

**Topic:** Employment

**Activity:** Employment & Professional Status: A Critical Incident for Refugees

---

**Objective**

- ✓ Participants will be able to identify some of the employment-related challenges they might encounter regarding the U.S. workplace
- ✓ Participants will be able to identify some ways to prevent or address challenges in the U.S. workplace

**Lesson Time**

25 minutes

**Materials**

- ☐ Copies of “Employment & Professional Status: A Critical Incident,” 1 per participant (included)
- ☐ Flipchart paper
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Tape

**Introduction**

Aspects of the workplace in the United States may be very different from what you were accustomed to prior to your arrival. It is important to be aware of some of the challenges you may encounter, and to consider ways in which to meet these challenges in order to become permanently self-sufficient.

**Practice**

1. Put participants into small groups of 3-4. Ask each group to choose someone to report back later to the larger group.
2. Distribute copies of “Employment & Professional Status” to each participant. Ask participants to read the critical incident to themselves or have someone in their group read it quietly to the group. If the facilitator senses that most participants are unable to read, s/he should read the critical incident aloud to the large group.
3. Instruct the groups to develop solutions or tactics they might use to prevent Farrah’s current situation or to deal with it once it has occurred. Some ideas might include the following:
  - Working on English skills
  - Actively seeking another job
  - Volunteering elsewhere with the hope that the volunteer position will lead to a paid job or helpful connections
  - Taking another job despite being overqualified
4. Bring the large group together and ask group reporters to summarize the main points of their small-group discussions. Record these on flipchart paper and discuss as necessary.
5. Lead a discussion addressing any of the following Reflection Questions that you feel may not have been adequately addressed during the previous discussion:

**Reflection Questions**

- What happened in this critical incident?
- Why was Farrah frustrated?
- What could Farrah have done differently?
- What are some possible consequences of Farrah’s choices?
- How would you handle this situation?
- Who could Farrah talk with about this? What resources might be available?

## Employment & Status: A Critical Incident

Farrah was a highly educated professional in her home country before resettling as a refugee in the United States. She was hired at her first job about two months after she arrived in the United States, assisting in a small office environment with basic administrative duties such as copying, mailing, typing, and filing. She was receiving \$12 an hour plus health benefits, and worked with an office staff that was very compassionate and willing to work with her despite her limited English skills. After seven weeks, however, Farrah quit because she felt the job did not match her abilities and status. Now her family is struggling as she does not have a job, nor does her husband. Farrah has returned to the resettlement agency for assistance, but finding her a second job is not a priority for her busy case manager.

Our thanks to RefugeeWorks and its Employment Training Institute participants for the information on which this critical incident is based.