

Topic: Outreach to Service Providers regarding Refugee Seniors

Activity: Refugee Seniors' Strengths and Fears – How Can We Help?

Goal

Service providers will use the Refugee Seniors video to inspire discussion among receiving community members (such as employers, health care providers, and English language instructors) on how to work with refugee seniors, both within individual agencies and across agencies.

Objective

- ✓ Participants will be able to identify senior refugees' strengths
- ✓ Participants will be able to identify senior refugees' challenges and fears
- ✓ Participants will be able to identify how their individual agency can help refugee seniors address their challenges and fears
- ✓ Participants will be able to identify ways receiving community can collaborate to help refugee seniors

Lesson Time

30 minutes

Materials

- Refugee Seniors in the United States* video, online at _____
- Projector or some other way to show video to group
- Interpretation assistance and/or scripts of the video, as appropriate
Note: You can download the script in Arabic, Burmese, English, Karen, Nepali, or Somali at [__webpage__](#). People literate in English may read the video's subtitles. All others will require interpretation.
- Flipchart and markers

Practice

Warm up: Strengths and Fears!

1. Ask the participants to pick a partner and share the reasons why they are interested in refugee seniors. What services do they provide? Then one person from each pair reports out to the whole group. This serves as an introduction of all participants to one another.
2. Ask the whole group what they see as refugee seniors' strengths. Write the responses on a flip chart. Anticipated answers are resiliency, strength, problem-solving ability, resourcefulness, previous work and life experience, knowledge and ability in more than one language, determination, patience, humor, ability to take the long view, and so on.
3. Ask the whole group brainstorm challenges they imagine refugee seniors face, and how these present challenges for their agency to help the seniors. Write these down on another flip chart page. Anticipated answers are lack of English ability, slowness in learning new skills (including language or job skills), poor health, possible limited previous education and work experience, lack of transportation, possible lack of engagement, lack of understanding about how systems and processes work in the United States, fear of being a burden to their families, fear of not having enough money, and fear in general.

Presentation: Video Presentation and Discussion

1. Tell the group that they will watch a video about refugee seniors in the United States. Ask participants to notice what the seniors identify as their fears and challenges, and what their advice is for other seniors.

2. Briefly discuss as a group the fears and challenges brought up in the film. Are there any additional challenges that the seniors mentioned that are not on the flipchart list? If so, add them. (Although it is not addressed in the video, you may want to note that attaining citizenship requires some English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Since citizenship is necessary in order to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and medical insurance after seven years in the United States, service providers will want to encourage refugee seniors to learn English in order to pass the exam, as well as to facilitate their integration into their new home.)
3. Briefly discuss as a group the advice of the seniors. Write down on another piece of flip chart their suggestions, including practice and learn English, get exercise, stay healthy, get a job, and be patient.
4. Place all the flipchart lists on the wall so the whole group can see them, including the strengths, fears, and challenges, and advice.

Practice: Responding to Fears and Challenges

1. Using the list of fears and challenges, break the whole group into small groups to discuss one or two of the problems. The groups should be natural groups – for example, agencies and participants that hire refugee seniors will discuss employment issues, health care agencies will discuss health issues, English language providers will discuss language issues, and so on.
2. Ask each group to discuss the following: How might they work with refugee seniors to address these fears and challenges? What can their agency do, individually or in collaboration, to help refugee seniors?
3. Bring the full group back together and ask each group to share their responses to the problem(s) their group addressed. On a fourth sheet of flip chart paper, list the problem and the suggested action.

Application/Assessment

1. When all groups have reported, lead a final brainstorming on how the agencies can begin to address refugee seniors' challenges.
2. You might want to lead an action planning discussion on how all of the service providers at this meeting can work across agencies to address these challenges. For example:
 - Can the English language instructors invite the job specialists to their class?
 - Can the job specialists talk to the English language learners about the job skills needed by the seniors?
 - Can the English language teachers observe a worksite where the seniors are being placed, to see what the language and basic skill demands are for the refugee senior?
 - Can the health care providers make a presentation at the school or workplace where the seniors are learning English or working, to talk about some basic ways of staying healthy?
3. If appropriate, direct the group's attention to the flipchart pages posted around the room. Make sure that the strengths and advice given by refugee seniors are taken into account as the agencies explore ways to help the refugee seniors.

4. If advisable, explore the possibility of further meetings to strengthen collaboration among the agencies or to carry out next steps within and across agencies.