

Topic: The Resettlement Agency

Activity: Secondary Migration and its Consequences: Two Critical Incidents for Refugees

Objective

- ✓ Participants will consider the consequences of early secondary migration
- ✓ Participants will consider the importance of maintaining a positive attitude and relationship with their resettlement agency

Lesson Time

35 minutes

Materials

- Critical incidents #1 and #2, enough for *one* critical incident per participant (included)
- Flipchart paper with large group reflection questions listed (samples included)
- Markers
- Tape

Introduction

It is important for recently resettled refugees to be patient and maintain a positive, productive relationship with their resettlement agency. However, this is not always easy. Resettlement is challenging, and some refugees may be tempted to blame their resettlement agency for their frustrations. Some move to a new city in hopes of having an easier time with a different resettlement agency or finding better services.

Practice

(Note: feel free to change names to reflect your participants.)

1. Put participants into small groups of 2-4 and ask each group to choose a spokesperson.
2. Distribute “Critical Incident #1: Jalal” to half the groups and “Critical Incident #2: Khalid” to the other half of the groups. Each participant should have one critical incident.
3. Ask groups to read the critical incidents (or the facilitator should read them aloud to each group if literacy is a challenge). Participants discuss their critical incident’s reflection questions.
4. Bring the large group together and ask the spokesperson from each group to summarize the main ideas from their group discussion, beginning with a summary of the critical incidents. Write answers to the reflection questions on the flipchart paper to compare and contrast the two critical incidents. Discuss as necessary.

Large Group Reflection Questions

- What did Khalid* do differently from Jalal*?
- Why did Jalal and Khalid trust different people?
- Why is it important to remain patient and trust your resettlement agency?

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Critical Incident #1: Jalal*

Jalal is a refugee about to resettle in the United States. During overseas cultural orientation, Jalal's trainer says the assistance from the resettlement agency will be limited and Jalal will have to become self sufficient quickly. However, Jalal's Iraqi friends who have already resettled in the U.S. tell him that resettlement agencies can give him many services, especially if he complains often. Jalal trusts his friends more than his trainer and hopes his resettlement agency will give him many things.

When Jalal arrives, he is disappointed. His apartment is old, his benefits are limited, and he cannot find a job. Jalal complains to his case worker, but she asks him to be patient and look for a job. He tries asking other case workers at the resettlement agency for a new apartment and more benefits, but they are too busy with other clients. After one month, Jalal is angry at his resettlement agency.

Stop and reflect:

- What happened so far?
- Why does Jalal trust his friends more than his trainer?
- Why is Jalal angry at his resettlement agency?

Jalal decides to move to a different city where his friends live. He sells his furniture and buys a bus ticket without telling his resettlement agency he is leaving. Once Jalal arrives in the new city, he goes to his friends' resettlement agency to ask for services. They tell Jalal that they do not have the funding to support him like his assigned resettlement agency did.

Jalal needs to apply for local government assistance all over again, which takes time away from his job search. Since Jalal does not have his own housing, he sleeps on his friends' couch. Jalal still has trouble finding a job, and finds that housing is much more expensive in the new city.

When the resettlement agency in his previous city finds a job offer for Jalal one week after he moves, they cannot find him and give it to someone else.

Stop and reflect:

- Why did Jalal move to a different city?
- Why didn't Jalal ask his case worker for advice?
- What are the consequences of Jalal's decision to move?
- How would Jalal have benefitted if he stayed where he was originally placed?
- What do you think will happen to Jalal next?

*These critical incidents are based on the real-life experiences of resettled refugees. All identifying information has been changed to protect privacy.

Critical Incident #2: Khalid*

Khalid is a refugee about to resettle in the United States. Although his friends tell him many things about life in the U.S., he knows they might be rumors or based on their specific cases. Khalid realizes his experience could be different. Khalid decides to only listen to the information from cultural orientation and his resettlement agency, even though this information is less exciting.

Even though Khalid listens carefully, life in the U.S. is harder than he expects. It is hard to find a job, his benefits are limited, and his apartment is old. Khalid is afraid his case worker will forget that he needs work, so he calls her often. She asks him to be patient and look for a job. Khalid remembers his cultural orientation trainer's advice: be patient, flexible, and trust your resettlement agency. After one month, however, he feels angry and wonders if he should move to a different city where his friends live.

Stop and reflect:

- What happened so far?
- Why did Khalid listen to cultural orientation and his resettlement agency instead of his friends?

Khalid asks his case worker for advice about moving to a different city. She warns Khalid that resettlement agencies in other cities may not have funding to help him and he will have to start the process of applying for government assistance all over again. Instead, she suggests things he can do in his current city to stay productive and positive:

- Ask people he knows or meets for job connections
- Look for "help wanted" signs in store windows
- Visit the library and parks, where he can meet people in his new community
- Study English by listening to the radio, watching TV, reading books, and talking to people

Khalid is disappointed that there is no "easy answer," but trusts his case worker and follows her instructions. His positive outlook helps him make friends with people in the library, and after two months one of his friends helps Khalid get a job.

Stop and reflect:

- Why did Khalid ask his case worker for advice before making a decision?
- Why didn't Khalid move to a different city?
- How did Khalid find a job?

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