agreed that it was helpful when they were able to talk to other staff already implementing a program, but they wished more of that interaction had been available. One of the goals of this manual is to encourage networking among current and potential SRFM programs. New programs are starting even as this manual is being developed, so we encourage you to seek out contacts suggested here and identify new ones through your own networks to learn from the implementation and ongoing experience of other programs. If at all possible, it is especially useful to visit and observe an established program.

- In Cleveland, Indianapolis, and other sites, a home visit before the first session helps ensure attendance by establishing a relationship with participants. In Cleveland, staff found that more than one visit was not productive. Visitors also bring a small gift, such as soap or a small toy, with them.
- Facilitators in Cleveland and St. Louis do extensive research using ethnic groups’ websites. They also read books and articles about refugees’ history, culture, and values, and they meet with leaders in the ethnic community to learn as much as they can about the culture, needs, and strengths of participants.

## Recruitment

Recruitment techniques differ widely, particularly for recruiting new arrivals and long-term refugees. In most cases, collaborative relationships are particularly important for successful recruiting. In all sites, familiarity with the refugee community and acceptance by community leaders are the basic keys to recruitment.

In networking and publicizing groups, many programs use flyers and radio announcements translated into languages of potential participants. Announcements are made in other news media and through ethnic and social services organizations that refugees use. Information is provided to groups that refugees attend (e.g., ESL, cultural orientation), either in the form of brochures or a brief presentation by the facilitator about the program. Many refugees do not read, so word-of-mouth dissemination of information through home visits, service organizations, and community events is essential. For new arrivals, case managers tell refugees about groups and often provide transportation, particularly when SRFM is part of cultural orientation. Other examples of creative recruitment strategies are as follows:

- Some programs host ethnic celebrations, such as Indianapolis' family celebration in collaboration with the African Center, to introduce SRFM and other programs.
- The St. Louis program contracts with a person in the community who recruits for groups, primarily by arranging with a host who invites friends and relatives and includes others who want to attend.
- Dallas, Houston, Phoenix, Richmond, and other sites provide youth programs that introduce the SRFM program to parents who are potential participants.
- Houston has translated brochures into eight languages.
- In Cleveland, facilitators obtain names of recent arrivals from R&P support staff and make home visits, leaving flyers in refugee languages and introducing themselves as best they can if the refugees do not understand English. Although this approach may seem dubious, it seems to work when accompanied by a sincere warmth and interest in the refugees as well as a brief written explanation of the purpose of the visit.

## Central Support

Interviews with staff in all three networks providing SRFM services (USCCB, LIRS, and HIAS), as well as the site visits to four USCCB programs, strongly affirmed the value of outside technical support and networking to bring a broad perspective and supportive resources to their program.

HIAS programs are designed to function as a consortium of agencies within a large metropolitan area. This structure has the advantage of providing locally accessible training, networking, and technical support while allowing for a diversity of approaches, depending on the style of the individual agency and the refugee population being served.

LIRS has developed a standard curriculum and format so that training and technical support can more easily serve all sites. Program staff can share similar experiences and solutions to common problems.

USCCB's sites have developed diverse approaches to curriculum and format design. In regularly scheduled conference calls, coordinators and facilitators share their experiences of what works and adaptations that have been useful. In addition, a member of the national staff makes site visits and individual phone consultations, acting as a coach and liaison within the network and to outside resources.

HIAS has a technical assistance grant that enables provision of training and technical assistance on request for SRFM programs in the three national networks.

Although Power of Two is the only adapted curriculum that has been made available to all programs, several program staff said it might be useful if a national agency would take the lead to organize a central clearinghouse of other materials that have been translated so that each program does not have to translate basic teaching materials each time it opens services for a new language population. This support would free up staff to concentrate on networking and developing resources that are needed locally.





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## 5. Contact Information

Contact information and a brief description of programs are provided below. The information is based on telephone interviews in June and July 2005 and site visits in November 2005 along with some follow-up email correspondence. Additional program details are included in Chapter 2. Updated information on these sites and new programs is available from national volag offices.

### **Cleveland**

Catholic Charities of Cleveland  
Migration and Refugee Services  
7800 Detroit Avenue  
St. Augustine Tower  
Cleveland, OH 44102  
Ph: 216-281-7005

Two facilitators trained as art therapists work as a team using the Family Wellness curriculum and a professional interpreter. Home visits are made to all participants, a practice that, along with incentives and attentiveness to group needs, facilitators credit with promoting good attendance.

### **Dallas**

Catholic Charities of Dallas  
Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services  
9850 Walnut Hill Lane, Suite 228  
Dallas, TX 75238  
Ph: 214-553-9909

This program for African refugees is facilitated by native speakers in apartment space near participants' homes. Facilitators use a combination of the Family Wellness and Power of Two curricula and address many pressing acculturation issues of newly arrived refugees.

### **Grand Rapids**

Catholic Human Development Outreach  
Migration and Refugee Services  
650 Burton Street, SE  
Grand Rapids MI 49507  
Ph: 616-301-8880

This program is working on transition issues pursuant to staff turnover but has successfully integrated components of the Family Wellness curriculum and acculturation resources into joint cultural orientation with other refugee resettlement agencies

### **Hartford**

Catholic Charities of Hartford  
Migration Refugee Services  
125 Market Street  
Hartford, CT 06103-1308  
Ph: 860-548-0059

Working within their established R&P program, former refugees facilitate groups for several nationalities. Emphasizing communication skills, they adapt the Family Wellness curriculum to refugee needs and supplement with activities from refugees' cultural traditions.

### **Houston**

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston  
Migration and Refugee Services  
2900 Louisiana  
Houston, TX 77006  
Ph: 713-526-4611

The focus to date has been on Somali Bantu, Sudanese, and Cuban refugees, but outreach to new refugee groups is ongoing. The program uses primarily the Family Wellness curriculum supplemented by the anger management and conflict resolution sections of the Power of Two along with acculturation resources in various formats. Train-the-trainer classes are provided to enlist refugee leadership.

### **Indianapolis**

Catholic Social Services  
Family Growth  
P.O. Box 1410  
Indianapolis, IN 46202  
Ph: 317-236-1400

The SRFM program “takes one step further” the Catholic Social Services agency’s other family education services, which cover topics including parenting, anger management, and divorce; the program uses experienced family education staff and interpreters, when available. Parts of three curricula are used in three 4-hour sessions offered within 3 months of refugees’ arrival.

**Oakland**

Catholic Charities of East Bay  
Migration and Refugee Services  
433 Jefferson Street  
Oakland, CA 94607-3539  
Ph: 510-768-3100

Supplying “the missing piece” of its R&P program, Oakland serves primarily Vietnamese refugees who may be new arrivals or in the United States for more than a generation. Using the Power of Two curriculum, each group shares experiences and learns new skills. Volunteer facilitators are being trained to work with other nationalities.

**Phoenix**

Catholic Social Services  
Migration and Refugee Services  
1825 West Northern Avenue  
Phoenix, AZ 85021  
Ph: 602-977-6105

The PREP curriculum was chosen because of its focus on family and spiritual values and social support. The program’s approach seems to fit with refugees’ customs and traditions and is flexible. A facilitator and trained mentors serve several nationalities.

**Richmond**

Diocesan of Richmond  
Refugee & Immigration Services  
811 Cathedral Place, Suite E  
Richmond, VA 23220-4801  
Ph: 804-355-4559 x318

SRFM is part of the R&P program and was developed from earlier experience providing mental health services for refugees by training caseworkers to make referrals. Using Power of Two, caseworkers speaking the refugees’ languages provide groups for Sudanese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Somali Bantu refugees in three cities in Virginia.

**St. Louis**

Office of Laity and Family Life  
The Cana Institute  
5937 Keith Place  
St. Louis, MO 63109  
Ph: 314-832-0512

A trained marriage educator has recruited a trained therapist, outreach workers, and interpreters to build an effective team for groups based on PREP and Family Wellness. Groups of African and Bosnian refugees meet in refugees’ homes.

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**St. Paul**

Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis  
Seton Family Services  
1276 University Avenue West  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
Ph: 651-603-0201

St. Paul Catholic Charities contracts with the Somali Confederation to conduct Family Wellness sessions augmented with parenting and other acculturation issues, including special sessions for youth.

**HIAS**

Jewish Family Services agencies in four cities oversee clusters of collaborative programs using the refugee-adapted Power of Two curriculum augmented by resources addressing the specific needs of local refugee groups. HIAS also provides technical assistance for SRFM programs in other volags.

**LIRS**

In its three program sites, LIRS has found it useful to standardize the Power of Two curriculum into a common format, which mitigates problems of staff turnover and training.

## Fact Sheet: Basic Information About Programs Surveyed

This Fact Sheet provides a quick reference for developers of new programs or others who would like to consult with an established program.

Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Programs					
Sponsor	Agency	Location	Nationalities	Curriculum*	Interpreter?
USCCB/MRS	Catholic Charities of Cleveland Migration and Refugee Services	Cleveland	Liberian, Somali, other African, Bosnian, Turkish	Family Wellness	Yes
	Catholic Charities of Dallas, Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services	Dallas	Somali, other African	Family Wellness Power of 2 ARC	No
	Catholic Human Development Outreach/Migration and Refugee Services	Grand Rapids	Liberian, Somali, Cuban	Family Wellness	Yes
	Catholic Charities of Hartford Migration and Refugee Services	Hartford	Liberian, Somali	Family Wellness	Sometimes
	Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston Migration and Refugee Services	Houston	Liberian, Somali, Cuban, other African	Family Wellness Power of 2	Sometimes
	Catholic Social Services Family Growth	Indianapolis	Liberian, Somali, Cuban, other African	Family Wellness Power of 2 STEP	Yes
	Catholic Charities of the East Bay Migration and Refugee Services	Oakland	Vietnamese	Power of 2	No
	Catholic Social Services Migration and Refugee Services	Phoenix	Liberian, Somali, Cuban, other African	PREP	Sometimes
	Diocese of Richmond Refugee & Immigration Services	Richmond	Liberian, Somali, Cuban, other African, Bosnian	Power of 2	Sometimes
	Office of Laity and Family Life The Cana Institute	St. Louis	Liberian, Somali, Bosnian	Family Wellness PREP	Yes
	Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis Seton Family Services	St. Paul	Somali, Cuban	Family Wellness STEP	No
HIAS	Jewish Family Services	Chicago	Vietnamese, Bosnian, Russian	Power of Two*	Sometimes
	Jewish Family Services	Atlanta	Bosnian, Russian, Afghan, Somali Bantu	PAIRS	No
	Jewish Family Services	San Diego	Russian, Afghan	ARC	No

*\*Programs may use other materials tailored to local needs.*

*ARC, Active Relationships Center; PREP, Prevention and Relationship Education Program; STEP, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting*

Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Programs (continued)					
Sponsor	Agency	Location	Nationalities	Curriculum*	Interpreter?
HIAS (continued)	Jewish Family Services	Bergen County	Russian	ARC	No
	Jewish Family Services	Tucson	Russian, Liberian, Somali Bantu	ARC	Sometimes
LIRS	Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey	Trenton	Liberians	Power of Two	Sometimes
	Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska	Omaha	Sudanese	Power of Two	No
	Lutheran Family Services of Colorado	Colorado Springs	Liberians	Power of Two	Sometimes

*\*Programs may use other materials tailored to local needs.  
 ARC, Active Relationships Center; PREP, Prevention and Relationship Education Program; STEP, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting*

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# RESOURCE LIST

## 6. Resource List

The following resources include some that were recommended by staff in SRFM programs and others that were identified by the author. They are not in any order of preference.

Because services for refugee marriage and family adjustment problems and refugee mental health are relatively new and developing quickly, new resources are being introduced all the time. We encourage you to search “strengthening refugee families” on the Internet to locate current resources that best fit your own situation.

### Curriculum Materials

Most programs use a combination of curriculum materials and other resources adapted to specific needs of their groups. Information available on the Internet describes the cost of curriculum materials and training as well as training opportunities. Program staff usually select a curriculum according to how adaptable it is for the population and whether staff are more comfortable with a skills training or group process approach.

#### **1-2-3 Magic Parenting**

[www.parentmagic.com/](http://www.parentmagic.com/)

#### **Active Relationships Center**

[www.activerelationships.com/home.htm](http://www.activerelationships.com/home.htm)

#### **Family Wellness**

[www.familywellness.com/](http://www.familywellness.com/)

#### **PAIRS**

[www.pairs.com/](http://www.pairs.com/)

#### **Power of Two**

[www.poweroftwo.org/](http://www.poweroftwo.org/)

Using the Power of Two: Marriage Skills Workshops by Susan Heitler ([www.therapyhelp.com](http://www.therapyhelp.com)) as a basic model, Tatyana Fertelmeyster (Illinois Refugee Family Strengthening Project, Chicago, IL) created a refugee-specific curriculum that allowed the curriculum to provide culturally appropriate marriage-skills education to refugees from more than 30 different countries.

#### **Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP)**

[www.prepinc.com/](http://www.prepinc.com/)



## **Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP)**

[www.lifematters.com/step.asp](http://www.lifematters.com/step.asp)

## Information About Refugees

The needs of refugees are constantly changing, depending on the nationalities arriving in the United States, how long they have been here and their adjustment needs, and services available to them. In general, it is most helpful to search the Internet for “strengthening refugee families” or specific nationalities. A few websites and resources of current interest are provided below.

### **Online Resources**

*Amerasian, aslyee, entrant, and refugee arrivals by country of origin and state of initial resettlement for FY 2004*

[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/data/fy2004RA.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/data/fy2004RA.htm)

Statistical information about refugee populations and arrivals in the United States.

*Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence*

[www.apiahf.org/apidvinstitute/researchandpolicy/default.htm](http://www.apiahf.org/apidvinstitute/researchandpolicy/default.htm)

A national network of advocates, community members, and allied professionals; the website provides information, research, and resources about violence against women in Asian and Pacific Islander communities.

*Bridging Refugee Youth and Children Services (BRYCS)*

[www.brycs.org/](http://www.brycs.org/)

Links to many resources for specific refugee nationalities and programs, including best practices and family programs for refugees

*Cultural Orientation Websites*

[www.culturalorientation.net/](http://www.culturalorientation.net/)

[www.cal.org/](http://www.cal.org/)

Trainer’s links to information about resettlement in the United States, basic facts about new refugee groups arriving in the United States, and opportunities for cultural orientation activities for trainers

*Religion and Refugees*

[www3.baylor.edu/~Charles\\_Kemp/religion\\_and\\_refugees.htm](http://www3.baylor.edu/~Charles_Kemp/religion_and_refugees.htm)

Summary and brief discussion of the religious beliefs and practices important to refugees currently resettling in the United States

*Strengthening Sudanese Refugee Families: Preventing Domestic Violence*

[http://apha.confex.com/apha/128am/techprogram/paper\\_8649.htm](http://apha.confex.com/apha/128am/techprogram/paper_8649.htm)

Paper presented at the 128th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, Boston, MA (Nov 12-16, 2000)

### **Print Resources**

Asgedom, Mawi. *Of Beetles and Angels: A True Story of the American Dream*. New York: Little, Brown & Co., 2003.

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Hoffman, Mary. *The Color of Home*. New York: Penguin Putnam for Young Readers, 2002.

McCarthy, Patrick. *After the Fall: Srebrenica Survivors in St. Louis*. St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2000.

Pipher, Mary. *In the Middle of Everywhere*. New York: Harcourt, 2002. One mental health professional's experience and observations working as a "culture broker" with refugee children and their families.

Tran, Canh, and Hayduk, Lani. *The Book of Canb: Memoirs of a Vietnamese Woman*. Milford CT, 1996.

## Program Development

The following resources can be useful in developing new programs. Most program staff interviewed stressed that the best resources were staff of other programs who were willing to share their experience and, if possible, allow a site visit.

It is vital to seek out local churches, mosques, synagogues, elders, and other leaders of ethnic groups and organizations and involve them early in your planning and learn as much as possible from them about the community's needs, strengths, customs, and communication styles.

### Online Resources

*Bridging Refugee Youth and Children Services (BRYCS)*

[www.brycs.org/documents/raisingchildreninnewcountry\\_web.pdf](http://www.brycs.org/documents/raisingchildreninnewcountry_web.pdf)

The BRYCS "parenting toolkit" includes sections on program development and evaluation as well as an extensive resource list and descriptions of sites offering refugee parenting programs.

*Dyer-Ives Foundation*

[www.dyer-ives.org/dy002\\_programs\\_initiative.htm](http://www.dyer-ives.org/dy002_programs_initiative.htm)

Local plan for welcoming and providing access for newcomers, but set in national and global context with useful format and information for any locale.

*SmartMarriages*

[www.smartmarriages.com/](http://www.smartmarriages.com/)

Clearinghouse for curricula, training opportunities, resources, and linkages to service providers

*The Foundation Center*

[http://fdncenter.org/fc\\_stats/](http://fdncenter.org/fc_stats/)

Resource for foundations and funding programs for refugee and immigrants

*Healthy Marriage Initiative*

[www.acf.dhhs.gov/healthymarriage/index.html](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/healthymarriage/index.html)

Federal program to help couples, who have chosen marriage for themselves, gain greater access to marriage education

services, on a voluntary basis, where they can acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain a healthy marriage

*Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees*

[www.gcir.org/](http://www.gcir.org/)

An organization that provides grantmakers with opportunities for learning, networking, and collaboration. It also provides information resources to enhance philanthropy's awareness of issues affecting immigrants and refugees; deepen the field's understanding of how these issues are integral to community building; and increase philanthropic support for strategies that benefit newcomer populations and strengthen society in general.

*Keys to Cultural Competency*

[www.coloradotrust.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=publications.welcome&initiativeid=255](http://www.coloradotrust.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=publications.welcome&initiativeid=255)

Practical information about program development and evaluation.

**Print Resources**

Busch, Noel Bridget, et al. *Assessing the Needs of Refugee and Asylee Families: A Healthy Marriage Initiative*. Austin: University of Texas, 2004.

Scheinfeld, Daniel R., and Lorraine Wallach. *Strengthening Refugee Families*. Chicago: Lyceum Books, 1997.





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