

# U.S. Laws and Refugee Status

## The Basics: U.S. Laws and Refugee Status

### Introduction for the Trainer

#### Key Content

During this session, participants will learn about some important U.S. laws, and their legal rights and responsibilities as refugees in the United States.

#### Main Messages

Because the United States is governed by the rule of law, there are many laws that refugees need to know. Refugees are responsible for knowing American laws, such as those related to alcohol, drugs, domestic violence, and child supervision. In the United States, all people (including refugees) must pay the penalty for breaking a law even if they didn't know that they did something wrong.



45 minutes

#### Objectives

Participants will be able to do the following:

- ▶ Describe their rights and responsibilities as refugees in the United States
- ▶ Understand that there are laws about alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and firearms
- ▶ Describe laws about domestic violence, child supervision and neglect, and child abuse
- ▶ State that it is their responsibility to know U.S. laws and the consequences of breaking them
- ▶ State that law enforcement officials can be trusted
- ▶ Describe how to contact law enforcement officials

#### Materials

- Refugee Laws and Status Cards (included)
- Refugee Laws and Status Answer Key and Notes (included)

#### Key English Vocabulary

- ▶ *9-1-1*
- ▶ *emergency*
- ▶ *law*
- ▶ *Don't break the law!*

## Session Preparation

Estimate the number of participants who will be attending the session. Then decide how many small groups there will be during the activity. Each group should have three to four people.

Review the Refugee Laws and Status Cards and edit, add to, or subtract cards based on the participants' needs and level of understanding. Find out about the laws in your area and, in the space provided in the Refugee Laws and Status Answer Key and Notes, include common challenges that refugees face. For example, allowing a young child to walk to a nearby store or laundromat by themselves could be considered neglect, hitting a child is often considered abuse, and leaving a child home alone while going grocery shopping is an example of poor child supervision.

Print the revised Refugee Laws and Status Cards. Cut out the cards along the dotted lines. Then cut each card in half, dividing the picture and the statement in half. Keeping pairs together, divide the cards into the number of groups there will be during the activity.

## Trainer's Introduction of Session to Participants

During this session, we will talk about safety, refugee status, and U.S. laws that are very important for you to know.

## Introductory Exercise

*Briefly review the key English vocabulary for this plan by saying the first word aloud in English. Participants say the word to a partner, and then all together as a group. Continue in the same way with the rest of the words and the phrase. Throughout the session, emphasize the words as they come up and use the phrase whenever there is an opportunity. If there is time (8 to 10 minutes), use the unit vocabulary found at the end of this unit to help participants better understand key English vocabulary words.*

## Activity

Divide participants into the small groups you chose during the session preparation. Distribute sets of Refugee Laws and Status Cards, as organized during the session preparation.

Small groups spend about 5 minutes reviewing the Laws and Refugee Status Cards. Participants look at the cards in the set they have been given and put the two halves together to complete the pictures shown on the cards. Participants then discuss what aspect of U.S. law or refugee status is being shown in the picture.

Bring the full group together. Small groups present their matched Refugee Laws and Status Cards to the full group and describe which aspects of safety, refugee status, and U.S. law are shown in each picture. During the presentations, add more information to the discussion by referring to the Refugee Laws and Status Answer Key and Notes. Answer questions and clarify information as needed.

When small groups have presented their matched cards, debrief the session using the questions below.

## Debriefing Questions

- ▶ If there was an emergency where you lived before you came to the United States, who would people contact for help?
  - ▶ Would someone call the police in emergencies? If not, why not?
  - ▶ If there is an emergency in your new community, what number should you call?
  - ▶ If a police officer is walking toward someone, what should that person do?
  - ▶ What is a right that you have as a refugee in the United States? What is a responsibility that you have?
  - ▶ What laws about domestic violence and child supervision did you learn?
  - ▶ Why is it important that you learn the laws in the United States?
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## *Working With Individuals or Very Small Groups*

When working with one to four participants, participants should spread the Refugee Laws and Status Cards out on a table or on the floor and match the pictures together during the activity. As cards are matched, the trainer should ask participants questions about what they see in the pictures and what the pictures show. When finished, debrief the session using the questions provided.

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## Variations and Considerations

If possible, group participants by language background for the activity so that small groups can communicate in a common language.

If needed, use translated versions of the Refugee Laws and Status Cards.

Refugee Laws and Status Cards



*As a refugee, you have the right to work in the United States.*



*Breaking the law could affect your legal status.*



*In an emergency, you should call 9-1-1.*



*It is your responsibility to learn U.S. laws.*



*There are laws about child supervision, neglect, and abuse.*



*There are laws about disciplining children.*



*There are laws about domestic violence.*



*There are laws about the use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and firearms.*



*You can trust police and other law enforcement officers to help you.*

## Refugee Laws and Status Answer Key and Notes

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As a refugee, you have the right to work in the United States.

*Participants should understand that, as refugees, they can work in the United States.*

*Notes on local laws:*

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Breaking the law could affect your legal status.

*It is the responsibility of the individual to learn local, state, and federal laws and obey them. Refugees who break laws may pay a fine or go to jail; breaking the law could also affect a person's immigration status.*

*Notes on local laws:*

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In an emergency, you should call 9-1-1.

*Explain to participants that in an emergency they need to pick up a phone and dial 9-1-1. Have participants practice saying, "fire," "police," and "ambulance." Tell participants that if they need to call 9-1-1, they should answer as many questions as possible and stay on the line until the operator tells them to hang up. Participants who don't speak English should say, "No English," and tell the operator the language they speak.*

*Notes on local laws:*

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It is your responsibility to learn U.S. laws.

*If you break a law, it can affect your freedom and immigration status, even if you did not know the law.*

*Notes on local laws:*

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There are laws about child supervision, neglect, and abuse.

*Children in the United States need to be supervised at all times until they are considered old enough, by law, to look out for themselves. That age differs in different locations. Not supervising a child properly is considered neglect or abuse and is illegal.*

*Notes on local laws:*

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There are laws about disciplining children.

*Americans usually discipline their children by taking away privileges, such as playing with friends or watching television. Most Americans believe that it is wrong to discipline children by hitting or hurting them. It is against the law for a parent to injure a child on purpose.*

*Notes on local laws:*

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There are laws about domestic violence.

*Hitting or hurting a family member is considered a crime in the United States.*

*Notes on local laws:*

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There are laws about the use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and firearms.

*These laws differ by state. You are responsible for obeying each state's laws when you are in that state.*

*Notes on local laws:*

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You can trust police and other law enforcement to help you.

*If a law enforcement official is walking toward you, do not be afraid. They are there to help. If you see a crime or have a problem, tell a police officer.*

*Notes on local laws:*

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