

**Topic:** Employment

**Activity:** Employment & Professional Status: A Critical Incident for Staff Training

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**Objective**

- ✓ Staff members will be able to identify some of the employment-related challenges their clients might encounter regarding the U.S. workplace
- ✓ Staff members will identify some ways of helping their clients prevent or address challenges in the U.S. workplace

**Lesson Time**

35 minutes

**Materials**

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

**Introduction**

Aspects of the workplace in the United States may be different from what your clients were accustomed to prior to their arrival in the U.S. It is important to be aware of some of the challenges they may encounter, and to consider ways in which you can help your clients meet challenges and become self-sufficient.

**Practice**

1. Put staff members 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 staff members to read the critical incident to themselves or have someone in their group read it quietly to the group.
3. Instruct the groups to develop solutions or tactics they might use to work with a client in this situation. Some ideas might include the following:
  - Encourage Farrah to volunteer elsewhere with the hope that this experience will lead to a job
  - Encourage Farrah to increase her skills in other training programs
  - Creating support groups of educated refugees to discuss and consult on issues such as this
  - Encourage Farrah to increase her English skills
  - Help Farrah be proactive in seeking another job
  - Encourage Farrah to take another job despite her over-qualifications
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?
- Do you know anything about Farrah’s values that may impact her choices?
- What about this situation might make you frustrated? Why?
- What could you have done to try to prevent this from happening?
- How would you handle this situation?
- What resources are available for Farrah and you?
- How could you use this critical incident to coach clients?

## Employment & Status: A Critical Incident

Farrah\* was a highly educated professional in her home country before resettling as a refugee in the U.S. 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 no longer a priority for her busy case manager.

For this same critical incident in a lesson plan designed for use with refugees, see <http://www.cal.org/co.domestic/toolkit/employment/index.html>.



\* This resource is based on the real-life experience of refugees resettled in the United States. All identifying information has been changed to protect privacy.

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