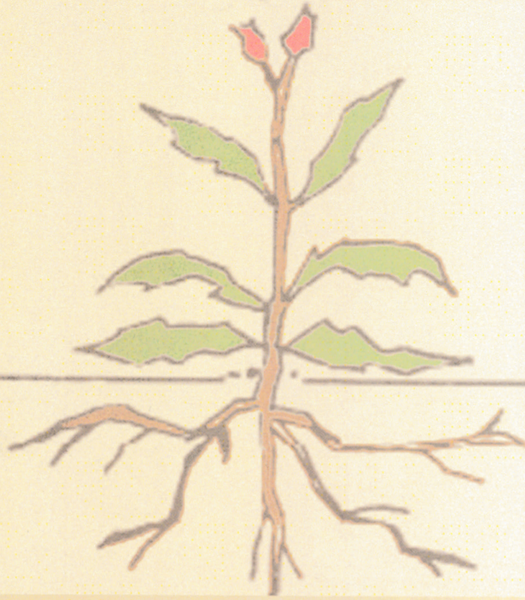

Standing Up and Speaking Out for Refugees

A Tool Kit for Refugee Community Leaders

MOSAICA
The Center for Nonprofit Development and Pluralism

searac
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center

With Funding from:
The Office of Refugee Resettlement
U.S. Department of Human Services

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Project ROSE
(*Refugee Organization and Service Enhancement*)

About Project ROSE

In working with hundreds of refugee-led organizations around the country, Mosaica and SEARAC found that refugee leaders and refugee-led groups and organizations often serve as a bridge between their communities and mainstream agencies and institutions. They help members of their community navigate complex systems and bureaucracies, and help mainstream providers understand the needs of their communities, and advocate for policies and practices that ensure the needs of their communities are met. Yet there are few tools available to help them do this.

We have also found that many refugee leaders struggle to make *informed decisions* about how to build an organization, partly because they are unfamiliar with the requirements of managing a 501(c)(3) organization and have limited knowledge of other organizational models or structures. Again, from our experience, there are few tools available to help refugee leaders and refugee-led groups choose an organizational structure that makes sense for them.

To respond to these needs, Mosaica: The Center for Nonprofit Development and Pluralism and the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC) came together to form Project ROSE. The project had two main goals:

1. To provide refugee leaders and refugee-led self-help groups[1] with the tools to "stand up" and "speak out" to make sure that community members' rights are respected, that they have access to quality services that are responsive to their needs, and that they have opportunities to achieve full integration into the broader community.
2. To assist refugee-led groups to choose and build an organizational structure that is appropriate given the group's goals, the community's needs, and the larger environment. For example, groups might choose to become a project of another organization, have a fiscal sponsor, or incorporate as an independent nonprofit organization.

About the Project ROSE Tool Kits

With support from the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, the Project ROSE team worked from 2006 to 2009 to develop, test, and refine materials for two tool kits:

Standing Up and Speaking Out for Refugees: An Advocacy Tool Kit. This tool kit provides:

✓ An introduction to key steps, questions, and helpful hints for advocating for the rights of high quality services to refugees, including how to be an effective advocate and how to negotiate with other organizations to ensure they meet your community's needs.

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[1] These groups could be informal associations or incorporated, established 501(c)(3) organizations, including organizations that identify themselves as Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs) or Ethnic Community-Based Organizations (ECBOs). They could also be well-established, as well as emerging groups or organizations.

- ✓ An overview of the most important legal rights of refugees in the U.S., as well as laws and standards related to access to services and the quality of services.
- ✓ An overview of how the human service system works, including what services are available in most communities, how they are funded, and how they are administered.
- ✓ Tools for planning and carrying out advocacy efforts and examples of what refugee leaders and organizations around the country have done to improve services to their communities.

Choosing the Right Structure for a Community Organization: A Tool Kit for Refugee Community Leaders. This tool kit provides:

- ✓ An overview of different organizational models or structures - including unincorporated associations, fiscal sponsorship, and 501c3 organizations – and the requirements of each model.
- ✓ Reference materials, checklists, helpful hints, and sample forms for developing each model.
- ✓ Examples, based on the real life experiences of organizations around the country, that share lessons learned about what has worked and what hasn't.

About the Project ROSE Training Sites

Mosaica and SEARAC tested and refined the tool kits through training workshop in three pilot sites: Houston, Texas; Lincoln, Nebraska; and Washington, DC. We selected these sites based on:

1. The presence of a diverse and growing refugee community.
2. A mix of new, emerging, and established refugee-led groups.
3. The presence of refugee leaders, refugee-led groups, MAAs, and other organizations that are willing to work with us, learn with us, provide feedback on the tool kits.

Our local partners in the pilot sites were:

Asian Community and Cultural Center
2615 'O' St., Lincoln, NE 68510
Ph: 402-477-3446
www.lincolnasiancenter.org/

The Alliance for Multicultural Community Services
6440 Hillcroft #411, Houston, TX 77081
Ph: 713-776- 4700
www.allianceontheweb.org/

In Washington D.C., SEARAC hosted the training sessions and three local community-based organizations – Newcomer Community Service Center, the Maryland Vietnamese Mutual Association and the African Resource Center – assisted with outreach.

Between February 2007 and October 2008, the Project ROSE team provided four training session in Lincoln, three in Washington D.C., and two in Houston Texas. Each training session consisted of one day focused on each tool kit.

Participants included refugee leaders not affiliated with a particular group or organization, refugee leaders in the initial stages of forming organizations or associations, and the staff, volunteers, and Board members of refugee-led groups – including informal associations, incorporated organizations without tax-exempt status, and organizations with 501(c)(3) tax exemption.

Training participants provided feedback on the materials. Their questions and the challenges they shared with us helped us to identify new topics and tools as we developed the tool kits.

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Khammany Mathavongsy, SEARAC (at the time)
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Chapter 1
Purpose of This Tool Kit

Why Did We Create this Tool Kit?

As a community leader or leader of an ethnic community-based organization (ECBO) or Mutual Assistance Association (MAA)[1], you see the problems and challenges every day:

- ✓ When refugees go to the hospital, no one is available to help them read documents they are asked to sign or to help them understand instructions for taking medicine
- ✓ Refugee parents are not involved in their children's education because they don't understand how the U.S. school system works or the role of parents is in the system, and the school does not provide interpretation/translation
- ✓ Refugee families have problems their landlords, and get evicted for reasons they don't understand and that may be unfair
- ✓ There is tension between refugees and police
- ✓ Refugees lose their jobs because their employers do not understand or accommodate certain cultural and religious practices--such as taking extra time at lunch for prayers

One of your most important roles as an ECBO leader is to serve as a bridge between your community and the *mainstream*[2] agencies, organizations, and institutions that refugees interact with in their daily lives--such as public schools, social service agencies, health care providers, the police, employers, and housing authorities.

As this bridge, *your role* is to *stand up* and *speak out* for your community, and work with others to find solutions to the problems and challenges. *Your role* is to make sure that community members' rights are respected, that they have access to quality services that are responsive to their needs, and that they have opportunities to achieve full *integration* into the broader community.

A Definition...

Integration

You will see the term "integration" throughout this tool kit. It has many different definitions. We have defined it as a long-term process that creates opportunities for refugees and immigrants to become fully participatory members of their communities and meaningfully engaged in civic participation and decision-making processes that affect their communities.

This definition comes from one used by the *Building the New American Community Initiative*, an integration-project funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement from 2001-2003. For more information, see the Migration Policy Institute's website: www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/2004.php.

[1] We use the term "ECBO" throughout this tool kit.

[2] Throughout this tool kit, we use the term "mainstream" to refer to organizations and institutions that are *not* led for and by members of refugee/immigrant communities. Although they may provide services to refugees, these organizations are often *not* familiar with refugees' needs and experiences.

While this role can be challenging and frustrating, ECBO leaders like you are standing up and speaking out every day. Chances are, you are:

- ✓ Helping refugees navigate complex systems and bureaucracies
- ✓ Mediating disputes between police and your community
- ✓ Working with the principal of a school to set up a "school liaison" to help refugee parents
- ✓ Testifying at city council or county board hearings
- ✓ Helping service providers understand the unique challenges of your community
- ✓ Working with local housing authorities to help create and sustain healthy, affordable housing options for refugee families
- ✓ Sharing stories and information about your community with the media
- ✓ Talking with funders about the assets of your community and the way your community could use those assets in order to address challenges that face your community members
- ✓ Collaborating with health care providers in your area to share information about culturally and linguistically appropriate ways to serve your community
- ✓ Talking with policy makers to educate them about community needs and urge that polices that are enacted positively impact your community

We created this tool kit to provide you with information, strategies and approaches, and tools and tips that will help you navigate service systems in the U.S., more effectively advocate for better services, *and* empower the people you serve and represent to stand up and speak out for themselves!

The tool kit will help you ask the right questions, figure out where to turn for the answers, and, in the process, find your own creative solutions to the problems and challenges your community faces. It brings together:

- ✓ **Information** about how different service systems in the U.S. are structured, what they offer, and how they are funded. It also provides information about the basic rights of your community.
- ✓ **Professional standards and promising practices** that various service providers--from government agencies to mainstream nonprofit

More Definitions...

Service Providers and Service Systems

Service providers are all of the different entities that provide services to your community, including:

- Government agencies, such as a department of social services or a health department
- Other public institutions, such as school systems and the police
- Nonprofit organizations--including both *mainstream* and *refugee*-led--and for-profit organizations that might contract with the government to deliver services or provide them with private funds

A *service system* is all of the different entities that provide services in a particular area--such as "the health care system."

The examples in the tool kit focus on service systems that all refugees come into contact with once in the U.S.: the education system, police departments, the health care system and social services (e.g., case management, employment programs). However, the tools and tips provided can also be helpful when you are dealing with other systems, such as the courts or foster care.

organizations to other ECBOs--are using to more effectively respect the rights of and deliver high quality services to refugee communities.

✓ **Lessons learned** from refugee leaders and organizations around the country that are standing up for their communities and speaking out on behalf of refugees and their families.

Who is the Audience for this Tool Kit?

We created this tool kit for refugee community and organizational leaders--including ECBO staff, Board members, and volunteers. The tool kit should be especially helpful for emerging ECBOs that represent newer refugee communities and are just learning how to navigate "the system" in the U.S. However, we hope that even seasoned ECBO leaders with years of experience will find new information, tool and tips to strengthen their work.

We also hope this tool kit will encourage communication among ECBOs across the country. ECBOs have much to learn from each other and need to work together to ensure that services and systems reflect the needs and strengths of refugee communities throughout the country.

How Can You Use this Tool Kit?

You can use this tool kit as a resource manual for information and ideas in situations where you or your ECBO has an opportunity to "stand up and speak out" for your community--maybe because of a crisis or an ongoing problem that needs to be solved.

This tool kit will not give you the answers--because there is no one right answer to any problem or challenge--but it will point you toward the right questions to ask, information you'll need, and strategies and approaches that others have used successfully.

Every community is different and every issue or problem is different. Once you know the basics, you can develop strategies and approaches that make sense for your ECBO and your community. For example, an ECBO that has been in existence for 20 years and has full-time paid staff may use very different strategies and approaches from an informal, all volunteer organization that just started a few years ago.

In general, you can use this tool kit to:

✓ **Figure out how to respond to an ongoing problem or challenge refugees face.** Let's say refugees are new to your city or county. Members of the refugee community have come to your ECBO reporting the same problem: the local hospital does not provide interpretation. As a result, children who speak English are serving as interpreters for their elders. What can you do? Where should you start? This tool kit suggests some questions you might start with, such as:

- Are there laws that require the hospital to provide interpretation? What are the laws related to *language access*?
- Are there standards for culturally-competent care that that hospitals should meet? Is this hospital meeting those standards?
- Who should you meet with to express your concerns?
- What changes is it reasonable for you to ask for?
- How can you best approach the key decision makers at the hospital to make sure they hear your concerns and makes needed changes?
- Who are other *stakeholders*, what's their role, and how can you involve them?

Or, let's say the refugee community is concerned about how refugee children are doing in school. In this case, some important questions to begin with might be:

- How are refugee students performing compared to their peers? What other issues and concerns do they face?
- Is the school system aware of the needs of refugee students? What programs and services do they have in place to address their needs?
- What standards and best practices exist in other communities to serve refugee students? What solutions would your community like to see implemented?
- Who would you need to meet with to discuss how the community and the school system might work together to improve outcomes for refugee students?
- How can parents and students be involved? What role can our ECBO play?
- What resources are needed to work on this issue? What goals are reasonable and what next steps should you take?

> **Keep In Mind...**
>
> **Quote from a Refugee Advocate**
>
> "With most official agencies and institutions in the U.S., you can appeal any decision they make...But you also need to know that there is an accepted way to complain. We need to learn the right way to complain."

✓ **Figure out how to respond to a specific crisis.** Let's say a refugee youth was shot by the police. The police say he had a weapon and was dangerous. His family says he was depressed and angry but they couldn't get help for him. To make the situation worse, the police department has no one who speaks your language. What can you do? Where should you start? In this case, questions to start with might include:

- What do you think the problem is? What does the community think the problem is? What do the police think the problem is?
- With whom should you speak about your concerns? The Chief of Police? The head of the police unit in your neighborhood? The Mayor?
- What should you ask for? Are there any standards around cultural competency that police departments should adhere to? Are there promising practices that other communities have used to improve police-community relations?
- Have other communities--other immigrant communities or the African American community--gone through the same thing, and, if so, what can we learn from them?

✓ **Develop a plan for working with a particular service provider to improve services to refugees.** Let's say there's a large mainstream social service agency in your community that provides employment services, family counseling, youth programs, and housing services. You often refer members of your community there, but have heard lately that they don't feel welcome and that the services don't meet their needs. What can you do? Where should you start? In this case, questions to start with might include:

- What do you think the problem is? What do refugees think? What would you like the agency to do differently?
- Who should you meet with? Should you talk to the case worker you know or try and arrange a meeting with the Executive Director? Should you go to the Board?
- Should you stop using their services or ask to work together?
- What should you ask for? Are there standards they should be meeting or promising practices you could suggest and work with them to implement?

✓ **Identify how refugees can participate in the decisions that affect their lives.** Maybe there's no particular issue or crisis you need to respond to, but you want to see refugees become more fully integrated in the economic, social, and political life of your city or county. What can you do? Where should you start? In this case, questions to start with might include:

- Where do different kinds of decisions get made? These decisions could include decisions that affect the affordability of housing or the hiring of new teachers.
- Who makes these decisions?
- What citizen advisory or other kinds of committees exist?
- What other organizations are concerned about and are working on the same issues as your ECBO?

The voices of refugees must be heard and valued when decisions are made and resources allocated if refugees' rights are to be respected and if they are to have access to quality services and opportunities to achieve full integration into the broader community. ECBOs can play a crucial role in ensuring that refugees' voices are heard. Above all, this tool kit aims to provide these tools. Take what you can use and adapt it to fit your needs.

Chapter 2
Your Right to Stand Up and Speak Out For Refugees

Introduction

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

-- Margaret Meade

As an ECBO leader and simply as a resident of the United States (U.S.), you have the right to stand up and speak out for your community to ensure their rights are not violated, ensure they have access to high quality services, and ensure opportunities for full integration with the broader community.

Individuals and groups across the county stand up and speak out everyday to:

- ✓ Make their voices heard
- ✓ Participate in decision making about how resources are allocated
- ✓ Solve community problems
- ✓ Improve the lives of their neighbors
- ✓ Address situations that are not fair

In short, they are making life better for people and creating positive social change.

You can stand up and speak out though a wide range of activities, such as:

- ✓ Meeting politicians and key decision makers to communicate your issue and recommend possible solutions
- ✓ Talking to the media about your issue
- ✓ Writing letters to the editorial boards of newspapers
- ✓ Giving a speech to a local public forum
- ✓ Working in coalitions and in partnership with other like-minded groups to achieve joint advocacy goals and objectives
- ✓ Organizing and encouraging your community members to self-advocate
- ✓ Participating in rallies, street marches, strikes, and boycotts

Helpful Hint...

Words You Might Hear

You might hear people use many different words to describe the act of standing up and speaking out. These include:

- Civic participation
- Activism
- Organizing
- Advocacy
- Social Change

And you might hear people use different words to describe the people who do it:

- Activists
- Organizers
- Advocates
- Change agents

In this tool kit, we'll use the terms *advocate* and *advocacy* in the broadest sense. ***(See Chapter 3)***

The Role of People Who Stand Up and Speak Out in U.S. History

"The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life."

--Jane Addams[1]

The U.S. has a rich history of individuals and groups of individuals standing up and speaking out to make sure everyone's voices are heard, to right wrongs, and to make life better for others. These actions are protected by the constitutional rights of Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Assembly. (***See Chapter 4 for an explanation of these and other rights***.)

Historical activists like Frederick Douglass,[2] and Martin Luther King, Jr. have worked with great effort and bravery to make sure that these rights truly apply to everyone living in the U.S., and that the residents of the U.S. are empowered to make changes. Some other examples of activism throughout our history include:

- ✓ **The Labor Rights Movements** of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which led to the creation of unions and the development of minimum wage laws and other protections for workers.
- ✓ **The Women's Suffrage Movement**, which led to the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920, giving women the right to vote.
- ✓ **The Civil Rights Movement**, which was a more than a decade long effort to abolish discrimination and achieve social and political equality for African Americans. It led to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. (***See Chapter 4 for a discussion of these acts.***)
- ✓ **The Immigrant Rights Movement**, which among other things, currently advocates to help establish a way for undocumented residents to become citizens, and decrease the amount of time it takes to bring a family member from another country into the U.S.

"The fight is never about grapes or lettuce. It is always about people."

--Ceasar Chavez

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[1] Jane Addams was a 19th century social reformer who founded Hull-House, an innovative effort to address urban poverty, and was an advocate for immigrants, women's rights, and peace.
[2] Frederick Douglass was a 19th century escaped slave, who became a prominent abolitionist activist, writer, and statesman.

The Role of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) have always been important vehicles for people to make their voices heard, participate in decision-making, and advocate for positive change for their communities. CBOs play a critical role in our democratic processes because they have direct access to information about community needs and strengths, have close relationships with and the trust of the community they serve, can mobilize community networks, and serve as a collective voice for the community.

Often, people who work in CBOs feel hesitant at first about speaking out. They may not be comfortable with demonstrations, rallies, or other forms of public protest. The good news is that while these can be useful strategies, CBOs can use many other kinds of activities and strategies to advocate for change. CBOs can:

- ✓ Organize a community forum to discuss a problem and find a solution
- ✓ Write, call, and/or meet with a key decision maker to negotiate a solution to a problem
- ✓ Mobilize community members to attend a public hearing and give testimony
- ✓ Educate and inform the general public about your community
- ✓ Help to organize a coalition of people who want to make the same changes
- ✓ Conduct research to understand better all the possible strategies for change

Most importantly, CBOs can make sure that the voices of the people directly affected by an issue or problem are at the table and can develop the skills and leadership of members of the community they serve and represent to contribute to making positive changes.

The Role of Ethnic Community-Based Organizations (ECBOs)

> *"The police, Mayor, school board, etc. are public servants. They work for us, the public, so they have to listen to us."* ... Somali ECBO leader

ECBOs have always played an important role in standing up and speaking out for refugee and immigrant communities. As an ECBO leader, you most likely do one or more of the following already:

- ✓ Educate mainstream agencies and organizations about the needs and strengths of your community
- ✓ Help community members understand and gain access to the services or benefits to which they are entitled--such as Medicaid, Medicare Part D, or SSI
- ✓ Hold town meetings or forums that invite elected officials and other decision makers to listen to the concerns of refugees and give your community a chance to ask questions
- ✓ Serve as a voice for your community, communicating issues and concerns to decision makers and policymakers
- ✓ Serve as a bridge between your community and mainstream communities

- ✓ Provide information to your community about important changes and new developments with laws, policies, and programs--such as new local laws affecting the rights of tenants or what to expect with the 2010 Census
- ✓ Meet with government agencies or other service providers to discuss problems refugees face and work to find realistic solutions--such as how to improve communication between refugee communities and the police

Chances are, you would like to do more of these kinds of activities but you're not sure how and you don't have time. Making service providers and service systems work better for refugees takes both time and a set of knowledge and skills that is different from those you use to provide direct services to individual community members.

It takes time to research and understand the bigger systemic problems, to meet with stakeholders and decision makers, to build relationships, to negotiate solutions. How do you find the time to "stand up and speak out" when you also have a steady stream of community members at your door in need of assistance?

There are so many issues that affect your community, how do you know when to stand up and speak out? When should your ECBO turn its attention to making sure that fair housing laws are better enforced so that landlords cannot get away with evicting refugees unfairly? Or, trying to get the local public hospital to hire and train qualified interpreters? Or, trying to get the school system to hire bilingual community liaisons?

> **Keep In Mind...**
>
> **Your Role in Empowering Community Members to Stand Up and Speak Out!**
>
> The most effective and lasting changes are usually brought about by those people most directly affected by the issue or problem. It's important for you, as an ECBO leader, to stand up and speak out for change. But it's also important for you to empower community members to stand up and speak out. Your ECBO should involve community members in advocacy efforts and help them learn what their rights so they can speak out for themselves!

As you decide how much you can and should take on, consider the following questions:

- ✓ **How important is the issue or problem to community members your ECBO serves and represents?** In any community, different people have different needs and concerns. You may need to go out and talk to community members or hold community meetings to find out which issues people care most about and what to do something about. Sometime, you might want to focus on an issue that affects the most people. But sometimes, there may be an issue that affect a smaller number of people, but is critical to that small group.

- ✓ **Will getting involved serve to educate the community you serve and represent about the issue and educate the broader community about refugees?** Sometimes, by getting involved in an issue and working in partnership or coalition with other groups, you can play an important role in educating both your community and the broader community. For example, by getting involved in a local task force that is set up to look at the availability of child care in your city, you can bring the perspective of refugees to the task force and gain information about child care that will likely be useful to your community.

- ✓ **How likely is it that, by "standing up and speaking out," you can make a difference?** You can always make a difference--the question is how long and hard you may have to fight and how many people will need to get involved. As the saying goes, you may need to "pick your battles."

- ✓ **Are members of the community already getting involved and your ECBO can support their efforts?** It may be that community members are already getting involved in advocacy on an issue but are looking for support from your ECBO to help them carry out their plan. Or, it may be that community members want to, but don't have the skills or resources to organize together. ECBOs can play an important role in making helping the community organize. For example, African taxi drivers in Washington D.C. were concerned about new policies in the city that would be harmful to their businesses. Several of the taxi drivers approached a local African ECBO and asked if the ECBO could support their emerging advocacy efforts by proving meeting space and training in how to advocate.

- ✓ **Is the community you serve and represent not "at the table" on an important issue?** Sometimes, communities are overlooked in the decision process because they may not have any type of representation. As an ECBO leader, you can help establish connections between the refugee communities and the key people that can influence decisions.

- ✓ **What resources and capacity does your ECBO have?** Lastly, as you consider which issues you can take on and how much you can do, you have to consider the resources--people, time, money, skills, relationships--available to your ECBO.

The remaining chapters in this tool kit will give you additional information and tools you can use to address the questions above and build your capacity to "stand up and speak out" on issues affecting refugees in your community.

Chapter 3
Standing Up and Speaking Out for Your Community:
Key Things to Know, Questions to Ask, and Steps to Take

Introduction

What can you do to ensure that your community's rights are respected, that they have access to and receive high quality services, and that they are supported in their efforts to integrate with the broader community?

In talking to dozens of ECBOs around the country, we heard that one of the most common questions ECBOs have in their role as a bridge between their community and mainstream service systems is this: *When there's a problem, who do we talk to and what do we ask for?*

Figuring out what you should do--who to talk to, what to ask for, and how to get it--isn't easy. There's no one right way to *advocate* for the rights of your community or for better services. What you should do depends on the following:

✓ **What is the situation?** As Chapter 1 pointed out, you may:

- Need to respond to a crisis or to an ongoing problem with a particular service provider or service system.
- Have a special opportunity to stand up and speak out--such as an opportunity to meet with a new mayor, who asks to meet with community leaders to better understand their concerns.
- Want to prevent a change that would have a negative impact on services to your community--such as city funding cuts for adult education programs.

More Information...

A Few Words about the Term *Advocacy*

Advocacy is about speaking up for people and the issues that affect them. Advocates try to influence the people who have the power and authority to make a decision or adopt changes that will impact people or a community.

You are *already* an advocate if you've ever:

- Spoken up at a meeting to correct misinformation about refugees
- Attended a school meeting with parents to support them in communicating their concerns
- Called a caseworker at an agency to find out why someone's application for benefits was denied
- Written a letter to a newspaper expressing your opinion about a community issue

As we noted in Chapter 2, *standing up* and *speaking out* for your community is a right shared by everyone in the US. As ECBO leaders, you probably advocate for refugees every day. Now your challenge is to build on that experience to make sustainable improvements in services to your whole community.

Advocacy is often confused with *lobbying,* which is an attempt to influence specific legislation being considered by a city, county council, state legislature, or the Congress. *Lobbying* is just one form of advocacy. Nonprofit organizations can only engage in very limited amounts of lobbying and can never use public funds to lobby. For a more detailed information,

⇒ See ***Checklists and Helpful Hints*** on page 15.

✓ **What needs to change?** What will it take to address the problem? Are you seeking:

- Improved communication with a particular service provider or system?
- The elimination of specific barriers to access? For example, you may want city-funded ESL classes to provide child care so all parents can access them.
- Changes in the way service providers deliver services or changes to specific policies or practices? For example, you may want a social service agency to change the questions on its intake forms to better capture the needs of refugee families.
- To change an existing law or pass a new one?

✓ **What is the nature of your relationships?** What is the nature of your relationship with the agency, organization, or institution that you are dealing with? Do you have good relationships with the staff? Have you worked with them before? Are they open to your ideas and input?

✓ **What is your capacity and experience?** How much time does your ECBO have to invest in advocating with different agencies, institutions, and organizations to better serve your community? What skills and support will you need? What styles and approaches are you most comfortable with? Does the advocacy work or issue align with your ECBO's mission? Is this something your ECBO should get involved in?

Sometimes, it's a question of sitting down with the *decision maker* in the government agency, institution, nonprofit or for-profit organization you are dealing with, educating them about your community, and working together to figure out a solution. Sometimes, it may take more. If a person or institution does not want to change and does not want to work with you, then it may take more pressure to get them to change. Finally, you may end up discovering that what really needs to change is a law or policy--and that will take a whole different kind of effort.

This chapter introduces you to key questions you should ask and steps you can take to successfully *stand up and speak out* for your community. It provides general suggestions and ideas for taking action, using a variety of examples.

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> Who's the Decision Maker?
>
> A *decision maker* is the person or people who have the power or authority to make decisions affecting the issue, problem, or population you are advocating for.
>
> For example, if you are addressing issues related to the police department, the decision maker might be the Police Chief, or it could be the City Council. Likewise, with schools, it might be principal, the Superintendent of Schools, or the School Board.

⇒ See ***Chapters 4, 5, and 6*** for an in-depth discussion of appropriate actions for different situations. These chapters address specific topics related to legal rights, human service programs, access to services, and quality of services.

When Should Your ECBO Stand Up and Speak Out?

This chapter focuses on three different kinds of situations in which your ECBO may need to advocate on behalf of individuals or your broader community.

1. **When there is a community crisis.** Sometimes, you may be *forced* into becoming an advocate by a crisis that demands a response--an unarmed refugee youth is shot by the police in a misunderstanding, a refugee dies of an illness that a hospital should have been able to treat easily, or several refugee families' homes are spray painted with ethnic slurs. These are all real examples in which refugee community members came to an ECBO and said, "*You need to do something.*" Many ECBOs first get involved in advocacy when they must respond to a crisis.

2. **When there is an ongoing problem.** You might realize that an issue needs attention after you see many people experiencing the same problem with a particular service provider, employer, government agency or other public institution. Examples of typical problems include:
   - **Problems with *policies***--for example, a 1996 law states that refugees can no longer receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) after seven years unless they obtain citizenship. That's a problem with a *policy*.
   - **Problems *getting* services**--for example, refugees need a particular service, but the programs have long waiting lists or are not located near public transportation.
   - **Problems getting *appropriate* services**--for example, refugees are getting services, but report problems with how they are treated or the service quality (e.g., refugees attend a county-run senior center, but the center does not serve ethnic food and many seniors are not eating as a result).
   - **Problems related to *communication*** --for example, parents complain that they do not understand what is going on in their children's schools or there is no one to help refugee patients communicate with the doctor at a local clinic.
   - **Problems with *unequal treatment***--for example, a company is not hiring any members of your community, although many qualified refugees have applied.

Keep In Mind...

"Case" Advocacy vs. "Systems" Advocacy

Sometimes, an individual refugee comes to your ECBO and reports a problem with a particular service--maybe s/he has been cut off from food stamps or has been denied enrollment in a program that helps with utility bills and does not understand why. In these situations, you need to know that most agencies and service providers have a formal grievance or appeal process. You should become familiar with that process, then help refugees navigate the process. This is often called "case advocacy" or "client advocacy."

But when you start to see the same problem over and over again, that may be a sign that the policies and practices of the agency or service provider are the problem that needs to be fixed! This type of advocacy is known as "systems advocacy."

⇒ ***See Chapter 5 for more information about how to file formal complaints and appeals.***

3. **When there is a special opportunity.** You might have a special opportunity to speak out for your community. For example, a new school board member calls your office and says she wants to learn more about the needs of refugee children and their families, or the mayor sets up a *New Americans Task Force* to look at ways to improve city services to refugees and immigrants.

In each of these situations, a critical role for your ECBO is to stand up and speak out for your community. Depending on the situation, you may have different goals, need to use different approaches or strategies, and need to work with different partners.

How Do You Decide What to Do?

In some situations, you may simply need to increase a *mainstream* service provider's awareness and understanding of refugee's needs. These providers may have little knowledge of or experience with refugees. Other situations might require you to change the policies and practices of the service provider; advocate for more funding to address a problem; or focus on getting a new law passed or current laws enforced.

Sometimes, it might only take one or two meetings with a decision maker to achieve your goal of ensuring that refugees' rights are protected, that they receive high quality services, and have opportunities to successfully integrate with the broader community.

Other times, you may need a long-term effort--also known as a *campaign* --to achieve the changes or improvements you are looking for. Again, it depends on the situation, what needs to change, your relationships, your ECBO's capacity, and how open or resistant the decision maker is to change. Below, are steps you can follow to figure out who you should talk to and what you should ask for as you "stand up and speak out" for refugees.

⇒ See ***Tools You Can Use*** on page 17 for a planning worksheet you can use as you work through the steps below.

1st - Learn As Much As You Can About the Problem and the Service Provider

Whether you seek to address a crisis or an ongoing problem, you need to learn as much as you can about the issue or problem, and about the program and the service provider. You don't want to take action based on information that is inaccurate or assumptions that are incorrect.

For example, let's say there is a well-known and highly respected employment and training program in your city. Your ECBO has referred refugees to the program, but no one has ever successfully enrolled.

> **Keep In Mind…**
>
> **What YOU Need to Know!**
>
> When there's a problem, don't jump to conclusions. Become a detective! Investigate!
>
> You need to know:
> - What are the laws and regulations?
> - Who enforces the laws and regulations?
> - What are service providers' policies?
> - How do you file a formal complaint or grievance?

So what do you do? Do you immediately cry, "*Discrimination!*" and file a lawsuit? Do you say "*Oh well, let's try again next year*"? To make an *informed decision* about the best course of action, you need to figure out what is really going on. For example, the problem could be:

✓ **Lack of awareness and/or knowledge of refugee communities.** The service provider might not be aware of or know much about the refugee community, or may have misinformation about your community. Perhaps the organization wants to serve refugees but doesn't know where to start or how to reach them.

✓ **Language or cultural barriers.** Sometimes, service providers reach out to refugees and want to serve them. However, they may not have the appropriate language and cultural competency to do so. Without meaning to, their programs might have significant language and cultural barriers. For example, with the case of the employment and training program, perhaps refugee women who might want to participate don't because there are no female teachers and the service provider does not realize it's inappropriate for females to be alone with a male in some cultures.

⇒ ***See Chapter 6 for more information about language access and cultural competency.***

✓ **Discrimination.** Perhaps the organization does not want to serve refugees and is deliberately not letting refugees into the program. It may prefer to serve native English speakers or citizens, feeling they are easier to serve and place in jobs. Staff may even have negative views about refugees. If the program is publicly funded, this behavior may be unlawful discrimination.

⇒ ***See Chapter 4 for more information about unlawful discrimination.***

✓ **Lack of resources.** Let's say there's a food handler training program that would be appropriate for refugees. You meet with the service provide to find out more about the requirements, and then offer your help reaching out to refugees. The provider tells you, "We'd love to work with you, but what we don't have the resource. The program is only funded to serve 40 people and the available slots fill up quickly." What can you do? If the policy is "first come, first served" then your ECBO could help refugees sign up early. Or, you could advocate for more funding to expand the program.

> **Helpful Hint…**
>
> **"Sorry…We Don't Have the Resources"**
>
> For many services providers--both government and nonprofit--lack of resources can be a real constraint. But it can also be an excuse to do nothing. If the service provider really values reaching diverse communities, it will want to work with you to find creative ways to do so, or to advocate for more funds.

✓ **Inconvenient time or location.** It could be that refugees are not able to participate in a program or service because it's offered at an inconvenient time or location. Perhaps the site is not accessible by public transportation, or the classes are at night and women from your community are not supposed to go out alone at night.

⇒ ***See Chapter 6 for more information about these other access issues.***

✓ **Eligibility issues.** Perhaps the eligibility requirements tend to exclude refugees. For example, the target service areas might be neighborhoods where few refugees live. Or, the income levels of many refugees may be just above the limit to qualify for free services.

⇒ ***See Chapter 5 for further discussion of issues related to eligibility for various human services.***

✓ **Other program rules, policies, or regulations.** In addition to eligibility requirements, there may be other program rules, policies, or regulations that make it difficult to serve refugees, or ones that are needed in order to better serve refugees. For example, an agency that wants to better serve refugees could change its contracting policies and require that service providers with whom it contracts demonstrate their capacity to serve limited English speaking clients.

It's going to take some work to fully understand the issue or problem, the service provider and how it works, and who the decision makers are and what they care about. To learn as much as you can, you will need to talk to many different people and ask a lot of questions. Most likely, you will have to start out by setting up a few meetings just to gather information.

⇒ See ***Checklists and Helpful Hints*** for an introduction to different kinds of meetings, and ***Chapter 8*** for a more comprehensive meeting planning guide.

Specifically, you'll want to learn as much as you can about:

✓ **The experiences of refugees who are affected by the issue or problem.**

- How many refugees have experienced the issue or problem? What have they experienced?
- Do they view it as a serious problem?
- Why do they think this problem or issue has been happening?
- What do they think needs to change? What do they think some possible solutions are?

To answer these questions, you could talk to people one-on-one, have a community meeting, or even do a brief survey.

> **Keep In Mind...**
>
> **Is it Just One Case or Is it Many?**
>
> Sometimes, it's not important how many people are affected by a problem. If even one person is unfairly denied benefits or discriminated against--that's one person too many.
>
> But be careful about jumping to conclusions based on the experience of one person only. One person might report a bad experience with a particular staff member at a service provider, but that might be an isolated experience based on a misunderstanding, miscommunication, or even personality differences.

✓ **The particular program or service in question.**

- What does the program or service offer?
- How is it designed?
- What are the rules and eligibility requirements?

- How is the program funded? What are the funder requirements?
- Who are the program staff? What ethnic communities do they represent and what languages do they speak?
- Does the program solicit and incorporate feedback from past and present participants?

✓ **The service provider.**

- What type of entity are you dealing with--a government agency? Other public institution? Nonprofit or for-profit organization?
- What is its mission?
- What is its overall reputation?
- What is its track record of service to refugee communities?
- Does it employ or has it employed bilingual and bicultural staff?
- Does it have qualified staff?
- Does it have qualified bilingual/bicultural staff at the decision making level?
- Has it worked in partnership with other refugee or immigrant organizations?
- Who provides oversight of the service provider's activities? If it's a nonprofit organization, then it's the Board of Directors. If it's a government agency, then it will be a body of elected officials (such as a City Council, School Board, County Commissioners, or State Legislatures).

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> Some Ways to Gather Information
>
> 1. **Search the service provider's website**. An agency or organization's website will give you basic information about its mission and services. Some also have organizational charts, which can be very useful in identifying relevant decision makers.
>
> 2. **Use this tool kit.** Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of this tool kit give you basic information about different kinds of issues--such as civil rights and language access--and different kinds of service providers and programs/services.
>
> 3. **Arrange informational meetings or phone calls with the provider.** Start with people you know who work at the service provider. If you or someone in your ECBO know a staff member, call and see if s/he is willing to help you better understand the service provider. This person might be able to tell you who you need to speak with about your concerns. For example, if you know a helpful teacher and you have a question about the policies of the school system, you could talk to that teacher.
>
> If you don't know anyone, call the service provider or organization and ask who you should speak with regarding your concerns. In a smaller agency or organization, that might be the Executive Director. With a larger provider, it may be a Program Manager or Director.

✓ **Other community groups, organizations or coalitions working on the same issue.**
Talk to other people who might be familiar the issue, the program/service, or the service provider. With the many issues or problems refugees face, chances are some other group is or has been affected by the same problem. Some other community group, organization, or coalition is probably familiar with the issue or problem, has tried to do something about it, and could offer advice or lessons learned. They may also be potential allies, and willing to work with you to solve the problem.

⇒ ***See Chapters 4 through 7 for contact information for various organizations that work on issues likely to affect your community. Chapter 7 provides an introduction to community mapping, a tool you can use to identify potential allies.***

2nd - Identify *What* Needs to Change and Come Up with Proposed Solutions

Once you've done your homework and understand more about the nature of the problem, it will be easier to identify exactly *what* needs to change and to develop proposed solutions.

But sometimes it's hard to know what to ask for. What's a reasonable solution and request? For example, if a very good training program has no locations near where refugees live, should you ask the service provider to open a site in the refugee community? If there are problems between refugees and the police department, should you ask that they hire and train a certain number of officers from your community?

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 will help you become familiar with laws, standards, and best practices related to different areas of human services. This information will help you figure out what to ask for.
Below, we describe some typical problems and potential solutions.

> **Keep In Mind...**
>
> What Can We Ask For?
>
> First, your ECBO should ask: What would be our dream solution to this problem? Make sure to involve not only your staff, Board and volunteers, but also community members in a discussion. With the example of the training program, maybe the *dream solution* would be a training site located in the apartment complex where refugees live. Then ask: What other solutions would be acceptable? Generate as many ideas as you can before you go into your meeting with the provider.
>
> When you go into the meeting, you can say: "Here's what we think really needs to happen to fix this problem. Now let's talk about what's possible and how we can work together to find a solution. Perhaps, in the end, you agree that the provider will offer a transportation stipend to refugees to attend the training.

✓ **Lack of awareness and/or knowledge of refugee communities.** If you learn that the service provider wants to serve your community, but doesn't know anything about refugees, then you may need to focus on *education*--educating the staff of the service provider about your community. You could do this through formal presentations or trainings, or informal meetings.

✓ **Language barriers.** Let's say you learn that refugees keep encountering language barriers when they seek services from a particular agency or organization.

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> Information to Include When You Are Educating Others About Your Community
>
> Chances are, regardless of what the problem is, you will have to spend time educating the service provider about your community. Whether you are making a formal presentation or giving an informal talk, for a checklist of information you should be sure to include, For a more detailed information,
>
> ⇒ See ***Checklists and Helpful Hints*** on page 23.

Then you may need to *both* educate that service provider about your community and their rights, *and* identify specific practices the service provider could change or adopt to ensure access. In this case, you'll need to make sure you are familiar with the laws and standards related to language access.

⇒ ***See Chapter 6 for more information about language access.***

✓ **Discrimination.** If your research suggests that in fact the organization has unlawfully discriminated against refugees, then you might need to take formal action and file a complaint, or even work with a legal service provider to file a lawsuit.

⇒ ***See Chapter 4.***

✓ **Lack of resources.** If your research reveals that the reason why some refugees don't have access to a particular service is because the program or service is not funded adequately, then you may need to advocate for more funding.

✓ **Inconvenient time or location.** If you learn that refugees are having problems participating in a program or service because it's only offered when most refugees work or it's in a location many can't get to, then you may want to sit down with the service provider and figure out some solutions: Can they offer the program at different times? Can they build transportation stipends into the budget for their program?

⇒ ***See Chapter 6.***

✓ **Eligibility issues.** If your research reveals that the eligibility requirements for the service or program tend to exclude refugees, then you may need to negotiate changes to the eligibility requirements. If those requirements are set at the federal level, that would take a larger advocacy effort. But if they are set by a particular nonprofit service provider or city or county agency, then you might be able to get them changed.

⇒ ***See Chapter 5.***

3rd - Identify Specifically *Who* Can Make the Changes You Seek

Once you've identified *what* needs to change, you need to figure out *who* has the power or authority to make the change you seek. Who is the decision maker?

Often, it's really a question of how *high up* you need to go. For example, if you are dealing with an issue or problem that is related to:

✓ **Communication between parents and the school system**--then potential decision makers might be a particular

Helpful Hint…

Create a Map

To figure out who has the power or authority to make the changes you seek, create a map of all the key stakeholders – including the key people and positions within the institution or agency you are targeting, as well as other stakeholders who play a role.

As you gather information, bring your team together. Put several pieces of large paper up on a wall. Ask people what they have learned about *who* has power and authority for *what* with regard to the problem you want to solve. Write down the names of people or titles or positions you've learned about. Begin to look at how they are connected, and who or what will offer the best approach. For more on mapping,

⇒ ***See Chapter 7.***

teacher, the school principal, the School Superintendent, the School Board, or the City Council.

- ✓ **Treatment of refugees by the social services department**--then potential decision makers might be a particular program supervisor or director, the director for the entire agency, or the city council or state legislature.
- ✓ **Access to publicly-funded health care services**--then potential decision makers might be a program director, the director of the entire clinic, or the agency that funds the clinic.
- ✓ **Availability of spaces for refugees in an employment and training program delivered by a nonprofit organization**--then potential decision makers might be the program's outreach worker, a program supervisor or director, the Executive Director of the organization, the Board of Directors, or even the organization's funders.

Helpful Hint…

Advocating with Funders

When the bottom line is that a provider really needs more money to be able to expand services to refugees, then you might need to advocate with the provider's funder. This might mean testifying at a budget hearing, writing a letter of support to a foundation, or event attending a meeting with the funder.

You also need to learn as much as you can about the decision maker(s) to develop the best approach or strategy.

One of the most important things you will need to assess is: *How committed is the decision maker to serving our community?* Ask yourself:

- ✓ Does s/he want to do the right thing but simply not know how? If the decision maker wants to do the right thing, what can our ECBO do to help?
- ✓ Is the decision maker resistant to change? If the decision maker is resistant to change, why?
- ✓ Does s/he think it will cost too much? Worried about staff capacity? Not see the need to change anything? Or, simply not want to make the changes you seek?

4th - Make A Plan and Take Action

Once you've identified *what* needs to change and identified *who* has the power to make the changes you seek, you need to decide on the best way to influence the decision maker to make the changes you want. And, of course, you need to make a plan.

There are many different ways to *take action*--to *organize* and *advocate* for the changes you seek. In choosing the best approach, you need to:

- ✓ Gather the information you've collected about the nature of the problem, including what type of solution or change is needed.
- ✓ Assess how open or resistant the decision maker is to change, and why decision maker might be resistant to your proposed solutions.
- ✓ Assess your own resources (time, skills, funds, experience).
- ✓ Make a decision on how to proceed and create a plan.

> **Keep in Mind…**
>
> Be Ready to Learn as You Go… And Apply What You Learn!
>
> There is no one right way to take action and organize and advocate for change. The path to success is different for every *effort*, because every situation is unique. You need to be willing to learn as you go and try new approaches when the ones you've been using are not working.

Start with Cooperative Approaches…

In general, it's often best to start with *cooperative* approaches. Ask for a meeting to share your concerns and let the decision maker know that you believe that s/he cares about refugees as much as you do and wants to make sure refugees receive equal access to high quality services. Offer to work with the agency, institution, or organization to develop solutions and to help implement them.

Sometimes, in using cooperative approaches, you may find that the decision maker starts to make excuses or come up with reasons why something won't work or can't be done. In such a scenario, you may need to do some negotiation and consider ways to compromise.

⇒ See ***Checklists and Helpful Hints*** on page 24 for more on effective meetings and communication with decision makers.

⇒ See ***Checklists and Helpful Hints*** on page 29 for more on effective negotiation.

> **Helpful Hint…**
>
> When You Offer Help…
>
> Be careful not offer to do too much for free. It's fine for you to advise the target group on the best ways to conduct outreach to your community and to give them the names of people who can do translations of flyers and lists of ethnic media to post information.
>
> But if the agency or organization wants your ECBO to do the outreach for them, then you need to figure out how much time it will take and charge them appropriately. Your time and your knowledge of and relationships in the community are valuable!

…If That Doesn't Work, Try Another Approach!

If the cooperative approaches and negotiations don't work and you find that the decision maker is resistant to change, then you may need to take a different approach. You make need to make your voice louder by getting more people involved! Or, if you knew from your research that the decision maker does not think there's a problem and does not see the need to work with your community, you might need to take another approach from the beginning.

In either case, you may need to put pressure on the decision maker to let him/her know that many people want this change and are ready to bring public attention to the issue if necessary. You may need to carry our things like:

- ✓ **Letter writing campaigns**--which get people affected by the issue and their supporters to write letters to the decision maker requesting or demanding the changes you seek.
- ✓ **Petitions**--which are documents that state a demand or request; organizers then get as many people as they can to sign them and then the petition(s) to the decision maker.
- ✓ **Media advocacy**--which can include getting an issue on local television and radio programs, as well as in local newspapers through feature stories, letters to the editor, or opinion pieces (also know as *op-eds*).
- ✓ **Online advocacy**--which uses free and/or inexpensive internet sites for advocacy. Site such as MySpace and YouTube are easy to use and can distribute information widely.
- ✓ **Rallies, marches, vigils, demonstrations**--which bring people together in public places or in front of the building where the decision maker works to express their demands.

No agency official, Executive Director, or employer wants is to be embarrassed in public and if the decision maker knows that what you are asking for is the right thing to do, a little more pressure might get him or her to do it.

5th - Involve Members of Your Community

Sometimes, as a community or organizational leader, you may feel you need to speak and act *on behalf of* other refugees who are affected by an issue or problem. But involving members of your community who are most affected by the issue in advocating for change can strengthen those efforts. By directly involving affected refugees, your ECBO can:

- ✓ **Gain new insights and ideas.** If you plan as a group, you will gain insights into the problem and ideas for possible solutions from those most affected. This will ensure that any actions your ECBO takes will be responsive to the community's needs.
- ✓ **Have a louder voice.** If you advocate as a group--and turn out more people at meetings and hearings, or at rallies and demonstrations--you will have a louder voice. If you mobilize your own community, you will also demonstrate your credibility as leaders.

> **Keep In Mind...**
>
> Travel Together
>
> As an old saying goes, "If you want to travel fast, travel alone. But if you want to travel far, travel together."
>
> And as you travel together, remember to value and lift up the leadership skills and styles that are unique to your culture and community.

✓ **Build the leadership skills of refugees.** Involving refugees in all stages of organizing and advocating for change provides an opportunity for them to build their leadership skills. By being involved in the process, refugees can learn how the system works, how to plan and run a meeting, how to develop goals and objectives, how to speak in public, and other skills.

⇨ ***Resource***: Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), with support from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), provides technical assistance on refugee citizenship and civic participation. For more information about ways to promote civic participation--including the leadership skills--of refugee community members, visit the website: **www.cliniclegal.org/Refugee.html**

Involve members of you community from the beginning. Have a community meeting to discuss the issue or problem. Invite people who want to and have the time to be involved to join a planning committee. Have different people take on different roles and responsibilities. For those who don't have the time or don't yet feel comfortable getting directly involved, keep them informed about your progress.

Some Points to Remember

Anytime you stand up and speak out for your community--to make sure their rights are respected and that they have access to high quality services--remember the following:

✓ **You are an expert.** You are an expert about your community. Do not be intimidated by the people you meet. They have things to teach you, and you have things to teach them.

✓ **Integrity is essential.** Treat people how you wish to be treated. Be honest, fair, and respectful. People will criticize you for many different things. Not everyone will agree with your goals or strategy, or be supportive of your actions. That's okay. If you have a solid decision making process and you act with integrity, others can criticize your strategy or tactics, but any criticisms of your character will be unfounded.

✓ **Relationships are critical.** It is important to cultivate relationships, just as you would cultivate a garden. If you want to grow good crops, you have to prepare the soil and water the plants before you can harvest. When you have an existing relationship with people inside the agencies, institutions, and organizations with which refugees must interact and a problem comes up, it will be much easier to deal with it.

Helpful Hint...

Relationships Take Time

"When we began our new program for refugee seniors, we knew we needed to work with our county health department to help seniors get better services. We found someone in the department who values our community and wanted to help. Over the course of about a year, we built a relationship with that person. Now, whenever there's a problem, we have someone to call who can guide us through the system and help us find a solution."

ECBO Executive Director

It's also important to build relationships with *other ethnic leaders and community organizations*. When you stand up and speak out together, you will be stronger. Take time, before you need them, to meet with leaders of other ethnic communities and organizations, to share information and experiences. Attend their events and support their efforts. Then when you need their support, it's more likely they'll be there for you. You'll already be *allies*!

✓ **Conflict can be good.** You need to be comfortable with conflict and not try to avoid it. Conflict can lead to new ideas and new solutions. If you don't share and discuss differing views, you can't resolve them.

✓ **It's ok to make mistakes.** People advocating for change make mistakes every day. If you try something that doesn't work or say the wrong thing, step back and ask yourself: "What happened and what can we learn from this?"

✓ **Change takes time.** The process of advocating for change takes time--it takes time to schedule meetings, time to involve your community, time to plan and carry out advocacy activities. Once you've achieved the changes you seek, it also takes time to implement them. It takes time for people to change their attitudes and their ways of doing things.

The best way to *learn* advocacy is to *do* advocacy. Remember that the American system of decision making works well only when people speak up for themselves and their neighbors, learn from one another, and work together to make decisions that are fair and reasonable. It is the duty of everyone in the U.S. to speak up for what is right, and work with other people to make this country the best it can be.

Checklists and Helpful Hints

What You Should Know About Nonprofits and Lobbying

Advocacy is about speaking up for people and the issues that affect them. Advocates try to influence the people who have the power and authority to make a decision or adopt changes that will impact people or a community. You are *already* an advocate if you've ever:

- Spoken up at a meeting to correct misinformation about refugees
- Attended a school meeting with parents to support them in communicating their concerns
- Called a caseworker at an agency to find out why someone's application for benefits was denied
- Written a letter to a newspaper expressing your opinion about a community issue

Standing up and *speaking out* for your community is a right shared by everyone in the US. As ECBO leaders, you probably advocate for refugees every day. Now your challenge is to build on that experience to make sustainable improvements in services to your whole community.

Advocacy is often confused with *lobbying or legislative advocacy,* which is designed to influence action by a city, county council, state legislature, or the Congress. *Lobbying* is just one form of advocacy. Nonprofit organizations can only engage in very limited amounts of lobbying and can never use public funds to lobby. Remember that lobbying is defined as attempting to influence specific legislation-- it is taking a position for or against a specific bill or piece of legislation.

Your organization--the staff and the Board members--must understand the basic lobbying rules for nonprofit organizations. Here are the most important things you should know:

✓ **Nonprofits *Can* Lobby.** Tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations are legally permitted to lobby. Just remember that, to maintain your tax-exempt status, *no substantial part* of your activities can involve attempts to influence legislation. However, the IRS provides very little guidance to help 501(c)(3) organizations know what is too much lobbying--that is, what is a *substantial* amount.

Helpful Hint…

The Part H Election

If your organization intends to engage in some lobbying and you want to make sure that you do not exceed the lobbying limits, you should choose the part H election. You do this when you file for tax-exempt status, or you can amend your tax-exemption if you already have it. Under part H, the IRS provides much clearer guidelines on lobbying expenditures, but you will have track these closely.

✓ **Nonprofits *Must* Keep Careful Records of Lobbying Expenditures.** 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations that do spend organizational resources on lobbying--such as staff time, or money for printing and mailings--must keep especially careful records of lobbying expenses and keep them separate. This is especially true if your organization has chosen the part H election, described in the box above.

✓ **Nonprofits *Cannot* Use Government Funds to Lobby.** This also means that during the hours that staff members are being paid through government funding, they may not engage in any lobbying. In addition, a nonprofit cannot use equipment that has been purchased with government funding to carry out lobbying.

✓ **501(c)(3) Nonprofits *Cannot* Engage in Partisan Political Activity.** As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, you cannot support or oppose a candidate for a political office--*at any level of government*-- and you cannot support or oppose a political party. This means that you cannot post advertisements or endorsements for candidates or political parties in your organization's office or newsletter. You cannot allow your organization's name to be associated with a particular candidate or political party, or you could lose your tax exempt status.

Keep in Mind...

Communication with Candidates

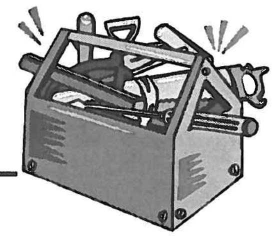
You may give candidates or political parties the opportunity to speak with your community members in a meeting or other event, but only if you invite all political parties and major candidates. You may not just invite one candidate, or one party.

As an individual, you are permitted to express your support for a political party or a candidate. However, you must make it clear that you express your support as an individual, and not on behalf of your organization. In addition, if you do express such support you must do it on your free time, and while you are away from the office.

✓ **Nonprofits *Can* Encourage People to Vote and Register Them to Vote.** As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, you can encourage members of your community to become American citizens, to register to vote, and to vote. You can even offer transportation to help people get to the polls on election day. However, you *cannot* tell people to vote for a particular party or a particular candidate. Voters must make up their own minds about who to vote for. ***There are some limits on voter registration and voter education activities. If you plan to get involved in these kinds of activities, make sure you know the rules.***

Remember that these rules apply whether your organization has its 501(c)(3) nonprofit status or is working with a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor. If you break any of these rules, you may lose grant money, or may have your nonprofit status revoked by the IRS. For more information on these issues visit the websites of:

Alliance for Justice: www.afj.org
Charity Lobbying in the Public Interest: www.clpi.org



Who Do We Meet With and What Do We Ask For
Planning Worksheet

What is the Issue or Problem?

Briefly describe the issue or problem you want to do something about.

Example: Over the years, your ECBO has seen many refugee families have problems with child protective services. Families have had children put in foster care and they don't understand why. The agency has no bilingual staff. In some cases, your staff have accompanied parents to meetings with their child protective services caseworker to interpret for them. But you've also heard that the agency will often use other children in the home to interpret.

1st - Learn As Much As You Can About the Problem and the Service Provider

a. What are 3-5 things you would need to research to get a better understanding of the problem?

   Example: Is the Department of Social Services (DSS), which oversees that child protective service agency, legally required to provide language access to limited English proficient (LEP) clients? Do the staff receive training in cultural competency?

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   ____

   ____

b. Where do you think you could go to find these things out? List several people or places you might be able to go for help.

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c. What roles should staff members, volunteers, members of the Board of Directors, and community members play in this process?

Example: They can attend meetings, share their experiences and ideas for solutions. At some point, we made need them to give testimony to the County Council.

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2nd – Identify *What* Needs to Change and Come Up with Proposed Solutions

a. What needs to change? Do we need to change a law? An agency policy? Agency training or funding?

Example: DSS needs to adopt a policy on providing language assistance. They need to make sure all their staff receive training in cultural competency.

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b. What solutions would your ECBO and the community you serve like to see to this problem? What's your *dream solution*? What are other acceptable solutions? Develop a list of *outcomes* you would like to see.

Example: We want to see all refugees treated with respect and have quality interpreters. Our *dream solution* would be for DSS to hire and train more refugee staff. In the short-term, we would like DSS to contract with a language bank for trained interpreters for all limited English proficient clients. We would like to see all DSS staff learn more about our community and receive training in cultural competency.

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c. What resources would be needed to carry out this solution(s)? Where might the provider find the resources to implement solutions? Where can your ECBO find resources to carry out its part in solving the problem? What resources might already exist in the community?

Example: DSS is legally required to provide language access and must put money in its budget to fund language services. It may need to request an increase in its budget from the County. Our ECBO could help recruit people to become trained interpreters and could provide training about the refugee community to DSS staff, but will need funding to do this. [Note: Your ECBO should estimate how much that would cost, and request a contract with DSS, or you could approach another local funder for support in developing a broader cultural competency training program.]

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3rd - Identify Specifically *Who* Can Make the Changes You Seek

a. Who do you think has the power or authority to make the changes or implement the solutions you seek?

Example: Because this involves a significant budget issue, the child protective services agency and DSS Directors will need to be involved. If DSS will need to request an increase in funding, then the County Council or County Board of Supervisors will need to be involved.

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b. Let's say you believe the decision-maker truly wants to serve your community, what approach might you take? What strategies would you take to achieve your goals?

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____
____

c. Now let's say you find out that in fact the decision maker is resistance to change, now what approaches might you take?

____
____
____

4th - Make A Plan and Take Action

Who	Will Do What	By When?

What Resources Would You Need To Carry Out Your Plan?

Brainstorm a list of all the things you would need (money, people, space, other resources) to carry out your plan, and ideas for where you could find these resources.

Resource Needed?	Where We Could Find It?

Checklists and Helpful Hints

An Introduction to Different Kinds of Advocacy Meetings

As you can see, standing up and speaking out for your community is going to mean a lot of meetings. Be clear on the purpose of every meeting before you ask for the meeting and before you actually meet. Below is a brief description of different kinds of meetings.

- ✓ **A meeting to share information.** Often, your first meeting with a potential ally or decision maker should focus simply on sharing information about your community and stating your concerns.

  For example, let's say you have been trying, unsuccessfully, to refer refugee seniors to services offered by the county government. You discover that the agency simply is not prepared to serve refugee seniors. Your first step might be to request a meeting with the agency director to simply tell her/him more about your community and the experiences and needs or refugee seniors.

- ✓ **A meeting to ask for information.** When you are in the process of gathering information to better understand the problem or issue, you will likely have a lot of meetings to simply get more information.

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> **Preparing for the Meeting**
>
> Whether you are meeting with a decision maker or someone who can help you get more information, you need to be prepared. Here are some hints to help you *prepare* for important meetings:
>
> 1. Know what your objective is--are you meeting to share information, obtain information, or make a request?
> 2. Know something about the person or group you meeting with--especially names, title, and job responsibilities.
> 3. Decide who should attend the meeting from your ECBO or community. If you are meeting with a group, take several people with you.
> 4. Decide on who will say what if more than one person will attend the meeting to represent your organization. Have someone who takes the lead.
> 5. Be sure you know where you are meeting and what time. Be on time!

For example, if the problem is tension between refugees and the police, you might have a meeting with the Community Liaison of the Police Department to learn more about the number of bilingual police officers, recruitment practices, and whether or not the department provides cultural sensitivity training.

In this situation, you may want to meet with leaders from other communities--such as African American or Latino organizational leaders--first to learn about what similar tensions may have existed before and past efforts to resolve them.

✓ **A meeting to ask for help or support from allies.** As in the example above, some of your meetings may be with allies to ask them for help and support. Once you identify likely allies, including non-refugee groups that have similar concerns, you may want to meet with them to:

- Ask for advice on how to reach a decision maker
- Ask for an introductions to other people who can help you
- Ask for their participation in your events (hearings, rallies, etc.) to show their support for the refugee community

For example, let's say that the county social services department has been failing to provide language access to the Southeast Asian community, which is now a significant percentage of its clients. When you researched the problem, you learned that the department does provide language access to Spanish-speaking clients, as a result of long-time advocacy by Latino organizations. You may want to meet with leaders of these organizations for advice on how to approach the department and for their support.

✓ **A meeting to ask for specific changes/make your request.** When you are ready--when you've researched the problem or issue, you've identified potential solutions, and have found allies and supporters--you'll need to meet with the decision maker to make your request.

For example, let's say that the problem is that a county-run health clinic is not providing language access to limited-English proficient refugees. You did your homework, so you know that, legally, they have to. You've also researched existing language access standards that federally-funded health clinics are supposed to follow. Now you have a meeting with the Clinic Director where you will share your concerns and request that the clinic take specific steps to address the language barriers your community faces.

Helpful Hint...

At the Meeting

Here are some hints to help you have a successful meeting:

1. Explain your concern, problem, issue, group, and goals.
2. Listen to the person or people you are meeting with. Ask questions when you don't understand something.
3. Present your proposal--your specific requests for needed changes/solutions. Make sure your requests are ones the decision maker has the authority to implement.
4. Stay focused on the topic at hand. It's fine to make "small talk" but don't get too far off topic!
5. Summarize next steps before you leave (if it's another meeting, set a date).
6. Say thank you.

⇒ ***See Chapter 8 for a comprehensive guide to planning and running different kinds of meetings.***

Checklists and Helpful Hints

Information to Include When Educating Others About Your Community

Chances are, regardless of what the issue or problem is, you will have to spend time educating your target about your community.

Whether you are making a formal presentation or an informal talk, here are some things you should be sure to include:

1. Demographic Information
   - ✓ How many refugees live in the city, county or state?
   - ✓ What ethnic communities do they represent?
   - ✓ What are their ages, gender, family configuration, income, and education levels?
   - ✓ What languages do they speak?

2. History
   - ✓ When did refugees arrive?
   - ✓ Why did they leave their home county?

3. Culture and Traditions
   - ✓ What are the unique customs and traditions of the ethnic community?
   - ✓ What are important values community members share?

4. Needs and Concerns
   - ✓ What are some of the most critical needs and concerns of members of the community?

5. Strengths and Assets
   - ✓ What are some of the most important strengths of refugees?
   - ✓ What contributions are they making to the broader community?

6. Their rights to services:
   - ✓ What programs and services are refugees entitled to and eligible for?

Generally, if you have been invited by a community group to make a presentation, you should keep the presentation to 10 or 15 minutes, and then leave time for questions.

Checklists and Helpful Hints

Effective Meetings and Communication with Decision Makers

Tips for Meetings with Decision Makers

As members of your resettled refugee community, you have an important perspective to bring to decision makers. The first thing to remember is that *you know the experiences of people in your community*. The information and perspective that you bring are invaluable to decision makers.

Before the Meeting

✓ **Prepare what you want to say.** Remember, you might not have a lot of time to meet with the decision maker, so you need to make sure that you know exactly what you need to say and what you are asking for in a concise way.

✓ **Do your research on who has the power to make the changes you want to see.** Does the decision maker you are meeting with have the authority to make the change, or can he/she influence others who do have that authority?

✓ **Do your basic research on the decision maker you are meeting with.** What is his/her history with the issue you are talking about?

✓ **Choose stories from your community that are compelling** and help to describe the issue you want the decision maker to address. Putting a problem in "human terms" is always a good way to help decision makers better understand your issues.

✓ **If you are going to the meeting with other people, select one person to lead the meeting.** He/she will need to introduce the group and explain why you are visiting the decision maker.

✓ **Prepare a small information packet** to leave with the decision maker. This packet could include:

- Information about your organization
- Specific background information about your community
- Press clippings
- Fact sheet about the issue you are talking about

- ✓ **Practice!** Pretend to have the meeting and practice making your points. Ask someone you know to pretend he/she is the decision maker and do a role play.

During the Visit

- ✓ **Show up on time!**
- ✓ **Start on a positive note.** One person should thank the decision maker for the meeting and introduce your group and your purpose for the visit.
- ✓ **Make a brief presentation.** Include what you would like to accomplish at the beginning of the visit. The purpose of your visit should be clear, concise and appropriate.
- ✓ **Know your agenda and stick to it.** Sometimes decision makers will try to shift the conversation to a more comfortable topic. Keep returning to your central message.
- ✓ **Try to find a common ground with the decision maker.** What shared goals, if any, do you have? What are your common interests? Stay true to your goals, but be willing to be flexible in the ways to accomplish the goals.
- ✓ **Personalize and localize the issue.** Relate what you are asking to personal experience and local need.
- ✓ **Ask specific questions** that require specific answers.
- ✓ **Always include a specific request.** Think about what kind of changes you would like to see to your particular issue and ask for their support.
- ✓ **Make it clear you want to continue to build a relationship.**
- ✓ **Tell the truth.** If you do not know something, say so. You do not have to be an expert on everything, but do try to find the answer after the meeting.
- ✓ **If things are not going the way you planned** during the meeting, and you cannot seem to get the meeting to go in the direction you want, accept that at the time. Remain professional and polite. After the meeting, think of more creative ways to reach the decision maker. For example, can you find more allies?
- ✓ **End on a positive note** and review what the next steps (if any) are.
- ✓ **Thank the decision maker** for the meeting.

After the Visit

- ✓ **Always follow up.** Send a thank you letter after the meeting re-stating any agreements and re-stating your request. Thank the decision maker again for meeting with you.

- ✓ **Remember that making any progress with a decision maker is about developing a relationship**, so you need to make sure to follow through with any tasks that you told the decision maker you would accomplish.

- ✓ **Keep the lines of communication open** with the decision maker. Very rarely do final decisions get made after meeting just one time. Be prepared to work in partnership with the decision maker for as long as it takes to address the issue you are concerned about.

Tips for Communication with Decision Makers

The ability to communicate information and ideas effectively and persuasively is one of the most important skills you can build as an advocate for your community. Whether you are in a meeting with head of a government agency or the Executive Director of a service provider, or making a presentation to a school board, here are some things to keep in mind:

- ✓ **Keep it clear and short.** Concentrate on getting your main points across clearly and concisely. If you are writing a letter, keep it under two pages. If you are making a presentation, keep it focused and concise. You should ask how much time you will have. If you are making a presentation at a hearing or briefing, then you will usually need to keep that to about five minutes.

- ✓ **Explain who you are and why you are writing or speaking.** When you speak or write to an individual or a group, make sure that they know who you are, what organization and group you are with, and why you are concerned about the issue or problem you are discussing. You might also want to tell people a little bit about your community and why you are in the U.S. as a refugee.

- ✓ **Have a clear request and/or action item.** If your communication is with a decision maker, make sure it is clear what you are asking for and what you want this person to do. For example: "We want the school system to translate information for parents." Make sure you are not asking people to do things that they do not have the authority to do. If you are communicating with

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> **Be Prepared for Meetings That Don't Go Well**
>
> You and your team need to be prepared for meetings that don't go well. You may encounter a decision maker who has a strong reaction against your team as the messenger, calling attention to problems. Or, a decision maker who denies that there is a problem. Think ahead about how to handle an emotionally-charged meeting.

potential allies and supporters, tell people what they can do to get involved and take action.

- ✓ **Give the issue or problem a "human face."** To help the decision maker(s) better understand the issue or problem, it's often effective to "put a human face" on the issue. For example, describe what happened to a sick child whose parents couldn't communicate with clinic staff. When people can think of a specific person or a specific image connected with your concern, they are more likely to remember what you say, and they will want to help you more. Where possible, bring in the actual voices and experiences of diverse people from your own community, and link these to the voices and experiences of other groups.

- ✓ **Be prepared.** Before a meeting, hearing or presentation, anticipate what questions and concerns your audience might raise and plan your responses. In the meeting or other event, if you are unable to answer a question, do not just say "I don't know." Say "I don't know that right now, but let me find the information and get back to you"--then be sure you do. Following up gives you another opportunity to build your relationship with the decision maker, to move your goals forward, and to show the person that that you take her/his concerns and questions seriously.

- ✓ **Practice.** Practice your communication before the meeting, hearing, or presentation, especially if you don't have a lot of experience. If you are making a speech or a presentation, or giving testimony, practice it. Ask friends and colleagues to observe and give you feedback. If you are meeting with a decision maker, get a few people together and role play. Ask someone to pretend to be the person or people you will be meeting with and present your ideas and information as you will in reality. You may discover questions you should expect, or ways to improve your communication.

- ✓ **Provide support materials as necessary.** If you are giving testimony or making a presentation, make sure to bring copies to hand out. Even for less formal meeting, it may be helpful to write down your main points and give a copy to the person or group you are meeting with, so they will remember those points better. Share copies of fact-sheets or brochures, and business cards if you have them. If you feel unsure about the language, ask someone whose first language is English to read the materials over and give you feedback.

- ✓ **Listen.** In any meeting, ask the other people what they think about an issue. Communication is most useful if everyone speaks, and everyone listens. This gives you an opportunity to learn from the person you are speaking with, and to teach that person about your community.

- ✓ **Follow up.** If you promised or the person you met with requested any additional information, make sure to follow up in a timely manner. After a meeting, write a note to thank the person or people you met with for their time. You can even use the thank you note as an opportunity to state again your most important points. Thank you notes help people to remember, and help build your reputation as someone dependable and worthy of respect.

✓ Debrief. After key meetings--with decision makers or allies--your team should meet to *debrief*. Talk about what you have together heard, seen, or come to understand…and what you need to pay attention to in future meetings! Questions you might to ask yourself include:

- Did we have the right people at the meeting? For example, did it work well to include elders or business professionals in the meeting?
- Were objectives reasonable? Should we have asked for more or did we ask for too much (more than the decision maker was ready offer)?
- Was out tone appropriate? Were we too "nice" or too confrontational?

As you become a more experienced advocate, you will find it easier to plan and participate in meetings and become more comfortable with all different forms of communication.

Checklists and Helpful Hints

Effective Negotiations

In meetings with decision makers--whether government officials or Executive Directors of othe mainstream nonprofit organizations--where you plan to ask for specific changes and make your request, you will probably have to *negotiate*. Why? Because you are likely to be in a position where you want more than the decision maker is willing to give. You need to be clear on what you want but also on what you are willing to give up. You should always ask for more than you expect to get. You need to be ready to negotiate.

Below, are some things to keep in mind when you are negotiating with decision makers to improve services for your community. Several of the items on this list are similar to those for holding effective meetings. However, they are also important to take into account in the context of negotiation.

1. **Have a Team.** You will likely find yourself in situations where you will want more than one person representing your side--that is, your issue, refugee community, or ECBO. If you are in a meeting with a decision maker and that person has three other agency staff present, you don't want to be in a position where it's one against four!

2. **Agree on your goals.** Make sure everyone on the team who will be at the meeting agrees on what your goals are. You don't want to contradict each other in a meeting with a decision maker! For example, if your team agrees that you want the social service agency you are dealing with to provide cultural sensitivity training to all its staff and to hire at least two bilingual outreach workers, you don't want one person to then state in the meeting, "but if you can't do that, we'll just go ahead and do the outreach for you."

3. **Agree on your *bottom line*.** In addition to agreeing on your goals--what you really want the decision maker to do--you should also discuss and agree on your bottom line. Your bottom line is the minimum change or actions that would be acceptable to your group. For example, your bottom line might be that the agency provide cultural

> **Helpful Hint…**
>
> **Putting Your Team Together**
>
> As you think about who should be at a key meeting with a decision maker, think *strategically*. For example, do you need someone there who:
>
> - Has experience that relates to the background of the decision maker and is likely to command respect?
> - Is level-headed and can stay calm if you get a strong reaction against your request from the decision maker?
> - Has been directly affected by the problem and can tell a compelling story?

sensitivity training to the case managers who interact with refugees and contract for interpreters.

4. **Know what you *have* to offer and what you are *willing* to offer.** You and your organization are the experts on your community and have access to community members in ways that government entities and other service providers simply do not. You also have the trust of your community and can serve as a conduit of information and as a bridge between your community and other service providers. You need to value what you bring to the table! You need to decide before hand how much assistance you are willing to provide for free and what you will do for a fee!

5. **Agree on your overall *strategy*.** How will you approach the decision-maker? How will you convince him/her that what your ECBO and community is in his/her interest as well? Will you try to get all of your goals/requests met at once? Or, will you use an incremental approach and ask for only a few changes at a time?

6. **Anticipate questions or concerns.** With your team, brainstorm possible questions, issues, or concerns the decision-maker might raise and think about how you would address them. For example, the decision maker might say, "We don't have the resources to hire new staff." Your response could be, "When an outreach worker position opens up, you could hire a bilingual person, and you could build funds for a new position into future funding requests." Think about the arguments that might best persuade a reluctant service provider to change. If the decision maker asks your team a question that you don't know the answer to, you can say that you will look into it and get back to them.

> **Keep In Mind...**
>
> Cultural Considerations
>
> As you prepare for a meeting with a decision-maker in which you will need to negotiate, be sure that your team discusses cultural considerations. For example, in many cultures it is impolite to disagree. But in meeting with a decision-maker, you may need to disagree to correct misinformation about refugees or to put forward the solution your community desires. Discuss the potential conflicts you might encounter between mainstream approaches to negotiation and approaches from your culture. How will you handle these?

7. **Be clear on team roles for meetings.** Before a meeting, make sure your team talks about roles in the meetings, specifically who will say what or cover which points you want to make. For example, maybe one person will talk about your community, someone else will share your community's concerns or the problems they are facing, and someone else talk about your proposed solutions.

8. **Practice.** Pretend to have the meeting and practice making your points. Ask someone you know to pretend s/he is the decision maker and do a role play.

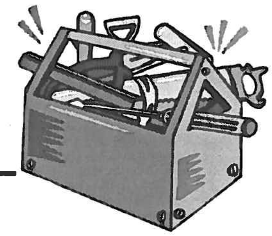
9. **Find common ground.** When you are both preparing for a meeting and considering what the decision maker's positions will be, and even during a meeting, try to find common ground. What shared goals do you have? What are your common interests? Maybe you both care about refugees and what them to be able to access high quality services, but you just have different ideas about the best way to do that.

10. **Make agreements and get them in writing.** When you finally reach agreements--and it might take many meetings to do that--make sure you carefully review what the decision maker has agreed to and that you prepare a written document summarizing who will do what.

11. **Follow up.** Once the decision maker has agreed to make certain changes, you should also agree to a follow up meeting in 3 months or 6 months to assess progress. Your ECBO can play an important role in providing feedback to determine if the changes are making a difference for your community.

If the agency you are dealing with receives federal funds and you believe that that the agency or service provider is in violation of the Civil Rights Act, you can still use an informal process to encourage the provider to comply with the law. If the agency or provider is resistant, that's when you may want to let them know that you intend to file a formal complaint.

Tools You Can Use



Training Activity - Benefits and Challenges of Standing Up and Speaking Out

1. Work in a small group. First, agree on roles: choose a **facilitator,** to coordinate the work of the group and also participate; a **recorder,** to record the work of the group; and a **reporter,** to summarize the work of this small group to the full group.

2. Your small group will be assigned one of the scenarios below. Take a few minutes to read the scenario and think about your responses to the questions. Have the facilitator go around the group, having each person share her/his responses to each question.

3. Discuss your responses and summarize your responses on “flip chart” paper. Have your reporter prepared to present them to the rest of the participants.

Scenario One – A Community Crisis

An elderly African refugee died while waiting to be seen by a doctor at the health clinic. He came in with his daughter but neither one of them could speak English well enough to communicate his symptoms. The clinic has no bilingual staff or interpreters. They asked the man and his daughter to have a seat while they tried to find a volunteer interpreter. While they waited, the man’s condition worsened and he passed away. The community is outraged, saying that they knew something like this would happen.

a. What could be some of the benefits of getting involved in advocating for your community in this situation?

b. What might be some of your advocacy goals?

c. What would be are some of the challenges you would face in getting involved in advocacy in this situation?

Scenario Two - An Ongoing Problem

Your community has a very large and diverse Southeast Asian refugee population. Over the years, your MAA (or ECBO) has heard about many problems that families have had with child protective services. Families have had children put in foster care and they don't understand why. The agency has no bilingual staff. Once in a while, if they have time, your staff have accompanied parents to meetings with their child protective services caseworker to interpret for them. But you've also heard that the agency will often use other children in the home to interpret.

a. What could be some of the benefits of getting involved in advocating for your community in this situation?

b. What might be some of your advocacy goals?

c. What would be are some of the challenges you would face in getting involved in advocacy in this situation?

Scenario Three - A Special Opportunity

There is a new Superintendent of schools if you city. She was selected by the Mayor because of her commitment to making every school a "world class school." She also believes that schools must partner with community organizations and wants to open the schools to community groups to run programs in the schools. Her staff is setting up a Community Advisory Committee to provide input in the new plan for the schools. To date, there are no members of refugee or immigrant communities on the Committee. The Executive Director of a mainstream organization who is on the Committee suggests you call her office and nominate someone from your ECBO to serve on the Committee.

a. What could be some of the benefits of getting involved in advocating for your community in this situation?

b. What might be some of your advocacy goals?

c. What would be are some of the challenges you would face in getting involved in advocacy in this situation?

Chapter 4
An Overview of Legal Rights and Protections

Introduction

If you are going to be an effective advocate for your community and play a role in helping your community become fully integrated into life in the U.S., you need to be familiar with the most important laws that protect people's basic rights. Whether you want to improve the services your county health clinic provides to refugees or challenge a decision by the local housing authority to evict refugee families, you need to know the laws that protect every U.S. resident.

This can be very intimidating--even for people who have lived in the U.S. all of their lives! There are many laws, the legal system is complicated, and the language used by the people who work in this field can be very technical and difficult to understand. An understanding of basic legal rights is very important for anyone living in the U.S.--and even more important for community leaders who speak out on behalf of their communities. Lastly, some laws and policies have a deeper impact on immigrants and refugees, so you should be sure you understand them especially well.

For some experienced ECBO leaders, much of what we present in this chapter may be information you have already learned. If so, we encourage you to share this information with others, including members of your community. For new ECBO leaders that represent more recently-arrived communities, we hope you will not be overwhelmed by the amount of information presented here. Either way, the information in this chapter is critical for you to know to be an effective advocate for the rights of refugees. We hope you will share it with others.

Note: Every situation is unique. The information provided in this chapter is very general and should not be considered as legal advice. For advice concerning a specific situation of a rights violation, please consult an attorney.

What Rights Are Protected By the U.S. Constitution?

Many communities, especially newer refugee communities, may not fully understand the basic rights protected by the U.S. Constitution. The U.S. Constitution protects *all persons* living in the U.S., whether you are a citizen or not, against government infringement of basic rights. These rights include:

> **More Information…**
>
> **About the U.S. Constitution**
>
> For more information about the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights (the first 10 amendments to the Constitution), here are some helpful organizations and websites:
>
> - Constitutional Rights Foundation: http://www.crf-usa.org/
> - American Civil Liberties Union: http://www.aclu.org
> - Our Documents: http://www.ourdocuments.gov/

- ✓ **Freedom of speech**--the right to express your opinion freely without fear of censorship or punishment by the government.

✓ **Freedom of press**--the right to publish your ideas, thoughts, or current events without fear of being threatened or punished by the government.

✓ **Freedom of assembly**--the right to peacefully gather, organize, or belong to any group that you choose without fear of censorship or punishment by the government. Your right to form an ECBO is based on this right to freedom of assembly.

✓ **Free exercise of religion**--the right to choose a religion, if any, and practice its traditions, rituals, beliefs without fear of censorship or punishment by the government.

✓ **Freedom to petition**--the right of an individual or group of people to ask the government for laws and policies that may favor them.

What Other Federal Rights Should You Be Familiar With?

The Civil Rights Act of 1964

U.S. laws say that no person living in the U.S. can be discriminated against in any aspect of daily life--including where you work, live, go to school, or dine. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on:

- ✓ Race
- ✓ Ethnicity
- ✓ Religion or belief
- ✓ Color
- ✓ National or ethnic origin
- ✓ Sex

These characteristics define what we call *protected classes*--groups of people who are legally protected from discrimination. A refugee and immigrant can belong to many of these protected classes, but the most important is often *national or ethnic origin*. More and more, there is a need to deal with the possibility that refugees may be treated differently because of their national origin, ethnicity, or religions belief.

Helpful Hint...

Be Familiar with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Its Amendments!

As an advocate for refugees, this is one of your most powerful tools. Title VI prohibits recipients of federal funding from discriminating on the basis of race, color, or *national origin.*

In 2000, The Executive branch of government issued guidance related to the need for agencies to avoid national origin discrimination against people with limited English proficiency if, among other things, they fail to provide meaningful access to individuals who are limited English proficient (LEP).

⇒ ***See Chapter 6 for an in-depth discussion of issues related to equal access.***

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin *in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.* In the law, Title VI states:

No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

For more information about the Civil Rights Act of 1964, visit the website of the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, which has numerous educational materials related to Title VI. (www.usdoj.gov/crt/)

Other Federal Civil Rights Laws

In addtion to Title VI, Congress passed other civil rights laws that added new protected classes and more clearly defined acts of discrimination that are prohibited.

The laws that may have the largest impact on the refugee and immigrant communities are as follows: (*Note: The links listed with each law described here will connect you to a complete description of the act along with other helpful information.*)

- ✓ **Equal Educational Opportunity Act**--makes it illegal to segregate (meaning *to keep separate*) students based on color, race or national origin, and discrimination of faculty and staff based on the same characteristics. (http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/edo/faq.htm)

- ✓ **Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**--makes it illegal for employers to make decisions regarding hiring, promoting, setting pay levels, or terminating people based on color, race, national origin, or sex. (http://www.eeoc.gov/)

Keep In Mind...

Some Definitions

A *law* can also be called an *act* or a *statute*. These terms can be used interchangeably. At the local level, laws passed by counties and cities are often called *ordinances*. Also, *court decisions* and rules of government agencies can also have the same force as laws.

Helpful Hint...

Examples of Possible Unlawful Discrimination

- A school that is majority Latino immigrant children does not offer honors classes, while others in the district that do not have many immigrant students do offer honors classes.
- A young man from Bosnia applies for a job as an accountant and is turned down because he speaks with an accent--even though he meets all jobs requirements and his accent does not interfere with the performance of his job.
- A realtor shows a Vietnamese family homes only in neighborhoods that are predominantly Southeast Asian and refuses to show the family houses in White neighborhoods.
- African immigrant visitors to a hotel are told they must pay with cash rather than by credit card and are charged higher rates than White visitors.

✓ **Fair Housing Act**--makes it illegal to discriminate against someone when selling, renting, or financing a house or apartment based on the previously listed protected classes. (http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/)

✓ **Voting Rights Act**--makes it illegal to deny voting rights to anyone based on discriminatory practices. Practices that have been found to be discriminatory include requiring voters to pass a literacy tests or charging a special tax to vote. This act also states that language assistance must be provided at the polls for counties that have a certain percentage of minority language speakers.

⇒ ***See Chapter 6 for more information about the language assistance provisions of the Voting Rights Act.*** (http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/intro/intro.htm)

✓ **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**--gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities; guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, State and local government services, and telecommunications. (http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/)

✓ **Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA)**--makes it illegal for employers to make decisions regarding hiring, promoting, setting pay levels, or terminating people based on age. The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 makes it illegal for any program that receives federal funds to discriminate on the basis of age, except in situations where a targeted age range is a necessary part of the normal operation of the program. (http://www.dol.gov/oasam/regs/statutes/age_act.htm)

✓ **Equal Pay Act**-- makes it illegal to discriminate compensation based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or disability. (http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/fs-epa.html)

✓ **Bilingual Education Act**--gives all children the right to education regardless of their immigration or citizenship status. The act also makes it illegal for schools to ask for documentation for any student. This act was upheld in the 1982 Supreme Court case, Plyler v. Doe.

More Information...

An Important Supreme Court Case Affecting Immigrants and Refugees

Once a law is passed, it must be enforced. Individuals who feel that their rights--as defined by the laws described above--have been denied can file a lawsuit. Sometimes, those lawsuits can go all the way to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court determines if laws, court decisions made by lower courts, and government actions comply with the U.S. Constitution or other controlling laws.

One of the most important Supreme Court cases affecting immigrants and refugees is ***Lau vs. Nichols.*** In 1970, a lawsuit was brought against the San Francisco Board of Education (Nichols was the President of the Board). The lawsuit argued that by using the same books, materials, and teachers to teach Chinese American students who did not speak English, the schools were violating Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits any program that receives federal funding from discriminating based on race, color, or national origin. The U.S. Supreme Court overturned decisions made by a lower courts and ruled that the San Francisco schools *did* in fact violate Title VI of the Civil Rights Act by not taking into account that such a large number of its students--approximately 1,800--did not speak English.

That decision made it the responsibility of the public schools, which receive federal funding, to provide assistance--in this example, educational services in Chinese--to language-minority children so that they may have a meaningful opportunity to participate in public education programs.

⇒ ***Chapter 6 provides an in-depth discussion of Language Access issues.***

What Laws Directly Impact Immigrants and Refugees?

In general, all people in the U.S. are understood to be *equal* regardless of their race and other characteristics and share basic civil rights. However, some laws give people *different rights* depending on their *immigration status*. There are also different *benefits and services* available to different categories of immigrants.

⇒ ***See Chapter 5 for more detailed information about the benefits and services that refugees are entitled to and eligible for.***

In general, citizens have the most legal rights and the greatest access to benefits, and services, while undocumented individuals have the least. For example, only U.S. citizens have the right to vote in local, state-wide, and national elections. In addition, some government agencies require an individual to be a registered voter in order to serve on a particular official board or commission. Knowing which rights, benefits, and services are available to different categories of immigrants is essential if you are to be an effective advocate for your community.

Below are brief descriptions of important laws that directly address refugee and immigrants, and website links where you can find additional information about them.

- ✓ **Refugee Act of 1980**--established the right of asylum and provided for a *permanent and systematic procedure* for admitting refugees to the U.S. The Refugee Act of 1980 also established the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Department of Health and Human Services. (www.acf.hhs.gov/)

- ✓ **Immigration Reform Control Act of 1986**--gave amnesty to nearly three million undocumented immigrants who had been living in the U.S. on or before January 1, 1982. This act makes it illegal for an employer to knowingly hire a worker who is not legally allowed to work in the U.S. (www.uscis.gov/)

- ✓ **Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (INA)**--collected all the laws on immigration up to that point. The INA has been amended over the years to reflect the changes in other laws that affect immigrants and refugees, including laws that have limited and granted immigration into the U.S. (www.uscis.gov/)

- ✓ **Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996** (Also known as *Welfare Reform*)--terminated eligibility for benefits such as Food Stamps, State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for refugees and immigrants. Some of these benefits were later restored, but with different eligibility requirements and limitations; for example, refugees can only receive SSI benefits for a total of seven years. Other benefits--such as SCHIP--still have not been restored. (www.acf.hhs.gov/)

- ✓ **Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRAIRA)**--created new laws and revised previous laws regarding, among other things, border control, alien smuggling, deportation, employment restrictions, and restrictions of benefits for aliens. (www.visalaw.com/)

- ✓ **Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001 (USA PATRIOT ACT)**--passed shortly after the terrorists attacks on 9/11, this law increases the capabilities of law enforcement agencies to detain and deport immigrants suspected of terrorism and

More Information...

About Laws Affecting Refugees and Immigrants

For more information about laws that affect immigrants and refugees, here are some helpful organizations and their websites:

- American Immigration Lawyers Association http://www.aila.org/
- Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. http://www.cliniclegal.org/
- National Immigration Law Center http://www.nilc.org/

broadens the definition of who is classified as a terrorist. (www.aclu.org/national-security/usa-patriot-act)

- ✓ **REAL ID Act**--also passed in response to the attacks on 9/11, this law establishes national standards for driver's licenses. In order to obtain most services provided by the federal government, including SSI and Social Security, individuals will need to have a state-issued ID that meets these standards. States have until May of 2011 to comply with the REAL ID Act. (www.dhs.gov)

Regardless of their citizenship status, U.S. residents can have some rights taken away from them. For example, even U.S. citizens--whether naturalized or born in the U.S.--can lose the right to vote if they are convicted of a serious crime that is classified as a felony. Also, even immigrants who have become naturalized can still be deported if they are convicted of certain crimes. These crimes include, among other things, providing false information on naturalization forms, committing treason, taking up arms against the U.S. on behalf of a foreign country, joining a communist or anarchist group within a certain time period after naturalization, or swearing allegiance or becomes a citizen of another country after becoming a U.S. citizen.

What Are Some Important Laws at the State and Local Levels?

In addition to the laws described above, state and local government also make laws and policies that aim to protect the rights of people who live within their jurisdictions. Often, as a result of advocacy by residents, state and local level laws are more comprehensive than federal laws.

You should be familiar with the laws that exist in your state, county, and city. The following are some of the most common kinds of laws that exist in many states and local communities.

- ✓ **Civil Rights Laws.** Many states have developed their own civil rights laws or acts (as do some cities) that build on the federal laws. (***Note***: At the state level, these laws are sometimes called *human rights* laws or acts. However, unless referring to a particular act, we continue to refer to *civil rights* throughout this chapter.) These laws or acts are sometimes more inclusive than federal laws--for example, they

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> **How Do I Find the Agency that Deals with Civil Rights in My State?**
>
> The agencies that deal with civil rights have different names in different states. It will probably be called a:
>
> - *Council*, *Commission*, *Department*, *Division*, or *Office* of...
> - *Civil Rights*, *Equal Rights* or *Equal Opportunity*, *Human Affairs*, *Human Relations*, or *Human Rights*.
>
> Your state might also have an office that concentrates on a specific group, such as the *Office of Asian Pacific Islander Affairs* or *Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs* in Houston, Texas.
>
> Visit the homepage of your state government and search through the listing of government agencies. In addition, local nonprofits that provide legal services might also be able to provide you with information about state civil or human rights laws.

might identify additional protected classes, such as sexual orientation, income status or even genetic information. Often, your local elected officials, legal aid service providers, or librarians are good sources to learn more about these laws.

- ✓ **Fair Housing Laws.** Some states have specific laws that address discrimination in the sale or rental of housing. The National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) has members in almost all states. If refugees in your locality are being discriminated against in housing, you could contact the NFHA member in your state as a place to start. For links to NFHA members by state, go to: www.nationalfairhousing.org/. Another organization that has worked specifically with low-income housing is the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC). More information can be found about NLIHC at its website: www.nlihc.org/.

- ✓ **Equal Employment Opportunities Laws.** Some states also have specific laws that address employment discrimination. Again, the agency in your state that deals with civil or human rights will be able to provide you with information about state laws. In addition, local nonprofits that provide employment-related legal services might also be able to provide you with information about state laws in this area.

⇒ ***See Chapter 5 for more information about organizations providing legal assistance.***

Who Enforces and Monitors Civil Rights Laws?

Civil rights laws are enforced by a combination of federal and state agencies. In addition, numerous nonprofit organizations monitor and advocate for civil rights. These organizations can be strong allies for your ECBO if you feel that the rights of refugees in your community have been violated.

Below is a brief description of how laws are monitored and enforced, followed by specific examples and suggestions for what your ECBO can do if the rights of refugees in your community are violated.

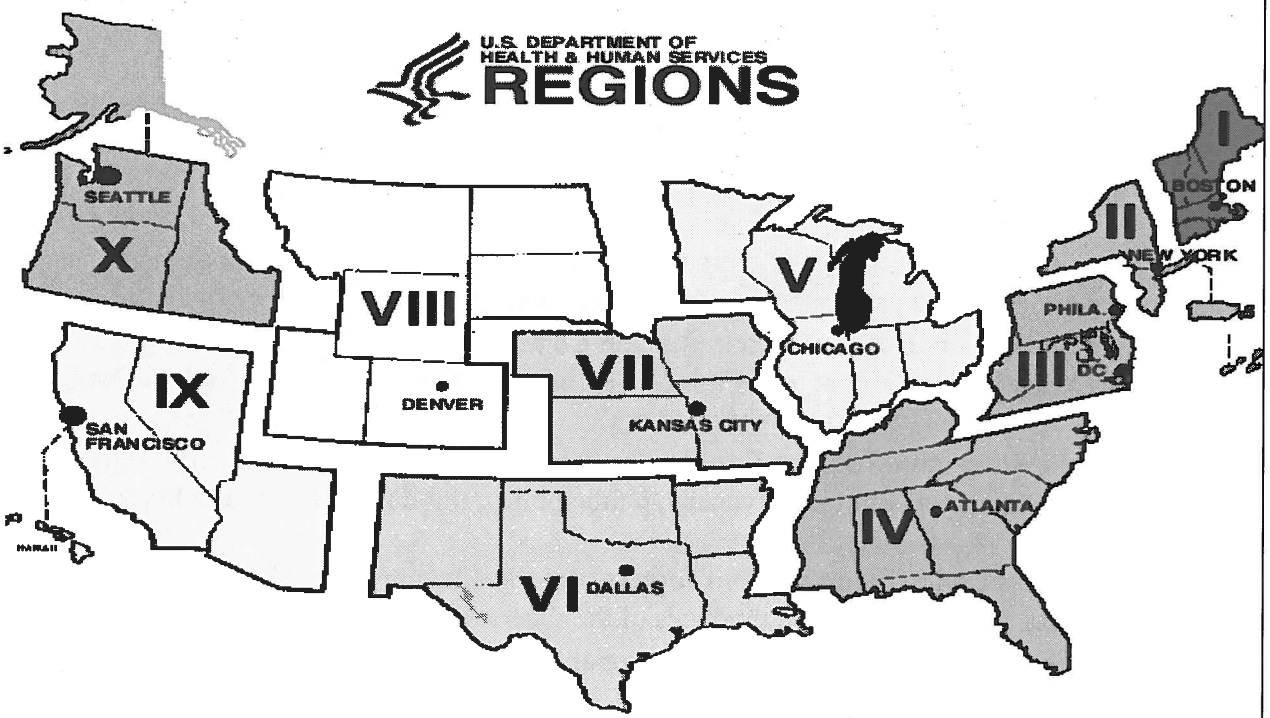
At the Federal Level

Different federal agencies enforce civil rights laws, depending on the type of violation. For example, employment discrimination cases are handled by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The EEOC is responsible for investigating individual charges of discrimination alleging unlawful employment discrimination.

Most federal agencies--the Departments of Health and Human Services (DHHS); Housing and Urban Development (HUD); Education; Labor; Agriculture; and Transportation, for example--have an *Office of Civil Rights (OCR)* that ensures that everyone has equal access to the programs and services provided by that agency. While the main Office of Civil Rights for each federal agency is located in Washington, D.C., most federal agencies also have a contact for the Office of Civil Rights in their *regional offices* located around the country.

More Information...

Since many of the services refugees use are funded by Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), it would be good for you to be familiar with the locations of DHHS Regional Offices. The Regional Offices of Civil Rights for the DHHS are shown on the map below. **Contact Information is provided in the *Checklists and Helpful Hints* on page 15.**



*This map can be found at http://www.hhs.gov/about/regions/

However, DHHS is just one of the many federal agencies that you may need to work with. Other federal agencies that refugees may be likely to come into contact with include the Departments of Education, Labor, and Housing and Urban Development. For links to their website, go to: www.usa.gov/Agencies/Federal/All_Agencies/index.shtml.

See *Chapter 5 for an overview of the key programs and services provided by these agencies*.

At the State Level

All states have an agency that investigates violations of state civil or human rights law. ***(See the Helpful Hint on page 6.)*** In addition, individual state agencies--such as state health and human service departments or departments of education--often have their own civil rights offices that enforce federal and state laws. Some larger cities may also have their own office of civil or human rights that oversee and enforce city laws if they exist. For example, you can find the City of Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/civil-rights/.

The federal level and state level offices generally work closely together. That means if you file a complaint with your state agency, that agency will cross file the complaint with the federal agency. Sometimes, though not always, it's better to file at the state level for faster processing. Only state agencies can enforce laws that are particular to that state.

Nonprofit Organizations that Monitor Civil Rights

While government agencies enforce the laws and investigate violations, many national nonprofit organizations have worked for a long time to protect people's civil rights through monitoring and advocacy. Many of these organizations have regional or local offices--sometimes called *chapters* or *affiliates*--that could offer you advice and assistance. To find a contract in your locality, state, or region, visit the website of the national office (listed below) and look for a directory. Organizations with which you may want to become familiar include:

- ✓ **American Civil Liberties Union**--a nonprofit organization who's mission is to protect the civil liberties as granted by the Bill of Rights. (http://www.aclu.org)
- ✓ **American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee**--a grassroots civil rights organization that, among other things, defends the civil rights of all people of Arab heritage in the U.S. (http://www.adc.org)
- ✓ **Asian American Justice Center**--works to advance the human and civil rights of Asian Americans through advocacy, public policy, public education, and litigation. (http://www.advancingequality.org)
- ✓ **Citizen's Commission on Civil Rights**--an organization established in 1982 to monitor the civil rights policies and practices of the federal government. (www.cccr.org)
- ✓ **National Council of La Raza**--a national Latino civil rights and advocacy organization that works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans. (www.nclr.org)
- ✓ **Mexican American Legal Defensive and Education Fund**--a national organization that pursues lawsuits regarding employment, education, immigration, public resources, and language access. (www.maldef.org)
- ✓ **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)**--an organization developed to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination. (www.naacp.org)
- ✓ **Lawyers Committee Under Civil Rights**--an organization created in 1963 at the request of President John F. Kennedy to provide legal services to address racial discrimination. (www.lawyerscommittee.org)

Helpful Hint...

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (USCCR) (http://www.usccr.gov/) monitors civil rights laws, gathers and serves as a clearinghouse for information, and issues reports on civil rights. The Commission does not investigate complaints but can assist you in the complaint process through its Complaint Referral Service. 1-800-552-6843 or (202) 376-8513

✓ **Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)**--is the main civil rights organization in the South. Does the litigation, education, policy, and advocacy sides of civil rights. Renowned institution important to include.

What Should Your ECBO Do If Refugees' Rights Have Been Violated?

For all violations of civil rights, there is a *formal complaint process* to follow. Your ECBO can help refugees who believe their rights have been violated to file complaints with the appropriate agency (as described above and in the examples below).

Most agencies have complaint forms you can download and fill out on their website. To find out how, go to the home page of your state department of human of social services, and search for *file a complaint*. Most also require that you file a complaint *within 180 day of when the act of discrimination took place.* These time limitations may vary, however, so you should consult with an attorney at the earliest opportunity to ensure that you preserve your rights to challenge the illegal discrimination.

Your ECBO can also help by gathering information related to the violation. Information that will be needed to file a complaint may include: a description of the act of discrimination, who discriminated against the individual (for example, was it a local, state, or federal government agency? a small business? a large, private corporation? a nonprofit organization?), when it took place, and why you believe the person was discriminated against.

Keep in Mind…

What Your ECBO Can Do

Remember, your ECBO can:

- Be familiar with the laws and the process for filing complaints.
- Encourage refugees who feel their rights have been violated to step forward and file a complaint.
- Help refuges fill out the complaint forms.
- Help them collect information they will need to complete the forms.
- Follow up to see what happened, and suggest different strategies

The process of actually getting a complaint filed, investigated, and then ruled on can be a lengthy process. Based on the information provided, the agency may continue with an investigation, may find that there isn't enough information, or it may find that there was no violation. If the investigation reports that there was a violation, the entity that was responsible--whether it's a federal, state, or local agency or a nonprofit organization that receives federal funds--may be ordered to correct the violation or risk losing current and future federal funding. Depending on what the issue is, the agency might also give the individual a right to pursue her claim in court.

Below are a few examples of different kinds of civil rights violations that refugees might experience and what you should do in that situation.

✓ **An Employment Discrimination Example:** An Iraqi refugee woman is ordered by her employer to stop wearing her *hijab*. She tells her employer that the request violates her civil rights and that she is going to report the request to the proper authorities. Shortly after, she is fired.

What can you do? Your ECBO can help the woman file a complaint with *either* your regional Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) *or* your state office for civil or human rights *(federal employees must first file a complaint with their agency's equal employment opportunity office)*. It is unlawful for an employer to *retaliate* against an individual for filing a charge of discrimination or for complaining about unlawful discrimination.

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> **What Do You Do If A Refugee Faces Employment Discrimination?**
>
> You can help the refugee file a complaint with the EEOC or your state office that deals with employment discrimination.
>
> For the EEOC, call the main information number for the EEOC at: 1-800-669-4000. Ask for the contact information for the EEOC office nearest you and for more information on specific procedures for filing a charge.
>
> Remember that there are different time limits for filing a complaint. These time limits may be as short as 45 days or up to 300 days or more from the day of the discrimination took place. Call as soon as possible so you can find out what the time limit is for your specific state and situation.

✓ **A Social Service Discrimination Example:** Employees at a county social services agency that administers federally-funded benefits and services are asking African families seeking services to provide additional documentation about their incomes and asking unnecessary questions about the immigration status of other household members who are not applying for the benefits.

What can you do? Your ECBO can help file a discrimination complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights Regional Office nearest you. You can file a complaint by email at OCRcomplaint@hhs.gov, or you can download the OCR's Discrimination Complaint Form at www.hhs.gov/ocr/howtofile.pdf and mail it.

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> **In What State Do You File A Complaint?**
>
> Violations of civil rights are handled by the city or state agency where the violation took place, *not* where the person lives. For example, if someone lives in Virginia, but works in Maryland and her/his civil rights violated while at work, s/he would contact the appropriate agency in Maryland, even though s/he lives in Virginia. The complaint must be filed in the city and/or state where the act took place.

✓ **A Civic Participation Discrimination Example:** A group of recently naturalized citizens arrive at the voting polls to vote for the very first time. When they arrive, a poll volunteer tells some of them they can't vote because they "don't speak English." Another volunteer asks some of them to provide proof of naturalization in order to vote. Other citizens are allowed to vote with having to show proof of naturalization or citizenship. Discouraged by the process, many of the new citizens decided not to vote.

What can you do? This example can be a form of voter intimidation. Your ECBO can help file a discrimination complaint with the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, which enforces voting rights (www.usdoj.gov/crt/crt-home.html). Also, your ECBO can also contact the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) (www.aclu.org), which has a voting rights protection branch in its organization.

✓ **An Education Discrimination Example:** Russian refugee children in a particular school district are falling behind in school and not being promoted to the next grade levels. The school district has no Russian-speaking teachers, translators, or tutors.

What can you do? Your ECBO can help file a discrimination complaint with the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) Office for Civil Rights Regional Office nearest you. You can also visit the website of the DOE Office for Civil Rights for more information about the process and to download a complaint form. (www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html)

✓ **A Housing Discrimination Example:** A city has recently experienced a large influx of Cambodian families. Several Cambodian families are trying to rent apartments from a private landlord with their Section 8 vouchers. The landlord has refused to rent the apartments to the Cambodian families but continues to rent to families of other ethnic backgrounds using Section 8 vouchers.

Helpful Hint…

What Do You Do If a Refugee Does Not Want to File a Complaint?

As an ECBO or community leader, you probably hear about many different cases where a refugee's civil rights may have been violated. You may also find that individual refugees are not willing to *speak out* about violations because they believe that there is nothing they can do, or because they are afraid of the consequences of *standing up* for their rights. These fears are real and valid.

As an advocate, your role is to:

- Help community members make choices that may be difficult for them
- Help them think about, and overcome, issues that may be difficult for them, or holding them back
- Let community members know that they can file a complaint anonymously, or through an identity protection process.
- File a complaint on behalf of the individual.

Ultimately, you need to help refugees make their own decisions and support them in whatever choice they make.

What can you do? As long as the families are not violating any other apartment policies (such as family size or pet policies), this situation could be considered discriminatory. You can file a complaint with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. You can visit the HUD website for more information about the process and to download a complaint form. (www.hud.gov/complaints/housediscrim.cfm). You can also report the situation to your local housing authority that administers the Section 8 housing program. You can also check to see if other families your ECBO works with have had similar experiences and help them file complaints as well.

Getting Additional Help

You may encounter a situation that is very complex and it is not clear what you should do or whom you should talk to. If you are not sure what to do, you can contact civil rights attorneys in your community. In the U.S., a network of nonprofit organizations and others provide civil legal services to low-income individual and families. They may be able to help you figure out the best course of action.

⇒ ***Chapter 5 provides more information about legal services in the U.S.***

Checklists and Helpful Hints

Contact Information for DHHS Regional Offices

Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5
Government Center John F. Kennedy Federal Building Boston, MA 02203 (617) 565-1500	Jacob K. Javits Federal Building 26 Federal Plaza New York, NY 10278 (212) 264-4600	Suite 436, Public Ledger Building 150 S. Independence Mall West Philadelphia, PA 19106 (215) 861-4633	Sam Nunn Atlanta Federal Center 61 Forsyth St., SW Atlanta, GA 30303 (404) 562-7888	233 N. Michigan Avenue Suite 1300 Chicago, IL 60601 (312) 353-5160
▪ Connecticut ▪ Maine ▪ Massachusetts ▪ New Hampshire ▪ Rhode Island ▪ Vermont	▪ New York ▪ New Jersey ▪ Puerto Rico ▪ U.S. Virgin Islands ▪ U.S. Virgin Islands Medicare	▪ Delaware ▪ Maryland ▪ Pennsylvania ▪ Virginia ▪ West Virginia ▪ District of Columbia	▪ Alabama ▪ Florida ▪ Georgia ▪ Kentucky ▪ Mississippi ▪ North Carolina ▪ South Carolina ▪ Tennessee	▪ Illinois ▪ Indiana ▪ Ohio ▪ Michigan ▪ Minnesota ▪ Wisconsin
Region 6	**Region 7**	**Region 8**	**Region 9**	**Region 10**
1301 Young St. Dallas, TX 75202 (214) 767-3301	Bolling Federal Building 601 E. 12th St. Kansas City, MO 64106 (816) 426-2821	Federal Office Building 1961 Stout St. #1076 Denver, CO 80294 (303) 844-3372	Federal Office Building 50 United Nations Plaza San Francisco, CA 94102 (415) 437-8500	2201 6th Avenue Seattle, WA 98121 (206) 615-2010
▪ Arkansas ▪ Louisiana ▪ New Mexico ▪ Oklahoma ▪ Texas	▪ Iowa ▪ Kansas ▪ Missouri ▪ Nebraska	▪ Colorado ▪ Montana ▪ North Dakota ▪ South Dakota ▪ Utah ▪ Wyoming	▪ Arizona ▪ California ▪ Hawaii ▪ Nevada ▪ Guam ▪ American Samoa ▪ Northern Mariana Islands ▪ Federated States of Micronesia ▪ Marshall Islands ▪ Palau	▪ Alaska ▪ Idaho ▪ Oregon ▪ Washington

Chapter 5
An Overview of Human Services in the U.S.

Introduction

This tool kit will help you *stand up* and *speak out* for your community--to make sure that community members' rights are respected, that they have access to high quality services that are responsive to their needs, and that they have opportunities to achieve full integration into the broader community. If you are going to *stand up* and *speak out* for your community, then you have to understand how human services are funded and provided here in the U.S.

The U.S. has a complex network of social programs that provide various types of assistance--from housing and health care to education and employment--to individuals and families. Through a combination of federal, state, and local government funds, as well as private funds, these programs often provide free or low-cost services to individuals and families with limited income. They may be provided by government agencies, by nonprofit organizations, or by private for-profit contractors.

The U.S. has a long history of both *the government* and *the voluntary sector* providing human services. Some of the most important government programs, which we'll discuss in this chapter, were started as part of President Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal" of the 1940s and, later, as part of what was called the "War on Poverty" in the 1960s. Policymakers over the past quarter century have held diverse views about the appropriate role of government vs. the voluntary sector in providing human services. At times, the trend has been to support the growth of government programs, and at other times the trend has been toward cutting back such programs.

This chapter provides an overview of the system that funds and delivers human services in the U.S.

Helpful Hint...

Different Terms You May Hear

You will hear many different terms that all refer to different kinds of help for individuals and families to meet their needs. Here are some of the terms you will hear:

- Social Programs
- Safety Net Programs
- Benefits
- Human or Social Services
- Subsidies
- Entitlements

We will use the general terms assistance, programs, or services throughout this chapter, except in some places where there is an important difference you must understand.

You are probably already familiar with some of the largest and best-known human service programs, such as Medicaid, Food Stamps, and Section 8 Housing. However, there are literally hundreds of others that are less well known but can help refugee families. This chapter provides an introduction.

Key Information about Human Services in the U.S.

What kinds of assistance do human service programs provide?

In general, they provide two kinds of assistance:

- ✓ **Cash assistance.** Some programs provide money or vouchers that low-income individuals and families can use to purchase what they need. For example, the Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program (known as WIC) provides vouchers that recipients can use at grocery stores to purchase nutritional foods.

- ✓ **Free or low-cost services.** Some programs provide funding to government agencies or nonprofit organizations to provide free or low-cost services to individuals and families. Examples include health care, child care, adult literacy, and job training. Services offered by nonprofits through a combination of public and private funds are often offered on a *sliding scale*--which means that recipients pay what they can afford based on their income.

Who can receive assistance?

Different programs have different *eligibility criteria.* Here are two main types of eligibility you should be familiar with:

- ✓ **Income eligibility.** Many programs limit eligibility to people with *low incomes*. To determine if a family is low income, these programs use the *federal poverty guidelines*. See box at right.

- ✓ **Categorical eligibility.** Some programs limit eligibility to certain *categories of people*--for example, you have to be a military veteran, be a student, have a disability, or be a pregnant women to be eligible for certain programs. Programs to help families often focus only on the biological parents--and sometimes only the mother--and do not help other caregivers, such as grandparents or aunts.

Helpful Hint...

What is the Federal Poverty Level?

Many programs determine eligibility based on *income levels*. Income eligibility is generally set in relation to the *federal poverty level*--the income level below which the government considers a family to be poor.

The 2007 Federal Poverty Level for a family of four is: $20,650. If eligibility for a particular program is set *100%* of the poverty level, that means a family of four must earn less than $20,650 a year to be eligible.

If eligibility for a program is set at *150%* of the poverty level, then a family of four earning $30,975 or less would be eligible.

2007 Federal Poverty Guidelines

Persons in Family or Household	Poverty Level
1	$10,210
2	13,690
3	17,170
4	20,650
5	24,130
6	27,610
7	31,090
8	34,570

SOURCE: *Federal Register*, Vol. 72, No. 15, January 24, 2007

Individual states can set their own eligibility criteria for programs that are funded by a combination of federal and state funds. For example, in the WIC Program, states can set income eligibility anywhere between 100% and 185% of the federal poverty level. Changes in income may result in an individual or family gaining or losing eligibility for a particular program.

Which programs are *entitlement programs*?

Entitlement programs are programs that people have a legal right to, as long as they meet certain eligibility criteria spelled out in the law. Anyone who is eligible for and wants the assistance must receive it. If the number of people eligible for and requesting assistance grows, then the government must allocate more funds to serve them all. If someone is unfarily denied benefits, then that person can appeal the decision, and even sue the government as a last resort.

Most social programs are *not* entitlement programs. That means that once the money runs out, you can't get the benefit or service, even though you may be eligible.

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> About Entitlement Programs
>
> The most important entitlement programs you should be familiar with are:
>
> - *Social Security* – Provides lifetime retirement benefits for retirees aged 65+ who have worked at least ten years in the U.S.
> - *Medicare* – Provides health insurance for people aged 65+ and for people under 65 with certain disabilities.
> - *Medicaid* – Provides health insurance to low-income individuals and families who meet eligibility guidelines set by at the state level.
> - *Supplemental Security Income (SSI)* – Provides cash assistance to aged, blind, and disabled people.
> - *Unemployment Compensation* – Provides temporary cash assistance to workers who been laid off from their jobs through no fault of their own and meet eligibility requirements established by the state.
> - *Food Stamps* – Provides coupons to low-income individuals and families that they can use like cash to buy certain nutritious foods at grocery stores.
>
> ⇒ See ***Checklists and Helpful Hints*** on page 16.

How are human service programs funded?

Human services in the U.S. are funded through a combination of government and private funds.

- ✓ **Government funds.** Most of the largest programs are partnerships between the federal and state governments. The federal government pays for a portion, and then each state matches that federal money with state funds. Usually, federal funds are allocated to states based on a formula that takes into account the population and needs within a state. Sometimes, individual states, counties, or cities identify a need and fund programs solely with state or local funds.

- ✓ **Private funds.** In addition to government funding, human services in the U.S. are supported by *private philanthropy*, including foundations, corporations, and individuals. Private funds typically support services delivered through nonprofit organizations.

How are human service programs administered/delivered?

Programs are delivered through a combination of federal, state, and local government agencies, as well as nonprofit and for-profit organizations. (*Note*: The programs noted as examples below are described in greater detail under "Programs Your ECBO Should Be Familiar With.")

- ✓ **Programs administered by the federal government.** Some programs are administered directly by the federal government. That means that you apply for assistance directly with a federal agency. The largest program administered directly by the federal government is Social Security.

- ✓ **Programs administered by state or local government.** Other programs are administered by state or local (county or city) government. That means you apply through a state or local government agency, which sets its own eligibility guidelines. Examples include: Medicaid, Low–Income Housing Energy assistance Program (LIHEAP), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

- ✓ **Programs administered by nonprofits.** In some cases, the federal, state or local government contracts with a nonprofit or for-profit organization to provide programs and services. Or, nonprofits seek private funding to develop and deliver services. Examples include employment and training programs, adult education and family literacy programs, housing counseling services, and child care programs. Your ECBO may already provide these kinds of service through public or private funds.

Programs Your ECBO Should Be Familiar With

Below is a brief description of the major public programs and *funding streams*--the sources of funding--for important human services that refugees could benefit from.

As an advocate, *it's your role to make sure these programs are responsive to the needs of refugees.* You should also become familiar with these because *there may be opportunities for your ECBO to apply for funding to deliver these programs and services.*

- ✓ **Aging Services.** In all states, the needs of seniors are addressed by a local *Area Agency on Aging*, which can either be a public agency of a nonprofit. Each Area Agency on Aging either directly provides services to seniors or contacts with local nonprofit organizations to provide services. The majority of funding for these services comes

> **Helpful Hint…**
>
> Finding Services for Seniors
>
> To find the Area Agency on Aging that covers your local community in your state, visit the website of the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging: www.n4a.org. Click on "links" for a list by state.
>
> Another helpful website for information about senior services is: www.eldercare.gov

from the Older American Act. This Act, passed in 1965, provides funding for a variety of programs and services to assist low-income seniors and make sure they are healthy, safe, and able to live as independently as possible. Some of the services funded that could assist refugee seniors are:

- Assistance applying for Medicare and Medicaid.
- Workshops that provide information about health.
- Home-cooked meals delivered to seniors' homes.
- Help with home repairs.
- Legal services.
- Transportation to senior centers.

Some studies have found that many minority and limited-English-proficient seniors who are eligible for Older Americans Act funded programs are not participating in them.

✓ **Cash Assistance.** For families with very low-incomes, there are several different cash assistance programs. These include the following:

- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).** TANF is what was once known as *welfare*. It provides temporary cash assistance to low-income families with children. Laws passed in 1996 place strict requirements on the program. To receive cash assistance, participants must be involved a variety of training and work programs. As noted on page 11, TANF has different names in different states.

- **Food Stamps.** The Food Stamp Program provides monetary assistance--in the form of paper coupons or electronic benefits on debit cards--to low-income people to buy food. For links to where to apply in your state, see: www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/map.htm.

- **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).** LIHEAP is a federally-funded program that helps low-income households by helping to pay utility bills. The program is administered by local governments and nonprofit agencies. For links to where to apply in your state, see the national LIHEAP clearinghouse: http://liheap.ncat.org/.

- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI).** SSI is a federal cash assistance program that helps aged, blind, and disabled people who have little or no income. SSI provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. For more information, visit the program's website at: www.ssa.gov/notices/supplemental-security-income/

- **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).** The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a refundable federal income tax credit for very low-income working individuals and families. If the amount the tax credit is greater than the taxes owed, the qualifying individual or household receives a tax refund.

✓ **Child Care.** In the U.S., there is no single public program that provides affordable child care for low income families. Much of the available child care is private and often expensive. Various federal, state, and local government programs fund child care providers to provide free and low-cost child care for low-income families. For example, many states offer eligible low-income families financial assistance to help pay for child care so they can work. However, this assistance is typically restricted to families who are participating in the TANF program and enrolled in education or training programs. The federal government also provides a child and dependent *tax credit* (for up to 30% of expenses) for parents who pay someone to care for children under the age of 13.

Every state has a network of local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&Rs) organizations that provide information about local child care providers, information on state licensing requirements, and applications for financial assistance for child care. For links to CCR&Rs in your state, visit the home page of the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies: http://www.naccrra.net/.

> **Helpful Hint…**
>
> Finding Information about Child Care
>
> For comprehensive information about the child care system and what your ECBO can do to help refugee families access affordable and quality child care, see *Enhancing Child Care for Refugee Self-Sufficiency: A Training and Resource Toolkit,* a publication of Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (BRYCS), a project of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).
>
> You can download the toolkit for free from BRYCS website: http://www.brycs.org/brycs_resources.htm. BRYCS points out that CCR&Rs might not be familiar with the needs of refugees. As an advocate, your ECBO could reach out to the CCR&R in your community and educate them about refugees.

✓ **Education (for children and youth).** Every child in the U.S. has the right to a free public education. You should also know that the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* provides funding to schools for language instruction for limited English proficient students and for professional development to improve classroom instruction for limited English proficient children and ensure the instruction meets high professional standards. Another important educational program for low-income families you should know about is:

- **Head Start.** Head Start is a federal program that provides comprehensive child development services to low-income children and families, with a special focus on helping

> **Helpful Hint…**
>
> Finding Information Related to Limited English Proficient Students in Your State
>
> The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA) provides lots of useful information about language instruction programs for limited English proficient students.
>
> Use the following link, then click on your state for listing of resources in your state: www.ncela.gwu.edu/policy/states/

preschoolers develop the reading and math skills they need to be successful in school. Local public and private nonprofit and for-profit agencies typically run Head Start programs. For more information, see: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/

✓ **Employment, Training, and Adult Education.** In any community, you can find a variety of employment, training, and adult education programs funded by a combination of federal, state, and local funding. The largest single source of federal funding is the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). You should become familiar with the resources in your community:

- **One-Stop Career Centers.** Title I of the WIA funds a network of over 2,000 *One-Stop Career Centers* that provide a range of training and employment services for low-income youth and adults. Title I funds are distributed by the Dept. of Labor to local *Workforce Investment Boards*

  One-Stop Career Centers provide job search assistance, life skills workshops, and training vouchers--known as Individual Training Accounts--that allow participants to enroll in training of their choice through contracts with local providers. In many communities, few refugees and immigrants have been participating in One-Stop Career centers.

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> **Get Connected to Local *Workforce Investment Boards* (WIBs) and *One- Stop Career Centers*!**
>
> The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) created a network of state and local *Workforce Investment Boards* (WIBs) that plan and coordinate employment and training programs--including One-Stop Career Centers--and administer grants to training providers.
>
> Local WIBs must include representatives of community-based organizations. As an advocate, you should get to know your local WIB and One-Stop Career Centers to ensure refugees needs are addressed and to help refugees access WIB programs.
>
> To find the WIB in your locality, visit the website of the National Association of Workforce Investment Boards: www.nawb.org/asp/links.asp

- **Community Colleges.** Every state has a network of community colleges that offer classes designed to meet the needs of adult students. They offer both degree programs and professional development courses. To find a listing of community colleges in your state, visit the website of the American Association of Community Colleges at: www.aacc.nche.edu/.

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> **Finding Information about Employment and Training Programs in Your State**
>
> In most states, you will be able to find information about employment and training programs in your state on the homepage of your state agency that deals with these issues. It might be called a Department of Labor or Dept. of Employment Services or Employment Security. Some states have an Employment Commission or Workforce Development Commission.

✓ **English Language and Family Literacy Programs.** In any community, you can find a variety of English language instruction and family literacy programs funded by a variety of federal, state, local and private sources. Title II of the WIA funds over 5,000 adult education programs around the country, including GED programs, family literacy, and English literacy for limited English proficient adults. The federal funds are allocated to state departments of education, which then contract with or give grants to community-based organizations, community colleges, libraries, and local school districts to run the programs. Other major public programs that support English language instruction include:

- **Even Start.** A federal program, Even Start supports family literacy programs that bring together early childhood, English language instruction, and parenting education. It is a federal program that is administered at the state level by state departments of education.
- **Refugee Resettlement Programs.** Many of the grants provided by the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement are used to support English language instruction provided by voluntary agencies (VOLAGs) and ECBOS.

> **Helpful Hint…**
>
> **The Need for Increased Funding for English Language Instruction**
>
> A recent report by the Asian American Justice Center found that English language programs in local communities too often have long waiting lists, are overcrowded, and are of uneven quality. The report, entitled Adult Literacy Education in Immigrant Communities, identifies advocacy priorities for expanding access to high quality English Language instruction. You can download the report at www.advancingequality.org

✓ **Health Care.** There is no right to health care in the U.S. The only right everyone has is the right to receive treatment in hospital emergency rooms. No one can be turned away or denied treatment from a hospital emergency room. There is, however, a patchwork of health care programs for low-income individuals and families. As you may already know, this system can be quite confusing and challenging to navigate.

The health care system includes public, private nonprofit and private for-profit hospitals, as well as public and nonprofit clinics (including free clinics). They may be supported by the federal, state, and/or local government; private foundations; United Way; and individual contributions. Many provide free or low-cost care to low-income people, or accept *third party payments* such as Medicaid or the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), a program that provides health insurance to children in families whose incomes are modest but too high to qualify for Medicaid.

Important federal health care programs for low-income individuals and families include:

- **Medicaid.** Medicaid, one of the largest entitlement programs, provides health insurance to low-income individuals and families who meet eligibility guidelines set at the state level. For more information, visit the website of the Department of Health and Human Service's Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services at: www.cms.hhs.gov/home/

- **State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).** As noted earlier, SCHIP--which goes by different names in different states-- provides health insurance to children under 19 whose families earn too much to qualify for Medicaid. The above website also has information about SCHIP.

- **Community Health Centers and Clinics.** The federal Department of Health and Human Services funds a network of community-based clinics and centers that provide primary health care to populations with limited access to health care. These include low income populations, the uninsured, those with limited English proficiency, migrant and seasonal farm workers, individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and those living in public housing. All of these providers must meet the standards for culturally and linguistically appropriate care described in Chapter 6.

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> Finding a Health Clinic Near You
>
> The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) provides contact information for federally-funded community health clinics around the country. To find a federally-funded health center in your community, go to: http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/
>
> For more information, you can also visit the websites of the National Association of Community Health Centers (www.nachc.com) and the National Association of Free Clinics (www.freeclinics.us).

The best way to find out what is available in your community is to start with your local health department. Often, local United Ways have directories of providers on their websites, and/or provide an information and referral service.

✓ **Housing.** The most important housing programs for low-income families are:

- **Housing Vouchers (Section 8).** The Housing Voucher Program--also known as Section 8 housing--is the federal government's major program for assisting very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent and safe housing in the private market. Housing vouchers help people pay the cost of renting housing from private landlords, as long as the landlord agrees to rent under the program and the unit meets minimum health and safety standards. Housing vouchers are administered by local public housing agencies (PHAs). PHAs receive

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> Finding Housing Assistance in Your Area
>
> For links to the Public Housing Agencies in your state, go to: www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts
>
> For links to HUD-approved Housing Counseling Agencies, go to: www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hcc/hcs.cfm

federal funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to administer the program. However, there is often limited availability and long waiting lists for the program.

- **Public Housing.** HUD also provides funds to local housing agencies to administer public housing programs that provide rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

- **Housing Counseling.** Lastly, HUD funds *housing counseling agencies* throughout the country that can give you advice about housing-related issues, including available assistance for people who need help with their rent, credit problems, or buying a home.

✓ **Legal Services.** In the U.S., various kinds of entities provide free and low-cost legal services related to *civil* legal issues through a variety of public and private funding sources. (Note: When an individual who cannot afford legal services needs *criminal* defense, the state must provide that person with a public defender.) The ones you should be familiar with include the following:

- **Law School-Affiliated Legal Clinics.** Most university law schools have what are called legal clinics. Legal clinics provide no or low-cost legal services to low-income individuals. Contact the universities in your area to find out which ones have laws schools, and which laws schools have legal clinics.

- **Nonprofit Organizations.** In most communities, there are also nonprofit organizations that provide free and low-cost legal services. This might include nonprofits whose sole mission is to provide legal services--these nonprofits often have the words "legal service" or legal aid" in their name--as well as larger multi-service organizations with a legal service component. Many of the nonprofit providers are funded through a federal agency called the Legal Services Corporation (LSC).

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> Finding Free/Low Cost Legal Services
>
> Many of the nonprofit providers are funded through a federal agency called the Legal Services Corporation (LSC). The homepage of the LSC's website provides a map where you can click on your state for links to providers in your state. www.lsc.gov

- **Pro Bono (or *free*) Assistance.** Lastly, there are individual lawyers and law firms that provide pro bono assistance. For a list of programs by state, visit the website of the *American Bar Association*: www.abanet.org/legalservices/probono.

What Your ECBO Should Know and Do To Make Sure Refugees Get the Programs and Services They Need

To be an effective advocate for high quality services that are responsive to refugees' needs, you should have a basic understanding how human services are funded and delivered. You should be familiar with:

- ✓ The programs that are available to help refugee individuals and families in your community
- ✓ The requirements for receiving benefits and services form these programs
- ✓ Where to apply to receive assistance or participation in different programs and how you can help refugees apply
- ✓ What you can do if refugees are *denied* benefits and services

> **Keep In Mind...**
>
> Do Your Homework: Understand the Budgets
>
> Remember that sometimes, in your role as a community and ECBO leader, you might need to advocate for increased funding or expanded eligibility requirements for a particular program to make sure that all the people who need assistance can get it. (Note: This is sometimes referred to as "expanding coverage.")
>
> If you are going to get involved in this type of advocacy, you need to do your homework and make sure you understand the current funding levels, how much more money will be needed, and where it will come from.

Here are the most important things you should know and do.

1. Know what programs and services are available for low-income individuals and families in your state, county, and city.

Since many refugees have low incomes, you should be familiar with the programs available for low-income individuals and families in your state, county, and city. This includes both cash assistance and free or low-cost services. While some programs funded by the federal government are available in all states, it's important to know that:

- ✓ **Federal or national programs have different names in different states.** For example, the program that provides cash assistance to needy families is called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) at the federal level. However, each state administers its own program. For example, in Massachusetts it's called *Massachusetts Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children*, while in Tennessee, it's called the *Families First Program.*

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> What's in Your State?
>
> For a comprehensive listing of government-funded programs available in your state, visit the website: www.govbenefits.gov. From there, you can click on *benefits*, then click on *state*, then click on your state on the map that comes up.

Another good example is the State Children's Health Insurance program (SCHIP), which provides health insurance to low-income, uninsured children whose families do not qualify for Medicaid. SCHIP is jointly funded by the federal and state governments and administered by the states. Within broad federal guidelines, each state determines the design of its program, eligibility groups, benefit packages, payment levels for coverage, and administrative and operating procedures. In Wisconsin, this program is called *Wisconsin BadgerCare*, while in Vermont, it's called *Vermont Dr. Dynasaur*, and in Massachusetts, *MassHealth*.

✓ **Different states, counties, and cities have their own programs funded with state or local funds.** State and local governments can use their own tax dollars to either expand programs for which they also receive federal funds or develop new programs that meet local needs. Programs and services may be available in your state but not in other states. There may even be programs and services available in your particular county or city that are not available in other parts of your state.

✓ **Different communities have different programs and services delivered through nonprofit organizations.** Lastly, thousands of nonprofit organizations around the country offer a broad variety of programs and services, often with private funding.

Helpful Hint...

Get to Know Your Local United Way

The United Way is a national network of more than 1,300 locally governed organizations that raise money and in-kind resources to support nonprofit addressing community needs. If you want to learn more about the different nonprofits in your area, a good place to start is with your local United Way. Go to the website of the United Way of America: www.unitedway.org. From there, you can enter your zip code and then find the United Way near you.

2. What are the specific eligibility requirements for those programs?

Familiarize yourself with the eligibility requirements for programs and services refugees most often need. Remember that eligibility for different programs varies by immigration status. Various immigration laws, described in Chapter 4, define which categories of refugees and immigrants are eligible for different programs. ***See Appendix A: Overview of Refugee Eligibility for Federal Programs for more information.*** In general, keep in mind that:

✓ Refugees are eligible for special benefits and services--such as Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medical Assistance--for their first several months in the U.S. All of these programs are time limited.

✓ Refugees are also eligible for certain entitlement programs--such as TANF and Food Stamps--that are usually only available to citizens. However, since 1996, many of these programs have strict time limits.

✓ Other immigrants that are sometimes thought of as similar to refugees--like human trafficking victims and public interest parolees--have access to different benefits, which may change as their immigration status changes.

Different members of your community may be eligible for different benefits, programs, and services, depending on their status. Your ECBO should be prepared for concerns and perhaps tensions that may arise because some groups appear to have access to more and better assistance. Take time to talk about these and come up with ideas for changes that the organization may want to help bring about.

Helpful Hint...

Refugees and SSI

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is the only federal program that has specific time limits just for refugees. As a result of a 1996 law, refugees are only entitled to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) within the first seven years they are in the U.S. unless they become U.S. citizens.

Approximately 12,000 refugees have already lost SSI benefits and another 40,000 will reach the seven-year limit and lose their benefits within the next ten years.

Many refugee leaders and organizations are organizing to change this law. For more information, contact SEARAC.

3. Which programs are entitlement programs?

It's very important to know which programs are entitlement programs. If a refugee comes to your organization and reports that s/he cannot get a particular service, it makes a big difference whether or not the service is an entitlement program. If it's an entitlement program, and you can show that the refugee meets the eligibility criteria, then the agency must provide the assistance. However, if it's *not* an entitlement program, then you need to find out why refugees cannot get the service or have been denied the service. It could be that they do not meet eligibility requirements or that there are long waiting lists.

⇒ ***Revisit Chapter 3 for questions to ask when researching the problem.***

4. How can you help refugees access these programs and services?

You can find information about these programs on the website for your state or local government. Some states provide information about how to apply and application forms online. Some even let people apply online. Some states have made application process easier by allowing families to apply for multiple programs through one application.

From an individual refugee's point of view, the process can be overwhelming. Eligibility requirements can be confusing and applying often requires a lot of paperwork. As an advocate, you need to *understand the process* and *build relationships* with people who work inside the government agencies.

Again, the approach to advocacy depends on the situation, the funding source and type of program, your relationships, and what you're comfortable with doing.

Relationships are key! Here are some things you can do to build relationships:

- ✓ Reach out to different state and local human service agencies and invite them to come speak or set up information tables at your events.
- ✓ Find someone in the agency who cares about and understands the importance of serving refugees and who would be willing to be the contact for your ECBO when refugees have problems getting services from that agency.
- ✓ Find out if there is anyone working in the agency who speaks your language and whom refugees could call directly with questions or problems. If you can find a contact with whom refugees can speak directly, this will reduce your workload.

Helpful Hint…

Confidentiality Issues Related to Advocating for Individual Refugees

When meeting or making phone calls to government agencies on behalf of individual refugees, the agency representative may ask you if you are authorized to speak on the client's behalf.

Your ECBO could develop a simple release form, signed by your ECBO and the refugee client, that states that the refugee authorizes the ECBO to speak on his or her behalf and that all information shared will be kept confidential.

5. What can you do if a refugee is denied access to a particular service?

Sometimes, you may be helping a refugee obtain services or apply for assistance. Other times, you might need to help someone address a problem s/he has encountered in applying for assistance and getting services. Maybe an individual refugee has come to your ECBO for help because s/he has been cut off from food stamps or has been denied enrollment in a program that helps pay utility bills and does not understand why.

Then what can you do? In this scenario, keep in mind the following:

1. If it is an *entitlement* program and a refugee is denied services, you can start by filing an administrative appeal. Typically, local legal services providers or clinics assist individuals who have been denied public benefits or assistance in filing appeals. As an advocate, it's best for you to help members of your community get legal advice.
2. Whether or not it's an entitlement program, you need to know that most agencies and service providers have a formal grievance or appeal process. You should become familiar with that process, then help refugees navigate the process.

Helpful Hint…

How to Complain

Remember that if a refugee's application for benefits is denied, you have a right to appeal the decision. If a refugee has been treated unfairly or inappropriately, you have a right to file a complaint. To find out how, go to the home page of your state department of human of social services, and search for file an appeal or file a complaint.

3. If it is simply a service or program--such as a job training program or parenting program-- you need to figure out if there is a pattern of excluding refugees and immigrants, or if there is a lack of language or cultural capacity, and see how best to deal with it.
   ⇒ ***See Chapter 6 for further discussion about approaches to advocating for better services to refugees.***

4. If there is public funding for the services or program, then Civil Rights Act protections apply (and most nonprofits providing social services as well as government agencies are covered) and you can file a civil rights complaint.
   ⇒ ***Revisit Chapter 4 for further suggestions in addressing civil rights violations.***

5. If the program or service is not an entitlement program and a refugee has been denied access because there is not enough funding to meet the demand or because the priorities or policies don't fairly serve refugees, you may need to advocate for changes or more funding.

Helpful Hint...

Get to Know Your Congressperson's Office

What if a refugee is having problems with a federal program--such as Medicare, immigration services, federal loans, or Social Security--and you have tried and tried to contact someone at the agency but no is able or willing to help you. What can you do?

You can contact the home district office of your member of Congress. All members of Congress have what is called a *casework office* and *caseworkers.* As an advocate, you can contact the caseworker office to request assistance. The caseworker can then make phone calls on your behalf.

Visit the website of you Congressperson for information and instructions.

In short, if you find many refugees experiencing the same problem with a particular human service program or agency, you should try to understand the problem, then advocate for a solution that can benefit everyone.

Overview of Refugee Eligibility for Federal Programs[1]

Program	Explanation of Program	Eligibility
Food Stamps	Food stamps provide monthly coupons or benefits to low-income households for the purchase of food. The federal government covers the majority of the costs associated with the program, but individual states administer the program and pay for a portion of the costs.	Refugees can receive food stamps if they meet all of the requirements of eligibility (for example, having limited income) and meet one of the following requirements: ▪ Refugees who have become citizens ▪ All refugees during their first 7 years in the U.S. ▪ Refugees who have worked 40 quarters or can be credited with 40 quarters of work and who have adjusted their status to "legal permanent resident" (also known as "green card holders). Spouses receive credit for the time worked by their husband or wife, and children under 18 receive credit for the time their parents worked. ▪ Refugees who are currently serving in the American military or are veterans of the American military who meet the minimum active duty-requirements. The unmarried children and spouses of these refugees are also eligible. ▪ Hmong and other ethnic minorities from the Lao Highlands who fought alongside U.S. forces during the Vietnam War. Their spouses, widows or widowers, and unmarried children under the age of 18 are also eligible. ▪ Refugees who were 65 years old or older and living in the U.S. on or before August 22, 1996. ▪ Refugee children living in the U.S. on or before August 22, 1996 who are under 18

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, the information used in this chart was adapted (or taken) from *Guide to Immigrant Eligibility for Federal Programs 4th Edition*, National Immigration Law Center, 2002, with updates from April 2009. See www.nilc.org.

		years of age. ▪ Disabled refugees who were living in the U.S. on or before August 22, 1996 who are receiving benefits due to their disability at the time of application for food stamps.
Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Public Housing and Section 8 Programs	HUD provides funds to local housing agencies to administer public housing programs that provide rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. [2] Section 8 housing is the federal government's major program for assisting very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent and safe housing in the private market.	Almost all refugees are eligible to live in HUD supported public housing or receive Section 8 vouchers, as long as they meet the basic eligibility requirements (e.g. meeting the necessary income thresholds, etc.). However, refugees' eligibility to receive housing assistance may depend on the date the family began to receive housing assistance, the immigration status of other household members, and the composition of the refugees' household. To find out more about the eligibility requirements of HUD's housing programs, please refer to www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hcc/hcs.cfm or www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/
Medicaid	Medicaid provides health insurance to low-income individuals and families who meet eligibility guidelines set at the state level.[3]	All refugees who meet the Medicaid eligibility requirements (e.g. meeting the necessary income thresholds) who entered the U.S. on or before August 22, 1996 are eligible to receive Medicaid. For those who arrived as refugees in the U.S. after August 22, 1996, some different restrictions may apply according to which state you live in. In order to find out more information about the Medicaid requirements where you live, please refer to www.cms.hhs.gov/home/medicaid.asp
Refugee-Specific Programs	These programs include: Reception and Placement, Refugee Cash Assistance, Refugee Medical Assistance, the ORR Matching Grant, and Wilson-Fish Programs.	All refugees are eligible for these programs.

[2] Information taken from Chapter 5
[3] Information taken from Chapter 5

Social Security	Provides lifetime retirement benefits for retirees aged 65 and over who have worked at least ten years in the U.S.	All refugees are eligible to receive social security benefits.
State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)	SCHIP provides federal funding for states to create and/or expand health insurance programs for uninsured, low-income children. If a refugee family earns too much money to qualify for TANF in their state, they might still be considered eligible to receive SCHIP assistance.	Almost all refugee children may receive SCHIP benefits assuming they meet all of the eligibility requirements (e.g. having limited income and being uninsured). However, in some states, refugee children who arrived in the U.S. after August 22, 1996 and have been in the country for more than 7 years are not eligible for SCHIP. In order to find out if the SCHIP program in your state has time limits, you can call "Insure Kids Now," an initiative of the Health Resources and Services Administration, the Health Care Financing Administration, and the National Governors' Association. The number to call is 1-877-543-7669. Or, you may check their website at www.insurekidsnow.gov.
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	SSI is a federally funded program that provides cash benefits to low-income people who are aged, blind, or disabled. SSI is administered by the Social Security Administration.	A refugee may receive SSI **permanently** if he/she was receiving SSI prior to August 22, 1996; or entered the country before August 22, 1996 but became disabled or blind after August 22, 1996. A refugee may receive SSI benefits during his/her **first 7 years** in the U.S. if he/she does not become an American citizen during his/her first 7 years in the United States and entered the country before August 22, 1996, but reached age 65 after August 22, 1996; or entered the country after August 22, 1996 and was, or later became, age 65, disabled, or blind.[4]

[4] Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS): http://www.hias.org/advocacy/Docs/RestSSI_04_2005.php

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	Through TANF, each state receives money from the federal government and provides cash benefits to certain groups of low-income families with children under the age of 18. Each state determines the level of benefits individuals receive and may set limits on how long families receive TANF benefits.	Refugees can TANF if they meet all of the requirements of eligibility (for example, having limited income) and meet one of the following requirements: ▪ Refugees who have become citizens and their citizen children. ▪ All refugees during their first 5 years in the U.S. ▪ Refugees in the U.S. on or before August 22, 1996. ▪ Many states have extended eligibility for TANF assistance past the five year period for refugees who entered the U.S. *after* August 22, 1996. ▪ Refugees who have worked 40 quarters or can be credited with 40 quarters of work and who have adjusted their status to "legal permanent resident" (also known as "green card holders). Spouses receive credit for the time worked by their husband or wife, and children receive credit for the time their parents worked while the children were under the age of 18. ▪ Refugees who are currently serving in the American military or are veterans of the American military who meet the minimum active duty-requirements. The unmarried children and spouses of these refugees are also eligible.

Chapter 6

Improving Programs and Services for Refugees:

What You Need to Know About Access to Services, Quality of Services, and Refugee Participation in Planning

Introduction

Now that you understand the basic legal rights and protections for refugees in the U.S. (Chapter 4) and are familiar with how human services are funded and delivered in the U.S. (Chapter 5), the question is: *What can your ECBO do to make sure that refugees in your community have access to programs and services that are responsive to their needs?*

This chapter focuses on three key areas where programs and services to refugees can often be improved and where your ECBO can play a role in advocating for improvements:

- ✓ Access to Services
- ✓ The Quality of Services
- ✓ Refugee Participation in Planning Services

Below, we describe each area, why it is important, legal requirements, existing standards and promising practices you should promote, and advocacy approaches for your ECBO to consider.

Access to Services

What is access to services and why is it important?

Access means *the right to enter or make use of.* Often, while many different kinds of services may be available in a community, these services are not so easy for refugees to *enter* or *use*--that is, they are not *accessible.* Often, needed services--from health care to employment training to social services--are not accessible to refugees because of language, cultural, and other barriers.

What are common barriers to access for refugees?

The following are some of the most common:

- ✓ Language barriers. Refugees who do not speak English or do not speak English very well might not be able to get services or participate in programs if information about the programs and services is not available in their own language, and if the services themselves are not available in their own language (for example, if the program staff only speak English).

- ✓ **Physical barriers.** Refugees might not be able to get services or participate in programs if they are in locations that are not convenient to public transportation. Refugees with physical disabilities might not be able to participate in programs that are in facilities that are not accessible.

- ✓ **Other barriers.** For example, it might be difficult for refugee parents with children to get services or participate in programs if no child care is available. Or, it could be difficult for refugees to participate in programs that are offered when many refugees tend to be at work. (Cultural barriers--for example, programs and services that are not suited to the cultural needs of a certain population--are discussed at greater length in the section that begins on page 10 entitled "Quality of Services.")

What Can Your ECBO Do to Address these Barriers and Improve Access?

(1) Language Access

As you know, *language barriers* are some of the biggest barriers refugees face in getting the services they need and achieving integration. As an advocate for your community, you should be familiar with *language access* issues. Here are the most important things you should know:

- ✓ **Federal Language Access Laws.** Various federal laws address language access for government agencies and government-funded programs. These include:

  - **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.** As discussed in Chapter 4, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits recipients of federal funding and programs receiving federal funding from discriminating, denying the benefits of programs and activities, and excluding individual participation based on national origin, race, or color.

    Title VI does not require federal agenices or programs receiving federal funds to provide language assistance. However, iintentionally failing to provide meaningful access to individuals who are *limited English proficient (LEP)* can merit a Title VI complaint.

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> **Be Familiar with Title VI and Language Access**
>
> One of the most important things you can do is make sure you are familiar with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
>
> Under Title VI, all federal agencies and any recipient of federal funds must provide equal access to their services for all individuals regardless of race, national origin, or color. You can file a complaint based on Title VI if an entity or program fails to provide language assistance in certain circumstances. *This is your most powerful legal tool as an advocate!*
>
> ⇒ See ***Checklists and Helpful Hints*** on page 20 for more in-depth information about language access.

- **Education-Related Laws**. In addition, there are three federal laws that provide for federal language assistance in education. These include:

  - **The Bilingual Education Act and Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1968** gives school districts the authority to provide bilingual education programs.
  - **The Equal Educational Opportunity Act (EEOA)** prohibits school districts from discriminating against students or staff members because of race, color, or national origin. The EEOA also states that it is the responsibility of school districts to help LEP students address language challenges so that they may equally participate in all educational programs.
  - **The *No Child Left Behind Act*** requires school systems to offer means for the participation of LEP parents in their child's school in a language they understand.
  - **The Native American Languages Act of 1990**. Among other things, this act recognizes the right of Indian tribes to teach students using Native American languages in all schools that are funded by the Secretary of the Interior.

> **Keep In Mind…**
>
> Do "English-Only" Laws Mean Agencies Don't Have to Provide Language Access? No!
>
> Some states, counties, and cities around the country have passed English-only laws that seek to limit government's provision of non-English language assistance and services. Even if you live in a jurisdiction that has passed one of these laws, federal agencies or agencies receiving federal funding *must still comply with Title VI.* In general in the U.S., the requirements of federal laws prevail over state or local laws.

- **Voting Rights-Related Laws**. Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act requires states and localities to provide voting-related materials--including registration forms, ballots, and instructions--in other languages in cases where there are at least 10,000 people or 5% of the voting age population who are members of a single minority language group and the members do not speak English very well.

✓ **State and Local Language Access Laws**. A variety of state and local laws and regulations require state and local agencies to provide language access. The states of California, Hawaii, and Maryland have passed comprehensive language access laws, as has the District of Columbia.

> **Helpful Hint…**
>
> About State Language Access Laws
>
> For a listing of state laws around language access in health care, visit the website of the National Health Law Program at www.healthlaw.org, then click on *Language Access* under the heading *Special Sections.*
>
> Also, the National Language Access Advocates Network (N-LAAN) is a national organization that provides a forum for language access advocates to develop expertise, share resources and devise strategy. www.probono.net/nlaan/

More than a dozen states have passed laws related to language access in specific service areas, such as health care and education. For example, New York State has a law that requires hospitals to provide interpreter[1] services and translation of forms for LEP populations that are more than 1% of the hospital population.

You should research and be familiar with the laws that exist in your state and which kinds of agencies they apply to. ***See the Helpful Hint box on page 3.***

You should also be aware of any population *thresholds* (or cut off point) stated in the law. Laws typically require that agencies only provide language assistance to populations that are a certain percentage--for example 3% or 5%--of the total service population. Make sure you know this population *threshold* and if your community reaches this threshold.

> **Keep In Mind...**
>
> What if my community doesn't meet the population thresholds in my state/city?
>
> Federal law does not define population thresholds. State and local laws typically do. If your community does not meet the population thresholds defined by state or local law, you could advocate for the population thresholds to be lowered!

✓ **Existing Standards.** In general, there are three different kinds of standards for appropriate language assistance:

- **Federal standards.** Some federal agencies have set standards for providing linguistically and culturally appropriate services and require any entity receiving its funds comply with them. One example is the *Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards* for health care organizations, developed by the Office of Minority Health (OMH). Any health care organization that receives federal funds must meet some of the standards, while others are recommended as sound practices. The CLAS standards are discussed in more detail on page 14.

- **State or county standards.** Some state and county human or social services departments have developed their own standards. For example, in Minnesota, Hennepin County's Health and Human Services Department has developed a model LEP plan that includes standards for interpretation. You can download a copy of the plan by visiting the County's website at wwwa.co.hennepin.mn.us. Then type in *LEP Plan* in the search box.

  In addition, some Police Departments around the country have adopted policies and procedures for communicating with and assisting LEP populations. One model is the

[1] Frequently, the terms "interpretation" and "translation" are used interchangeably. However, "interpretation" refers to helping people with spoken language, and "translation" refers to written documents.

Summit County/Lorain, Ohio manual for serving LEP populations. For copy of this manual, you can contact the Summit County Sheriff's office at 330-643-2181.

- **Professional association standards.** Professional associations in some fields have also developed standards for linguistically appropriate services.

  For example, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has developed a publication for its members and partner organizations called *Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice*. These are further described on page 14.

> **Helpful Hint…**
>
> **National Standards for Health Care Interpreters**
>
> The National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC) recently published National Standards of Practice for Interpreters in Health Care. The standards address issues such as confidentiality, accuracy, and impartiality. You can download the standards at: www.ncihc.org/sop.php.

✓ **Good Practices.** How can organizations that receive federal funds ensure meaningful access to their services? Reasonable steps to provide language access depend on how critical the service is to the LEP community, the size of the LEP population, and the resources of the organization. Depending on the situation, the following could be reasonable steps:

- **Hire bilingual staff.** Having trained professional staff who are bilingual and bicultural is the most desirable way to provide language access, especially when the service provider has frequent contact with particular languages.

  In addition to hiring "frontline" staff who are bilingual and bicultural, it's also important to make sure bilingual and bicultural staff are represented in management positions. This can help ensure policies and practices are informed by the needs of LEP populations.

  Service providers can also train bilingual staff to act as

> **Helpful Hint…**
>
> **One Way States Can Pay for Language Assistance**
>
> States can get special permission to pay for the cost of interpreter services using federal funds provided through the Medicaid, SCHIP and TANF programs. For example, Washington State reimburses 50% of public hospitals' and health departments' interpreter costs by using Medicaid funds. For more information about different ways states can use federal funds in this way, visit the National Conference of State Legislatures' website at: www.ncsl.org/programs/immig/SHNarticle.htm.
>
> Only 12 states take advantage of the option to use federal funds to pay for interpreter services. If you live in a state that does not do this, this could be a great "advocacy" opportunity! If you are interested in advocating around this issue, you should check the National Health Law Program's and The Access Project's *Language Services Action Kit*. It can be found at: www.cmwf.org/usr_doc/LEP_actionkit_reprint_0204.pdf

interpreters and ensure that these staff are available to other staff to act as interpreters.

- **Contract out for interpretation services.** Contracting for interpreters is a cost-effective option when there is no regular need for a particular language skill. In many places, state agencies partner with nonprofits to create language banks and interpreter services, or nonprofits provide these services with private funds. As you probably already know, agencies often look to ECBOs to provide interpretation services, and often expect them to do it for free.

- **Use telephone interpreter services.** This is a low-cost option that many state, county, and city human service agencies use to provide language access. It's not the best option for refugees who must often communicate complex needs and receive complex information.

- **Use community volunteers for translation and interpretation.** Some federally-funded agencies and organizations recruit their own volunteers or work with other nonprofits to recruit and manage community volunteers without specialized training in translation or interpretation. It's best to use community volunteers only for less critical services--for example, it would be fine to have a community volunteer help with a parent-teach meeting, but not with a meeting with a doctor where sensitive medical information must be communicated.

> **Keep In Mind…**
>
> Value Your Services!
>
> If your ECBO has been providing interpretation for free, *you can and should begin to charge for these services*, especially with agencies that receive federal funds and are legally required to provide language assistance.

But keep in mind that even with community members who volunteer to offer interpretation and translation services, it is still important to provide them with some basic training so they are familiar with the service provider they are interpreting or translating for and are also familiar with the basic principles about interpreting and translating, including the importance of confidentiality, as well as issues around the liabilities involved with interpreting. Remember that it is *never* acceptable to use minor children to interpret for family members.

(2) Physical Access

Refugees need to be able to physically get to the programs and services they are eligible for. If an employment and training program is located in a part of the city that is far from where refugees live and from public transportation, then it will be hard for refugees to access that program. If a refugee who uses a wheelchair cannot reach the English language class on the 4th floor because the building lacks a wheelchair ramp and an elevator, then the service is not accessible. Here are the most important things you should know about physical access:

✓ **Legal Requirements.** Programs and services *must* be accessible to people with disabilities--even if they do not receive any federal funds. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities. This extends to places of employment, transportation, state and local government agencies, telecommunications, and any entity that provides goods or services to the public--including stores, museums, libraries, parks, recreational facilities, social service centers and other nonprofit organizations.

The ADA defines a disability as any physical or mental impairment that limits a major life activity, such as the ability to walk, talk, see, hear, breathe, or work. Under the ADA, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is considered a mental impairment.

People with disabilities cannot be denied participation in public programs or activities that are available to people without disabilities.

> **More Information...**
>
> About the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
>
> The ADA requires that all government agencies and nonprofit organizations make *reasonable accommodations* to ensure that people with disabilities can access programs and services. However, these entities do not have to make an accommodation if the accommodation would place an undue hardship (e.g., excessive cost or disruption to services). For more information, visit the following website: www.jan.wvu.edu/links/ADAq&a.html

✓ **Good Practices.** There are many things service provider can do to make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities or the elderly, from physically altering facilities to providing qualified readers or interpreters. In addition, services should be in locations that are accessible by public transportation. While this is not a legal requirement, it is a good practice. If a service provider is opening a new program or service for the refugee community, it would make sense to find a location that is accessible to the target population.

(3) Other Supports That Help Refugees Access Services

Refugees may need other supports to make sure they can access services. For example, some parents might not be able to take an evening class unless they can arrange childcare. Others might not be able to get to the class unless transportation is provided.

Numerous studies of family literacy and English language instruction programs, for example, find that on-site child care is critical to success. According to a study by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Literacy, "Programs that are most successful in maintaining high retention rates provide services such as transportation, meals, quality child care, counseling, home visits by teachers, and social workers."

✓ **Legal Requirements.** In the U.S., government-funded programs are not legally required to provide childcare or other support services. However, many government agencies and nonprofit that are committed to serving low income communities recognize the importance of child care and find ways to provide it.

✓ **Existing Standards.** For a variety of adult education and training programs, some national organizations and state agencies have identified the provision of support services--including child care and transportation--as a standard for quality programs. For example, the State of Maryland's Adult English Language Program standards include as a standard: "The program provides access to a variety of services, directly or through referrals to cooperating agencies: child care, transportation, health services, employment counseling, educational counseling, legal advice, personal and family counseling, assessment of learning disabilities and other handicapping conditions, and translators and interpreters."

✓ **Good Practices.** Service providers can find many creative and low-cost ways to facilitate access to their programs and services. For example, service providers can:

- Locate facilities near neighborhoods where refugees live or within walking distance of public transportation when selecting sites for new programs, classes, or services.
- Provide transportation stipends or tokens.
- Partner with another nonprofit that has a van and can provide transportation or get a grant to purchase a van you can share.
- Offer stipends to participants to pay their own babysitters, pay stipends to refugees to provide child care on site during classes, or use volunteers to provide child care during classes.

More Information...

About Child Care and Transportation Barriers

According to the National Institute for Literacy's National Household Education Survey, almost one out of four limited-English-proficient adults who want to take English language classes can't because they lack child care or transportation. Women report that lack of child care is their biggest barrier.
For more information, see:
www.nifl.gov/nifl/facts/esl.html#part

To ensure services are responsive to the needs of the community they serve, service providers should consult with and involve the community, including people and organizations that represent diverse ethnic groups, age groups, gender, and other perspectives. The section entitled *Participation of Refugees in Service Design and Planning,* beginning on Page 17, offers suggestions for how to do this.

What Can *Your ECBO* Do to Improve and Expand Access?

If members of your community are coming to your ECBO and reporting problems with access to a particular kind of service or with particular agencies and organizations, the first thing you should do is turn to Chapter 3 of this tool kit! You'll want to learn as much as you can about the problem or issue, identify what your ECBO and your community believes need to change--your proposed solutions to address the problem, identify who has the power or authority to make the changes you seek, and then make your plan and launch your advocacy effort!

In addition to the general approaches and strategies described in Chapter 3, here are some additional things you can do to improve and expand access:

✓ **Begin to document access problems.** You can do this by keeping a list of people who come to your ECBO and report problems they are having with particular services or providers. You can also begin to collect information in a more systematic way through surveys and focus groups. Look at what patterns come out. For example, does the information you collect suggest that people from particular language groups, ages, or types of disabilities face particular types of barriers more often?
⇒ ***See Tools You Can Use*** on page 28 for questions you can use to assess access to and quality of services for refugees.

✓ **Make sure you fully understand access issues in your community,** including any relevant state and local laws (in additional to the federal ones). You should also research and be familiar with any steps the particular service provider you are dealing with has already taken to reduce barriers to access.

✓ **Start by sharing information about the community you represent.** Again, assume good intentions but lack of knowledge. Your first approach with a service provider should be to simply share information about your community--how big it is, why people came to the state or city, the language and culture--and what members most critical needs are. Share what your community members have shared with you about the barriers to service access they are facing.

Keep In Mind…

Do Your Homework Before You Advocate!

Remember, agencies and organizations may limit access to their services for a variety of reasons, including:

- Lack of knowledge of the legal requirements
- Cultural insensitivity
- Different priorities
- Unwillingness to incur the costs involved

Some providers *may want* to do the right thing and provide meaningful access to its services for your community, *but not know how*. Others may be resistant to making needed changes. When you begin your efforts, assume the provider wants to do the right thing!

✓ **Share information about what your ECBO offers.** Be prepared to tell a service provider about your ECBO--including the role you play in the community, the programs and services you provide, the knowledge and skills of your staff, and the important relationships you have. Talk over ideas for the best way to work together, making clear how the strengths and assets your ECBO brings can complement what the service provider offers.

✓ **Offer to help develop a plan.** Once you've begun to build a relationship, you could offer to help the service provider develop a plan for expanding access for your community. Plans to expand any kinds of access should identify strategies for expanding access, specific next steps, a timeline, and the resources that will be needed. Remember that federally-funded agencies that must develop plans for providing language assistance to LEP individuals often involve community organizations such as yours in the development of those plans. Remember to look at the *Language Assistance Self-Assessment Tool* on the www.lep.gov website. It has many good questions designed to help service providers determine what they should and can realistically do.

✓ **Be clear about what you have to offer, what you will do for *free* and what you will do for a *fee*.** Your ECBO needs to be an equal partner in efforts to improve services to refugees. Think carefully about how much you are willing to do for free. If the service provider looks to your ECBO to provide an ongoing and critical component of the service--such as outreach, interpretation, translation, or transportation--it is perfectly reasonable for you to ask if the provider has money in their budget for interpretation and translation services and then to ask for a fee and a contract. Services providers should not put you in the position of needing to choose between offering services for free or community members not getting the service!

> **Keep in Mind...**
>
> Know what you *have* to offer and what you are *willing* to offer for free
>
> Remember that you might want to do some things for free to build trust. However, as you likely already know, some providers may come to expect you to help for free. You must begin to value the knowledge and experience you have to offer! It is perfectly reasonable for you to charge for assistance you offer to a service provider.

✓ **Provide suggestions for realistic steps the provider can take to expand access.** While you will have to work with the service provider to better understand its capacity and resources, your ECBO may be more familiar with resources in the community. For example, are there other resources in the community--existing interpreter pools or active community volunteers--that the provider might not know about and could partner with? You could also share examples of promising practices and creative approaches that other providers are using to stretch limited resources. Again, if the organization is committed to serving your community, they'll welcome the opportunity for your ideas.

If the provider is resistant, you may need to take a different approach. While you need to be careful about starting out with approaches that are too confrontational--that might put the provider on the defensive--you should be assertive.

You should still share information about your community and its needs and barriers to access community members have experienced. But you may also need to be ready to point to data, the law, and existing standards from the service provider's field, if they exist.

Helpful Hint...

Do Your Homework - How Will the Changes You Support Help the Service Provider?

When you advocate for increased access, appeal to your target's economic self-interest! According to a 2002 study of the Office of Management and Budget, greater language access can substantially improve the health of many immigrants and their families--thus saving money in the long term. Language assistance may also "measurably increase the effectiveness of public health and safety programs."

If this fails, it might be necessary to move to (1) file a formal complaint; (2) enlist the help of a powerful ally (for example, an elected official, a key funder of the service provider in question, or a civic leader); and/or (3) use the media to highlight the access barriers that exist for your community.

Remember that even programs and services that are *not* federally funded can and should take reasonable steps to provide improved access to their services, including language assistance. *This includes your own ECBO!* Take a critical look at access to the programs and services your ECBO provides. Have you, your staff, and your board taken all reasonable steps to reduce and/or eliminate barriers to service accessibility? Your ECBO should also make the reduction of barriers a regular part of your planning efforts.

Quality of Services

What do we mean by *high quality services* and why are they important?

Your ECBO has probably heard refugees who have gone to a particular service provider, report things like "they didn't help me" or "I completed their program but I didn't learn anything and still can't find a job."

Sometimes, the problem could be a lack of clear communication around expectations--for example, refugees were expecting the case worker to "find them a job," while the case worker's actual job is to help the individual with a "job search" and offer guidance and suggestions. But the problem could be that the services *are not good services* or *are not appropriate for refugees.*

So how can you tell *high quality* services--services that will meet your community's needs and will have positive outcomes on their well being--from *poor quality* services? What should you look for?

In general, high quality services for refugees are services that:

- ✓ **Are culturally and linguistically competent.** In additional to being language appropriate, services should also be delivered in ways that are respectful of the clients' cultural beliefs and practices. Staff should receive training in cultural competence to ensure they have the attitudes, knowledge, and skills to work effectively across cultures. Organizations may also need to change the ways they do things in order to make people feel comfortable and safe. For example, a program may need to ensure that there are female teachers for female participants.

- ✓ **Are provided by trained, qualified, and committed staff.** Cultural competence is critical, but so is just plain *competence*. Staff should have the experience, interest, and training needed to perform their job effectively. Staff also need to be committed to serving your community--to spend the extra time often needed to find creative solutions to the complex challenges refugees face, rather than giving up and saying "this is somebody else's problem."

- ✓ **Are well managed.** In *well-run* programs and services, classes and appointments happen on time, staff and volunteers follow through, questions get answered, and the goals of the program--for improving lives and communities--are met. This requires good planning, clearly defined outcomes, and skilled managers who ensure that programs and services have the resources they need to meet their objectives, including appropriate data systems and technology.

- ✓ **Identify and respect clear rights for the people being served.** A growing number of service providers are developing a client or consumer *bill of rights*. These are often brief fact sheets that define client or consumer *rights*--such as a right to confidentiality, a right to respectful treatment, a right to not be discriminated against, and a right to a grievance procedure if the client or participant feels s/he has been mistreated or not received quality services.
  ⇒ See ***Tools You Can Use*** on page 29 for a sample consumer bill of rights.

- ✓ **Are designed and planned with the involvement of the people being served.** The people being served should have clear opportunities to provide input how programs and services are designed and delivered. They may have insights about *what it will take to make a program work* that the service provider won't know--such as the times of day that would be most convenient. The next section of this chapter, beginning on page16, provides an in-depth discussion on this topic.

- ✓ **Have appropriate materials and curriculum.** Educational and employment/training programs in particular should have materials that are up-to-date, accurate, and written at a language level refugees can understand. For example, materials created in the 1970s for Vietnamese clients cannot simply be translated into different languages and used with newer refugee groups now. Written materials and curriculum should be accurate, up to date, and address the actual needs of refugees.

✓ **Are *holistic* and *client centered*.** High quality programs and services do not just address an isolated need or problem; they also take into account other things that may be going on in the person's life. For example, let's say a participant in a citizenship program has stopped coming to class because her son got into trouble at school and she feels she needs to be home with him instead of coming to class. To ensure the mother can continue with the classes, program staff might help her find an after school program, a mentor or tutor, or some other type of positive youth development program.

✓ **Have been evaluated and shown to have positive outcomes.** A high quality employment program, for example, doesn't just place people in jobs--it places a high percentage of its participants in jobs with livable wages, potential for growth, and job security. Defining "success" is not as easy as it sounds. Again, it goes back to asking refugees what is important to them and what it would take for them to be satisfied with both delivery of service and the final results.

Depending on the type of program or service you are trying to improve, your ECBO and refugee community might identify other factors that reflect the uniqueness of your community and its specific needs, challenges, and assets.

What standards and promising practices exist for *high quality services*?

In general, two different categories of standards and promising practices guide the delivery of human services in the U.S.

✓ **Professional standards for specific service areas.** Many fields within the broad area of human services, health, and education have their own professional associations. Often, these associations develop standards for the delivery of quality services in their field. Examples include:

- The *Child Welfare League of America* has standards of excellence for child welfare programs, including services for abused and neglected children and foster care programs.(www.cwla.org)
- The *National Association for the Education of Young Children* established a national, voluntary accreditation system to set professional standards for early childhood education programs, and to help families identify high-quality programs. (www.naeyc.org)
- The *National Association of Social Workers* (NASW) has developed comprehensive standards for various aspects of social work practice, including standards for case management. (www.socialworkers.org)

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> English Language Instruction
>
> A recent report by the Asian American Justice Center identifies emerging best practices for English language instruction programs. You can download a copy of the full report at: www.advancingequality.org/files/AAJC_Adult_Literacy_Education_report.pdf

- The *National Mentoring Center* disseminates information about various standards and best practices for mentoring programs. (www.nwrel.org/mentoring/about_nmc.php)

✓ **Standards for cultural competence.** Professional standards for specific fields, such as those listed above, often include standards for cultural competence. For example, the NASW's standards include *Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice.* (Go to: www.socialworkers.org/practice/default.asp to download a PDF.)

In addition, a number of funding agencies have developed standards for cultural competence. In general, the field of health care has probably made the most progress in developing standards for cultural competence.

> **More Information...**
>
> *Great Resource on Cultural Competence*
>
> The National Center for Cultural Competence at Georgetown University focuses on building the capacity of health and mental health programs to design, carry out, and evaluate culturally and linguistically competent services.
>
> The Center's website has lots and lots of good tools and references--sample organizational policies, assessment tools, a consultant pool, a promising practices series and other publications.
>
> Visit the website at:
> www.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/nccc/

The *Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards* for health care organizations (also mentioned on page 4) are considered model standards for cultural competency. Any health care organization that receives federal funds must meet some of the standards, while others are recommend as sound practices. For more information about the CLAS standards, visit the OMH website at www.omhrc.gov. Click on the tab labeled *Cultural Competence*, and then on *National Standards.* In general, programs or services that receive significant federal or state funds are more likely to have to meet specific standards defined by the funder.

⇒ See ***Tools You Can Use*** on pages 30 and 33 for samples and checklists from the CLAS Standards.

What should your ECBO do if there's a problem with the quality of services?

If refugees come to your ECBO and tell the staff that the services they received or programs they participated in at another organization were not good, *what should you do?* In your role as an advocate for your community, *it is your responsibility* to voice your concerns to other service providers if your community members are not comfortable with the services they receive or are simply not being helped by those services.

If there's a problem, you can follow the same basic steps laid out in Chapter 3. Below, we offer a few additional things for you to think about, questions to ask, and steps to take when there are problems with the quality of services.

✓ **Learn as much as you can about the problem and the provider.** For problems related to service quality, some specific questions you should ask are:

- How much of the problem is a lack of *cultural* competence and how much is a lack of competence in general?
- Are there existing standards for the program or service? Does the program or service receive federal funds and should it be meeting federal standards?
- How do members of your community think the programs and services could be improved? What do they think needs to change?
- Does the service provider want to provide high quality services to your community but not know how? Or, is the service provider reluctant to change the way it delivers services?

> **Keep in Mind...**
>
> Don't Jump to Conclusions
>
> Remember that someone might not be happy with a particular service because she or he did not have a clear understanding of what to expect or simply didn't like the caseworker. Learn as much as you can about what your community members want, need and expect from a particular program or service and what the program or service is really designed to do.

⇒ ***See Tools You Can Use*** on page 28 for questions you can use to assess access to and quality of services for refugees.

✓ **Ask to meet with the provider.** As discussed in Chapter 3, at a first meeting with the provider, you should:

- Share any concerns you or your community have about how the provider is serving refugees.
- Share information about your community, including how big it is, why people came to the state or city, the language and culture, and what the community's most critical needs are.
- Share information about your ECBO, including it experience, program track record, and relationships and trust in the community.
- Ask questions to make sure you fully understand the provider and the service.

✓ **Offer to help develop and implement realistic steps the provider can take to improve services.** If the service provider wants to serve your community but doesn't know how, your ECBO can play an important role in working with the provider to improve services. You and your organization are the experts on your community and have access to community members in ways that funders, government entities and other service providers simply do not. You also have the trust of your community and can serve as a bridge between your community and other service providers. You can:

- Provide basic information about your community
- Help the provider document and collect data on your community's needs
- Provide training to the staff on how to work with your community
- Conduct outreach to your community and make referrals to the provider

- Provide interpretation, translation, transportation, and cultural mediation
- Monitor the changes by getting feedback from refugees to see if the services are better responding to their needs

Work with the service provider to set realistic objectives for improving services, a plan for achieving the objectives, and a clear understanding of action steps the provider will take, what your ECBO will do, and how you will communicate.

✓ **Make sure your own ECBO's programs and services are high quality.** You will be a more credible advocate with other service providers if refugees are satisfied with the programs services your own ECBO provides. Remember that it's not about *how many* services you offer, but the quality of the services you offer. Incorporate an evaluation component into all of the work that your ECBO does and respond to concerns about your ECBOs work as they arise, and your organization will be in a much better position when advocating for high quality services outside of your own organization.

An Ongoing Role for Your ECBO

An important role for your ECBO is to ensure that the programs and services provided by mainstream organizations are good quality and delivered in a culturally competent manner. In general--and especially in communities where the refugee community might be "newer" and the mainstream community has less experience with them--your role should be to:

✓ **Educate.** Your ECBO should continuously work to educate service providers about refugees, including their experiences in the U.S., their cultures and traditions, and their needs and concerns from their own perspectives.

✓ **Monitor.** Your ECBO should continuously ask community members about their experience with different service providers--including both government agencies and other nonprofits--as part of needs assessments that you do. It's vital that such assessments be ongoing, for instance reaching out during community meetings or even during one-on-one conversations with people.

✓ **Communicate.** Your ECBO should build and maintain good relationships and communication with service providers. The more you can build trust, the more open other providers will be to your suggestions for improving services.

✓ **Advocate.** Your ECBO should always be an advocate for both individual community members and for broader changes that will benefit more people.

✓ **Collaborate.** Your ECBO should collaborate with mainstream service providers to improve programs and services, but make sure that you negotiate a fee or sub-contract for any significant level of assistance your ECBO provides to a government agency or other nonprofit.

Participation of Refugees in Service Design and Planning

How can refugee participation in planning improve programs and services?

If the people who will ultimately benefit from a program or service are involved in planning it, the program or service will be more likely to meet their needs and to be useful, accessible, and culturally appropriate. While many service providers conduct needs assessments, they do not then consult with the people being served about *the best way to deliver the services* identified in the needs assessment.

For example, a needs assessment might find that refugee youth are not doing well in school and are not involved in any structured activities after school. A service provider might decide to start up an after school program. By involving refugee youth in planning it, the service provider could learn: What kinds of activities would youth be interested in participating in? What kind of physical space would make them feel comfortable? What should the hours of the program be? What's the best way to reach out to young people to encourage them to attend the program?

What standards or promising practices exist?

In the U.S., a growing number of human service fields encourage the active participation of people who will benefit from programs and services in planning them. This has been part of a *consumer movement* in which the people who receive services--often called *consumers*--have demanded the right to have a say in the design, decision making, and delivery of programs and services.

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> **What is Consumer Involvement?**
>
> *Consumer involvement* is a process in which those most affected by an issue are consulted and included in the decision making of an agency, planning group or collaborative entity. What that process looks like may vary greatly, but ultimately a key result of consumer involvement is that consumers' views and experiences are directly included in the planning and decision making processes.

Fields such as health care, mental health, and disability services have led the way in setting up structures for both ongoing and meaningful consumer involvement. Some federal funding sources require consumer involvement in the form of community planning councils and/or advisory boards, committees, or commissions.

For example, decisions about what HIV/AIDS services are needed and how federal funds for these services should be allocated within specific geographic communities are made by Planning Councils. At least one third (33 percent) of the Planning Council members must be unaffiliated people living with HIV who receive HIV-related services.

What can your ECBO do to increase refugee participation in service planning and evaluation?

Service providers that want to serve refugees but understand they need to learn more will often turn to ECBOs for advice--*What do refugees need? How can we provide this service in a way that is culturally competent? What barriers should we anticipate?*

At the same time, refugees also turn to ECBOs to share their needs and concerns about other service providers. As a result, ECBOs often become the unofficial spokespeople for refugees, representing their needs and concerns to mainstream service providers. While this can be quite helpful at times, it's much better to encourage a direct relationship between service providers and your community.

> **Keep in Mind...**
>
> Even Your ECBO Can't Speak for All Refugees
>
> You know your community better than mainstream service providers do. But even your ECBO cannot speak for all refugees. Make sure that you are not making assumptions about all refugees based on your interactions with some.

As you build relationships, trust, and credibility with service providers in your city or county, you can strongly encourage them to involve refugees directly. In fact, one of the most important parts of your role as an ECBO leader is to challenge service providers to not only consult with your ECBO but to *engage refugees themselves*. Here are a few models for doing that:

- ✓ **Surveys and focus groups.** At a minimum, when planning new services, services providers can conduct surveys and/or focus groups with refugees. Your ECBO could offer to help identify and recruit participants for a focus group and/or get surveys out to community members.

> **More Information...**
>
> About Different Kinds of Advisory Group
>
> When Mayor Chris Coleman of St. Paul, MN first took office, he began to hold monthly meetings with Hmong business owners in the city. The meetings provided an opportunity for the business owners to voice their concerns to the Mayor and his staff and to educate them about the impact various city policies, planning efforts, and taxes would have on their businesses.

- ✓ **Advisory groups.** Another model is to create a refugee advisory board or committee. The advisory group could be time limited--it could just provide input during the initial planning stages. Or, the group could be ongoing and could meet regularly--maybe three or four times a year--to provide advice about program implementation. Your ECBO could help identify and recruit refugees to serve on an advisory group. If refugees form a significant portion of the target population, you could suggest that the service provider recruit a few refugees to serve on its Board of Directors.

- ✓ **Liaisons.** A growing number of government agencies and other public institutions--such as police departments, and public schools--are hiring members of refugee and immigrant communities to serve as *liaisons* to the broader refugee or immigrant community. The liaisons serve as a bridge between the refugee or immigrant community and the mainstream agency or institutions. They serve as a vehicle for both *outreach to* the community and *input from* the community.

One of the most important things your ECBO can do is recruit, train, and support refugees from your community to serve in these roles!

You don't just have to wait for service providers to come to your ECBO for input and advice. You can target service providers with whom refugees have reported problems and suggest a model of refugee participation as a way to improve services. You can also advocate with mainstream public agencies and service providers that generally serve low-income people, to include a refugee or two in their existing structures for community involvement and participation.

> **Keep in Mind...**
>
> Continue Communication with Your ECBO
>
> Even if you successfully advocate with a mainstream provider to create a refugee advisory group, your ECBO should maintain and continue to build its relationship with the provider. You may still be in a position where you will need to advocate and this relationship is important.

As Chapter 3 points out, you'll need to think carefully about what to ask for and what to expect. For example, if the service provider serves only a small number of refugees, then it might not be realistic to ask the provider to create a refugee advisory group, but could conduct a focus group. However, if refugees are a significant portion of the population served, it would be appropriate to suggest that the service provider create a refugee advisory committee.

How can this help your ECBO meet its mission?

By working with service providers to increase refugee participation in the design and planning of services, your ECBO can also help meet its mission of empowering refugees. The experience of serving on an advisory group, Board, or commission can foster the growth and build the strength of community members. Community members will have the opportunity to learn, grow, and take on leadership roles in the broader mainstream community. Ultimately, this may be the most important part of ensuring that service providers have quality input from the community. At the same time, promoting broader refugee participation can relive you of some of the burden of belonging to multiple advisory and planning committees, which can be very time consuming.

What challenges can you expect?

As we discussed in Chapter 3, some providers will open to your suggestions for how their services can be improved, while others will not. Some will feel that is not your place to tell them how to do their work. With time--and with your continuing awareness-raising work--many come to see the benefits of having input from the community.

You may also find it difficult to recruit refugees to be involved, especially with more demanding forms of participation, such as serving on an advisory committee for another service provider. You may need to spend time building confidence, letting refugees know that they have something important to offer, even if they don't have formal education or strong English proficiency. You will also want to make sure that you are not going to the same people over and over again.

It's extremely important that the people who will be affected most by programs and services are part of the planning process. You may need to advocate with mainstream service providers to create the structures for refugee participation. Through your work as an ECBO leader, you will not only be able to help ensure that programs and services are responsive to refugees, but also empower your community to make sure that their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed at a level that will make a direct impact.

Summary of Resources... For More Information

Federal Language Access Laws
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Referenced on Page 2)
http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/cor/coord/titlevi.htm

State and Local Language Access Laws
National Health Law Program (Referenced on Page 3) www.healthlaw.org

Sample Standards for Language Assistance
Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards for health care organizations. www.omhrc.gov. Click on the tab labeled *Cultural Competence*, and then on *National Standards.*

Minnesota, Hennepin County's Health and Human Services Department model LEP plan (Referenced on Page 4) wwwa.co.hennepin.mn.us Then type in *LEP Plan* in the search box.

Summit County/Lorain, Ohio Police Department manual for serving LEP populations. For copy of this manual, you can contact the Summit County Sheriff's office at 330-643-2181.

Standards for Interpretation
National Council on Interpreting in Health Care's National Standards of Practice for Interpreters in Health Care (Referenced on Page 5) www.ncihc.org/sop.php

Funding for Interpretation
National Conference of State Legislatures (Referenced on Page 5)
www.ncsl.org/programs/immig/SHNarticle.htm

National Health Law Program/The Access Project – *Language Services Action Kit* (Referenced on Page 5) www.cmwf.org/usr_dox/LEP_actionkit_reprint_0204.pdf

Access for People with Disabilities
Americans with Disabilities Act (Referenced on Page 6) www.jan.wvu.edu/links/ADAq&a.html

Child Care and Transportation Barriers
National Institute for Literacy – National Household Education Survey (Referenced on Page 8) www.nifl.gov/nifl/facts/es1.html#part

Professional Standards for Specific Service Areas
Child Welfare League of America (Referenced on Page 13) www.cwla.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children (referenced on Page 13) www.naeyc.org

National Association of Social Workers (Referenced on Page 14) www.socialworkers.org

National Mentoring Center (Referenced on Page 14) www.nwrel.org/mentoring/about_nmc.php

Standards for Cultural Competence
National Association of Social Workers' *Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice* (Referenced on Page 14) Go to: www.socialworkers.org/practice/default.asp to download a PDF

National Center for Cultural Competence at Georgetown University (Referenced on Page 14) www.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/nccc/

Office of Minority Health – Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards (Referenced on Pages 4 and 13) www.omhrc.gov

The Joint Commission – Sets standards for and accredits health care organizations. www.jointcommission.org

Checklists and Helpful Hints

More About Language Access

What does the federal law say?

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that:

> *No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.*

Title VI *does not* say anything about language access specifically. However, the Supreme Court of the United States has ruled that failing to provide limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals with *meaningful access* in their own language constitutes national origin discrimination and thus violates Title VI.

How has this law been interpreted?

Adopted in 2000, Executive Order 13166 clarifies Title VI prohibitions against discrimination, by stating that that all programs and activities conducted directly by federal agencies, and entities that receive federal funding, *should provide language assistance in order to avoid discriminating against ethnic limited English proficient (LEP) populations*.

It also requires federal agencies to provide guidance to recipients of federal funds around how to ensure *meaningful access* by LEP persons to critical services while not imposing *undue burdens* on small business, small local governments, or small nonprofits.

What kinds of services are covered by Title VI and Executive Order 13166?

Any service provider that receives federal funds *must* take the *reasonable steps* to ensure *meaningful access* for clients who speak limited English. It doesn't matter how much federal funding they get. Even if the service provider receives only a very small amount of federal funds, then Title VI applies to them.

Many, many different kinds of services providers that refugees regularly come into contact with receive federal funds, including: ***(Note: See Chapter 5 for further information about these and other programs and services)***

Type of Agency or Service Provider:	Receives Federal Funds From:
Public Schools	Department of Education
Police Departments	Department of Justice
Hospitals and Health Clinics (Note: Any health care provider who accepts Medicare or Medicaid, both federally-funded, is covered by Title VI.)	Department of Health and Human Services
Public and subsidized housing	Department of Housing and Urban Development
Employment and Training Programs (including One Stop Career Centers)	Department of Labor
Human service agencies and service providers (such as social services, child welfare, public assistance and others)	Department of Health and Human Services

What must federal agencies and entities that receive federal funding do to provide *meaningful access* for LEP individuals?

Most federal agencies require recipients of federal funds to take *reasonable steps* to ensure *meaningful access* to their programs and activities by LEP persons.

Executive Order 13166 does not provide a definition of *meaningful access*. Meaningful access basically means that LEP individuals are effectively informed of and can participate in the program or service (as long as they meet other eligibility requirements). A federally-funded program or service that limits its language assistance to the provision of written materials in another language, for example, may not be allowing LEP individuals to effectively be informed or participate.

What's *reasonable* for an agency or organization receiving federal funds, depends on four factors:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the program or grantee.
2. How often LEP individuals come in contact with the program.
3. The nature of the program or service provided and how important it is to people's lives.
4. How much "reasonable steps" would cost and the resources available to the entity to pay these costs.

Once a federal agency of federally-funded entity completes this analysis of these four factors, it should develop an LEP plan to address the needs of the LEP populations it serves. Language access plans should address how LEP clients will be identified, how language assistance will be provided, how staff will be trained to ensure they understand language access obligations, and how the plan will be monitored.

What can you do if a federally-funded government agency is not providing language access?

As an advocate for your community, you can do a couple of things:

1st – You can assist refugees to file a written complaint. You can file the complaint with:

- ✓ The state agency's Office of Civil Rights. ***See attached sample complaint form from the Texas Health and Human Services.***

- ✓ The regional Office of Civil Rights for the appropriate federal agency. ***See attached sample complaint form from the federal Department of Health and Human Services.***

2nd – Your ECBO can also offer to work with an agency or provider to conduct an assessment of language access needs and develop a language access plan. Many federally-funded agencies around the country have established *language access planning committees* that include community organizations.

What happens when you file a complaint?

The Civil Rights Office will determine if the nature of the complaint is within its jurisdiction. They will then investigate the complaint and issue a Letter of Findings to you and the alleged discriminating party. If the alleged discriminating health or human service agency has violated your civil rights, the Office for Civil Rights will seek an appropriate remedy in an attempt to rectify the discrimination. If it is, the Office will conduct an investigation and will notify you in writing of the outcome of the complaint within 60 business days of when it was filed.

What can you do if a nonprofit service provider is not providing language access?

If you are trying to improve the services offered by a *nonprofit* service provider, find out whether or not the service provider receives federal funds. If it does, then it must provide *meaningful access* to its services for LEP individuals. Again, you can file a complaint if it does not.

What if the service provider does not receive federal funds?

If you are trying to improve the services of a provider that *does not* receive any federal funding, then the provider has no *legal* obligation to provide refugees with language assistance.

This does *not* mean that the service provider can discriminate against your community. They must provide your community members with the same services they provide for everyone else.

Where can you get more information?

The federal government has an electronic clearinghouse--www.**LEP.gov**--that provides information about language access, including:

- ✓ Links to the guidance issued by federal agencies
- ✓ Sample tools, such as a *Language Assistance Self-Assessment and Planning Tool for Recipients of Federal Financial Assistance*, which lays out key steps an agency can take to carry out an assessment of language access needs and to develop a language assistance plan
- ✓ Sample *Know Your Language Access Rights* publications in different languages
- ✓ Links to agencies and organizations that have developed promising practices

Language Access in Health Care

What does the Law say?

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits recipients of federal funding and programs receiving federal funding from discriminating, denying benefits of such programs and activities, and excluding individual participation based on national origin, race, or color.
The federal government and the courts have determined that this prohibition of discrimination based on national origin includes protections for peoples of different nationalities who do not speak English well. Covered health care providers must make *reasonable efforts* to provide *meaningful access* to limited-English proficient (LEP) patients.

What health care providers are covered by Title VI?

Almost all health care providers--whether private physicians, hospitals, or other health care facilities--are covered by this law because almost all providers treat patients enrolled in federally funded programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, or the State Children's health Insurance program (SCHIP). Providers who receive federal funding must work to ensure meaningful language access for all patients who do not speak English well, even those not covered by federally funded programs.

What kind of language access do health care providers need to provide and to whom?

The laws do not provide specific instructions about this. Guidance from the Department of health and Human Services states that health care providers who receive federal funds should analyze the following four factors in determining what steps to take to provide language access and for whom:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the program or grantee.
2. How often LEP individuals come in contact with the program.
3. The nature of the program or service provided and how important it is to people's lives.
4. How much "reasonable steps" would cost and the resources available to the entity to pay these costs.

Other Incentives for Health Care Providers to Provide Language Access

In the U.S., many different kinds of human service organizations can become accredited by entities that develop and disseminate standards for their field. The Joint Commission is the nation's predominant standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. The Joint Commission evaluates and accredits nearly 15,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. An independent, not-for-profit organization,. Since 1951, The Joint Commission has maintained state-of-the-art standards that focus on improving the quality and safety of care provided by health care organizations. Joint Commission has comprehensive standards for language access and cultural competence.

What are some of the key standards and best practices?

- ✓ Health care organizations should: evaluate the language needs of the population they serve, have a written policy on language access, provide staff training, and monitor compliance.
- ✓ Health care interpreter services must be available and provided at no cost to the patient.
- ✓ Health care interpretation must be provided by qualified interpreters.
- ✓ Health care interpretation services must be provided within an acceptable wait time.
- ✓ Health care organizations should track LEP data.

Additional Language Access Resources

Reports

Language Access: Helping Non-English Speakers Navigate Health and Human Services, NCSL Children's Policy Initiative, January 2003

Providing Language Interpretation Services in Health Care Settings, National Health Law Center Program May 2002

Supporting English Language Acquisition: Opportunities for Foundation to Strengthen the Social and Economic Well-Being of Immigrant Families, A Briefing Paper from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees.

Websites

Federal Interagency Working Group on Limited English Proficiency -
LEP.gov supports implementation of Executive Order 13166, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of1964, and the Title VI regulations regarding language access. This site also acts as a clearinghouse, providing and linking to information, tools, and technical assistance regarding limited English proficiency and language services for federal agencies, recipients of federal funds, users of federal programs and federally assisted programs, and other stakeholders.
www.lep.gov

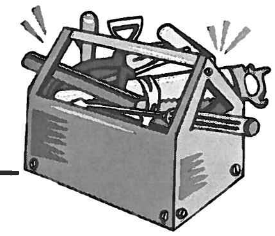
The Access Project - Works to strengthen community action, promote social change, and improve health, especially for those who are most vulnerable. By supporting local initiatives and community leaders, The Access Project is dedicated to strengthening the voice of underserved communities in the public and private policy discussions that directly affect them.
www.accessproject.org

The National Health Law Program - The National Health Law Program is a national public interest law firm that seeks to improve health care for America's working and unemployed poor, minorities, the elderly and people with disabilities. NHeLP serves legal services programs, community-based organizations, the private bar, providers and individuals who work to preserve a health care safety net for the millions of uninsured or underinsured low-income people.
www.healthlaw.org

Straight Talk: Model Hospital Policies and Procedures on Language Access
Straight Talk: Model Hospital Policies and Procedures on Language Access was published in Spring, 2005, by the California Health Care Safety Net Institute. It serves as a roadmap for hospitals--as well as outpatient departments, clinics and other health care providers--to ensure patients have access to interpreter services.

Straight Talk guides hospital leadership through the legal and regulatory requirements for provision of language services, providing practical, operational policies and procedures that ensure hospitals can meet those requirements. These Model Policies and Procedures are available on SNI's website (www.safetynetinstitute.org) in both PDF and Microsoft Word formatting so that they are easily incorporated into existing hospital policies and procedures.

Tools You Can Use



Questions for an "Access Audit"

As an advocate for refugees, you want to make sure that the programs and services your ECBO refers refugees to are good services that make a positive difference in the lives of the people they serve. You want to make sure that refugees will be treated with respect at any provider that you refer them to. So - How do you know if refugees will be treated well? How do you know if the services are high quality?

One of the ways you could engage community members in documenting and advocating for improved services is by carrying out an "access audit" in which you document all of the barriers to access to key services in the community.

You might want to start with one particular service provider or service system. You can start with what you already know. Bring together a group of community members and ask them about their experience. For agencies and organizations you're not familiar with, call them and ask for a meeting to learn more about their services.

Here are some questions to ask community members, based on their experience, and service providers themselves:

- ✓ Are programs and services offered in ways that are culturally and linguistically appropriate? (Ask for examples)
- ✓ How does the provider reach out to refugee communities? How do they share news and information with refugees?
- ✓ Are programs and services accessible? (for example, when and where they are offered)
- ✓ Do service recipients have up-to-date materials and training or educational curricula?
- ✓ Do they have access to current technology?
- ✓ What kind of training do staff members receive? Do staff have the qualifications they need for their positions?
- ✓ Does the provider evaluate its programs and services? Do they have document program successes and challenges and take steps to address the challenges?
- ✓ What are the outcomes of their programs and services? For example, what percentage of people who participate in job training programs have been able to get steady jobs with decent pay?
- ✓ Does the service provider measure client satisfaction? If so, what do service recipients have to say about the programs and services?
- ✓ How are the programs and services funded? Is the funding from public or private sources? Do funders have certain requirements that must be met?
- ✓ Are the facilities pleasant, clean, and decorated in ways that make refugees comfortable? Are they accessible to anyone, including those with physical disabilities?
- ✓ Do these barriers affect all people equally, or some more than others?
- ✓ Are there any creative solutions that service providers in your community are using to expand access to refugees?

Sample Consumer Bill of Rights

Hennepin County Limited English Proficiency Individual Bill of Rights

Every Limited English Proficiency Individual has the following rights:

I. To meaningful access of services through the provision of timely, effective language assistance free of charge.

II. To be treated with courtesy and respect and in a manner that respects the person's dignity and privacy and promotes independence.

III. To be treated in a manner which is sensitive to his/her needs and preferences, and ethnic, spiritual, linguistic, familial and cultural factors.

IV. To be free from discrimination, abuse, and harassment by the service provider or agency.

V. To have critical information about the services provided and who will be providing the service communicated in their language – either written, orally, or visually.

VI. To participate with the service provider or agency in the assessment of needs, development of a plan of service, reassessment, evaluation and revision of a plan of service with the aid of a competent interpreter or bilingual staff member.

VII. To be informed in their language of the possible outcomes by accepting or refusing services.

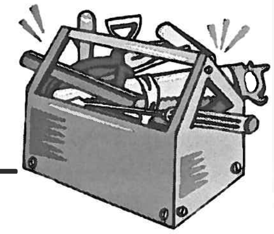
VIII. To raise concerns about or recommend changes to the service provided without fear of interference, coercion, discrimination or reprisal.

IX. To be informed in their language of laws, rules and policies affecting the operation of the service provider.

X. To be informed in their language of their rights and responsibilities when utilizing services.

XI. To be informed in their language of the procedures for initiating compliance concerns about the service provider or agency.

XII. To have his/her records and interactions with the service provider or agency kept confidential in accordance with the law.



Sample Measures of Cultural Competence for Service Providers

Here are some measures developed to assess the extent to which providers reflect cultural and linguistic cultural competence in health and human service settings. The measures provides concrete examples of the kinds of beliefs, attitudes, values, and practices which foster cultural and linguistic competence at the individual or practitioner level.

One way to measure this is to do an observation or interview staff, and assess measures as follows:

A = Evidence or reports that this measure is met widely or frequently widely within the provider setting

B = Evidence that this measure is met to a limited extent or occasionally within the provider setting

C = Minimal or no evidence that this measure is met within the provider setting

Physical Environment, Materials & Resources

_____ 1. Provider displays, in common areas and in staff rooms, pictures, posters, artwork, and other décor that reflect the cultures and ethnic backgrounds of clients served by the provider.

_____ 2. Provider ensures that magazines, brochures, and other printed materials in reception areas are of interest to and reflect the different cultures of individuals and families served by the provider.

_____ 3. When using videos, films or other media resources for education, training, treatment or other interventions, provider ensures that they reflect the cultures and ethnic background of individuals and families served by the provider.

_____ 4. Provider ensures that printed information disseminated by the agency or program takes into account the average literacy levels of individuals and families receiving services.

Communication Styles

_____ 5. When interacting with individuals and families who have limited English proficiency, provider staff demonstrate recognition that:

_____ * limitations in English proficiency are in no way a reflection of their level of intellectual functioning.

_____ * their limited ability to speak the language of the dominant culture has no bearing on their ability to communicate effectively in their language of origin.

_____ * clients may or may not be literate in their language of origin or English.

_____ 6. Providers use bilingual-bicultural staff and/or personnel and volunteers skilled or certified in the provision of medical, mental health, social work, or other relevant specialized interpretation during treatment, interventions, meetings or other events for individuals and families who need or prefer this level of assistance.

_____ 7. For individuals and families who speak languages or dialects other than English, the provider ensures that staff attempt to learn and use key words in their language so that they are better able to communicate with them during assessment, treatment, or other interventions.

_____ 8. Providers attempt to determine and communicate to service staff any familial colloquialisms used by individuals or families that may affect assessment, treatment, or other interventions.

_____ 9. Whenever possible (depending on the level of use of the language involved), providers ensure that all notices and communiqués to individuals and families are written in their language of origin.

_____ 10. Provider staff understand that it may be necessary to use alternatives to written communications for some individuals and families, as word of mouth may be a preferred method of receiving information.

Values & Attitudes

_____ 11. Clients and supervisors indicate that provider staff avoid imposing values which may conflict or be inconsistent with those of cultures or ethnic groups other than their own.

_____ 12. Supervisory staff screen books, movies, and other media resources for negative cultural, ethnic, or racial stereotypes before sharing them with individuals and families served the provider.

_____ 13. Provider policies require – and staff indicate awareness and compliance with policies – that both supervisors and all other personnel intervene in an appropriate manner when they observe staff or clients within the program or agency engaging in behaviors which show cultural insensitivity, racial biases and prejudice.

_____ 14. Provider staff demonstrate that they recognize and accept that individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds may desire varying degrees of acculturation into the dominant culture.

_____ 15. Provider staff demonstrate that they understand and accept that family is defined differently by different cultures (e.g., extended family members, fictive kin, godparents).

_____ 16. Provider staff demonstrate that they accept and respect that male-female roles may vary significantly among different cultures and ethic groups (e.g., who makes major decisions for the family).

_____ 17. Provider staff demonstrate understanding that the perception of health, wellness, mental health, and preventive health services, and other social service concepts, have different meanings to different cultural or ethnic groups.

______ 18. Provider staff demonstrate an understanding that grief and bereavement are influenced by culture.

_____ 19. Supervisory staff ensure that the provider seeks information from individuals, families, or other key community informants that will assist in service adaptation to respond to the needs and preferences of culturally and ethnically diverse groups served by the provider.

_____20. Before visiting or providing services in the home setting, provider staff receive training and resources for seeking information on acceptable behaviors, courtesies, customs, and expectations that are unique to the culturally and ethnically diverse groups served by the provider.

_____ 21. The provider keeps abreast of the major health concerns and issues for ethnically and racially diverse client populations that may affect HIV/AIDS care, and provides regular information updates and/or training to staff regarding these issues.

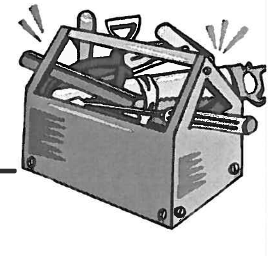
_____ 22. The provider ensures that staff are aware of the socio-economic and environmental risk factors that contribute to the needs and problems of culturally, ethnically and racially diverse populations served.

_____ 23. Provider staff are well versed in the most current and proven practices, treatments and interventions for health, mental health, and/or social services problems among ethnically and racially diverse groups served.

_____ 24.The provider has in place regular (at least twice yearly) and appropriate professional development and training to enhance staff knowledge and skills in the provision of services and supports to culturally, ethnically, racially and linguistically diverse groups.

_____ 25. The provider periodically (at least every three years) reviews of the program's or agency's mission statement, goals, policies, and procedures to insure that they incorporate principles and practices that promote cultural and linguistic competence.

Revised by Emily Gantz McKay of Mosaica from on the following document: Tawara D. Goode, Georgetown University Child Development Center (UAP) -- Adapted From "Promoting Cultural Competence and Cultural Diversity in Early Intervention and Early Childhood Settings and Promoting Cultural Competence and Cultural Diversity for Personnel Providing Services and Supports to Children with Special Health Care Needs and Their Families" (June 1989, last revised July 2000). Most recently revised by Mosaica for use with immigrant and refugee service providers in September 2006.



Checklist for Culturally and Linguistically Competent Provider Policies and Structure

Does the organization or program have:

__ 1. A mission statement that articulates its principles, rationale, and values for culturally and linguistically competent service delivery?

__ 2. Policies and procedures that support a practice model which incorporates culture in the delivery of services to racially, ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse groups?

__ 3. Structures to assure consumer and community participation in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of its services, including the involvement of refugees?

__ 4. Processes to review policy and procedures systematically to assess their relevance for the delivery of culturally competent services?

__ 5. Policies and procedures for staff recruitment, hiring, and retention that will achieve the goal of a diverse and culturally competent workforce?

__ 6. Policies and resources to support ongoing professional development and in-service training (at all levels) for culturally competent health care values, principles and practices?

__ 7. Policies to assure that new staff are provided with training, technical assistance, and other supports necessary to work within culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including refugee communities?

__ 8. Position descriptions and personnel performance measures that include skill sets related to cultural competence?

__ 9. Fiscal support and incentives for the improvement of cultural competence at the board, agency, program, and staff levels?

__ 10. Policies for and procedures to review periodically the current and emergent demographic trends for the geographic area it serves?

__ 11. Methods to identify and acquire knowledge about health, mental health, and other human service-related beliefs and practices of emergent or new populations needing services, including refugee populations?

__ 12. Policies and allocated resources for the provision of translation and interpretation services?

__ 13. Policies and resources that support community outreach initiatives for limited English proficient and/or non-literate populations?

__ 14. Requirements for contracting procedures, announcement of funding resources and/or development of request for proposals that include culturally and linguistically competent practices?

Reference: Rationale for Cultural Competence in Primary Health Care. Permission is granted to reproduce this document for distribution. The only requirement is that proper credit be given to the National Center for Cultural Competence. Developed by Elena Cohen, Consultant and Tawara D. Goode, National Center for Cultural Competence, Winter 1999. National Center for Cultural Competence Georgetown University Child Development Center, 3307 M Street, NW, Suite 401, Washington, DC 20007-3935. Tel: 800/788-2066 or 202/687-5387, Fax: 202/687-8899, e-mail cultural@georgetown.edu [Note: document was slightly revised by Mosaica to provide an immigrant/refugee provider focus, broader than the original document.]

Chapter 7
An Introduction to Community Mapping

Introduction

Most of this tool kit deals with the big picture--the laws that exist across the country, the characteristics of the human service system in the U.S., the standards and promising practices that exist for human services and the organizations that promote them.

To be an effective advocate for refugees, you need to know what exists in your state, county, and city. You need to know the state and local laws, the particular government agencies, institutions, and service providers, and the other organizations that could be resources for your ECBO. The latter includes everything from other advocacy organizations and coalitions to United Ways, nonprofit support centers, and community centers. You also need to know about the human resources that exist within your own ethnic community: what are the knowledge, skills, and other assets that exist in your own community and how you can you tap these in your advocacy efforts?

ECBOs don't do this work alone. You exist as part of a larger network of organizations, institutions, and individuals. You need other resources, skills, knowledge, people, and partners. And to find them, you need a map to start you out in the right direction!

What is Community Mapping?

Community mapping is a systematic process for identifying the assets and resources that are available to you as an advocate for your community.

This chapter provides you with key questions, helpful hints, and tools to carry out a community mapping process. It focuses on two different types of mapping--mapping the assets within your own community and mapping the key organizations, institutions, and other resources in the broader community. Once you have completed a community mapping process, you will probably find that your ECBO is not alone in its advocacy work, and that you have a larger network of organizations, institutions, and individuals you can work with.

Why Do Community Mapping?

There are many different reasons why your organization might want to carry out a community mapping process. Some of the most important include:

- ✓ **To build the leadership of your own ethnic community.** Mapping the assets-- the knowledge, skills, experience, and relationships--of members of your community have is an important first step to cultivating new leadership, creating new economic development strategies, and finding new ways to engage community members in the civic and cultural life of the community. For example, you may find people who:

- Developed great public speaking skills in their home country, but simply lack the English language skills to be more involved in civic life here.
- Already own their own home or business, have gone through the process, understand it and could mentor others.
- Are artists or musicians and might be interested in teaching a class to children from your own ethnic community as well as the mainstream community.

✓ **To improve access to services.** Developing a map of the local service system can help you identify both (1) existing programs, services, and resources from which your community can benefit, as well as (2) gaps in services, weak spots, and duplications in services for your community. It might be easiest to start with a "map" a particular service or resource system such as financial or emergency assistance programs for low-income families or adult education and training resources.

✓ **To diagnose a problem and figure out some alternative solutions.** You may be spending much of your time helping members of your community address problems on a case-by-case basis. Creating a map can help you figure out a solution to a common challenge or problem that members of your community might be having by identifying what the common problem is, where it is located, and who can make decisions about the problem.

For example, let's say that members of your community are being evicted from their apartment buildings so the landlords can sell the buildings to developers, who are turning them into more expensive condominiums. One way you could help community members is to help them find a new place to live. You could also work with this situation at a systemic level by working with the tenants to help them organize and keep their housing. To do this, you will need a "map" of who they key stakeholders are: Who owns the building? What city agency regulates development? Are their other organizations or coalitions that are helping tenants fight evictions?

✓ **To develop an advocacy strategy and identify targets for advocacy.** If your organization is going to advocate for your rights, for increased opportunities or for better services, you need to know who to target. What government agencies have jurisdiction over the issues affecting your community? Who is making the decisions that are affecting your community and how do they make those decisions? Who is making decisions about how resources are allocated? For example, if you know there are simply not enough ESL classes to meet the demand, who do you target to advocate for more funding?

✓ **To identify opportunities for civic participation.** There are many different forms of civic participation. Civic participation is really about getting involved in the associations, organizations, and institutions that affect our lives and communities, whether those are formal or informal, part of the state/local government, or started by people on the community. With a map, you can better connect members of your community to civic participation opportunities. For example, your map could identify tenants' associations, neighborhood associations, parent-teacher associations, or local government advisory committees. By encouraging and supporting members of your community to participate in these opportunities, your community can become more involved in the decision making process.

- ✓ **To develop your organization's own "strategic position" and partnerships.** By developing a map of what services, organizations, relationships and assets are already available to your ECBO, you can identify your own organization's "strategic position" or niche. How does your organization fit into the larger service system and/or networks of community-led and serving organizations and institutions? It will also help you be more strategic in planning your own programs and services (for example, are there new programs and services we should take on? Ones we should stop doing?). A map can also help you identify new networks and potential partners for collaboration. For example, if you identify affordable housing as a need for your community, it would be important to "map out" and build relationships with existing organizations and coalitions that work on this issue.

What Kinds of Maps Can You Develop?

The map you develop will depend on the questions you want to answer and the purposes you've identified. But the kinds of things you can map again fall into two general categories:

(1) The resources and assets of your own ethnic community

Chances are your organization has undertaken some type of needs assessment. You have probably carried out a survey, focus group, or community forum to talk about community members' most critical needs for services or the most critical barriers they face in accessing services. However, can you describe in similar detail the knowledge, skills, and experience members of your community already have? Or the resources – programs, facilities, potential partners, allies – that already exist in your community? In other words, how much do you know about the resources and assets in your own backyard and how all of these various resources are connected?

You can map the resources and assets of your own ethnic community. This can include institutional resources such as local businesses, informal associations, or home-based childcare providers, as well as the knowledge, skills and experience of individual community members.

As you identify the knowledge, skills, and experience of members of the community, you'll want to think about how these could be used to help your organization, as well as how your organization can provide opportunities for community member to build on and use these to benefit their own families and the community.

Individual Resources and Assets

- ✓ *Knowledge and skills*--this includes a variety of "marketable" skills, both through formal education and training, as well as life experience.
- ✓ *Experience*--could include people who have experience teaching English as a Second Language or financial literacy, farming, or running a small business. You will likely find

people who have training and experience in your home country but have been unable to put them to use here.
- ✓ *Financial*--this includes tangible assets such as savings, homeownership, and business ownership, as well as financial skills such as tax preparation, especially how to assist with the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Institutional Resources and Assets

- ✓ *Local businesses* owned by members of your community, such as restaurants, taxi services, printing shops, or grocery stores.
- ✓ *Informal associations*, such as funeral associations, professional associations, clan/political structures, youth groups, women's groups, and veterans groups.
- ✓ *Faith community*, such as churches, temples, and mosques.
- ✓ *Other nonprofit organizations* led by members of your community.

Cultural Assets

- ✓ *Language skills*--this could include people who speak different languages and/or perhaps have skills in translation.
- ✓ *Customs and traditions*--this could include people who carry on customs and traditions, from weaving to story telling.
- ✓ *Cultural groups, dance and music*--this could include people who practice and/or could teach traditional dance and music.

(2) The resources and assets of the larger community

There are many different ways to map the resources and assets of the larger, mainstream or geographic community. All communities have the following kinds of organizations and institutions:

- ✓ A variety of nonprofit organizations
- ✓ Public, government agencies and programs
- ✓ Faith-based institutions, including churches, mosques and temples
- ✓ Hospitals
- ✓ Libraries
- ✓ Schools, community colleges, and universities
- ✓ Associations (e.g., professional associations, neighborhood and civic associations, and recreational clubs)
- ✓ Community centers
- ✓ Political organizations
- ✓ Local businesses and business owners
- ✓ Large corporation and companies
- ✓ Foundations
- ✓ Parks and other public spaces
- ✓ Unused or abandoned buildings
- ✓ Local political representatives
- ✓ Elected officials and decision-making bodies (e.g., city councils, mayors, county commissioners, etc.)

- ✓ Government agencies
- ✓ Advisory bodies

The map could get huge and overwhelming. There are many different ways to approach doing this larger map. For example, you could draw a map of:

- ✓ Just the nonprofits
- ✓ Just the government agencies and public benefits
- ✓ Just particular types of service systems, such as all employment and training programs (public and private) or all youth programs
- ✓ Just different kinds of resources, such as public spaces and underutilized buildings

How Do You Use the Maps?

Once you have the map, the information may lead you to more questions. Below, we describe a few different kinds of maps and some of the key questions you'll want to ask as you analyze them, and look for the potential linkages and opportunities for your organization.

(1) A Map of the Resources and Assets of Your Own Ethnic Community

Now that you know more about the resources and assets of your own ethnic community, questions to ask might include:

- ✓ What did you learn about what resources--such as local businesses, informal associations, home-based childcare providers--that are available?
- ✓ What did you learn about the skills and experience of individual community members?
- ✓ What kinds of skills and experience can benefit your own organization and its programs?
- ✓ Do people want to volunteer these skills? Can you pay them?
- ✓ What opportunities are there to harness these skills and experience – for example, what kinds of small business or micro-enterprise opportunities does this present?
- ✓ What kind of leadership development opportunities do they present?

(2) A Map of the Human Service System

Now that you know more about the particular agencies, institutions, and service providers in the local service system, questions to ask might include:

- ✓ What specific services and programs already exist in different areas?
- ✓ Are there particular gaps given what members of our community need?
- ✓ Are there services that exist but our community can't access them?
- ✓ Are there programs or services that no one is providing that we should step in and provide?
- ✓ Are there programs or services we are providing that duplicate something that is already out there?
- ✓ Where does our organization "fit" into the larger service system? What's our niche?

- ✓ Who should we be collaborating with more closely? What networks should we be part of?

With a map of the service system, you can also see how your organization and services fit within this larger system and identify your niche and strategic position. Questions to ask might include:

- ✓ What do you do that no one else does?
- ✓ What do you do that overlaps with or duplicates what others do?
- ✓ Who knows about you and how can you enhance that relationship?
- ✓ Who should you meet with that you haven't already met?
- ✓ How can you become more visible in the community?
- ✓ Who do you need to be communicating with?
- ✓ What networks should we be part of?
- ✓ Who are potential partners for collaboration?

(3) A Map of Opportunities for Civic Participation

With this map, you might ask:

- ✓ How does local government work?
- ✓ What are the different decision-making bodies?
- ✓ Who controls different resources?
- ✓ Who has jurisdiction over specific issues, such as youth issues and issues affecting seniors?
- ✓ Who should you be advocating with to fix a problem?
- ✓ How can you help represent our community's needs in the local government's decision making process?
- ✓ Where and how can members of our community get directly involved in the process?

A map is really just a starting point. It points you in the right direction and shows you where you want to go, but you need to ask more questions and make more connections.

How Do We Do It? What Does A Community Mapping Process Look Like?

There's no one best approach to community mapping. You could do a year-long comprehensive, formal process or a two-month informal process that focuses on one particular set of assets, one particular issue or problem, or one particular service system. There are lots of different approaches. You need to decide what you want to accomplish, what resources you have, and what approach would work best for you. Below, are key steps to take and questions to ask.

1st - Decide on the Purpose and Scope of Your Mapping Process

Spend some time discussing what you want to learn from the process. Decide what kind of information you want to obtain and for what purpose. Look back at the list of possible purposes and think about your goals for a mapping process. For example, are you trying to:

- ✓ Solve a problem?
- ✓ Find potential partners to collaborate with?
- ✓ Find new resources for your community members?
- ✓ Better understand how local government works?
- ✓ Identify the resources of your own ethnic community?
- ✓ Learn about how a particular service system works?
- ✓ Identify all of the resources that are available for a particular population? (such as youth or seniors)

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> Using Community Mapping To Build Relationships
>
> A huge part of the value of a community mapping process is that is can help your organization **build relationships**. By reaching out to and meeting with the individual contacts within the groups, organizations, and institutions you identify, you can build and strengthen relationships. Reaching out to folks as part of a mapping process can provide you with a "good excuse" to get to know each other.

2nd - Decide Who Will Be Involved

A community mapping process is a great activity for everyone – your staff, Board, volunteers, and community members themselves – to get involved in.

Some of the different kinds of tasks that can be involved include:

- ✓ Creating surveys or interview questions
- ✓ Doing initial research on the internet and/or in the library
- ✓ Calling different associations, organizations, and institutions to set up informational meetings
- ✓ Meeting with different people, organizations, and institutions to find out more about what they do and the resources they have
- ✓ Conducting surveys, interviews and focus groups with community members
- ✓ Documenting, updating, and keeping the information gathered accessible

You could create a single "Mapping Team" or different teams that are responsible for different tasks. As you match up people with tasks, consider what knowledge, skills, experience and relationships the team members already have. When you get to the stage where you start to go out and meet with people, think about who should be involved in those meetings. Who needs to build relationships with whom? For example, it may be very important for a Board member or the Executive Director to be part of some meetings.

3rd - Decide on What Approaches You'll Use

How will you do the research to create your map? You can use:

- ✓ Surveys
- ✓ Focus groups
- ✓ Community forums
- ✓ Informal meetings
- ✓ Formal interviews

For each of these approaches, you'll also need to think about *how many* of each you can do.

One of the best places to start is with people your staff, Board, and key volunteers may already know. A great way to do that is through a brainstorming activity. You can do this as part of a Board or staff meeting, or arrange a special meeting just for this activity.

Most communities have very similar kinds of organizations and institutions, although they might be called different things. Here are some ideas for where you might find information:

- ✓ Existing directories of community organizations, put out by United Way, volunteer centers, and local city, county or state government; even the local phone book will have listings of government and social service providers
- ✓ Your local Chamber of Commerce
- ✓ Online searches--start with your county or city government homepage, or try your local United Ways homepage for links to other organizations

Ask your local contacts (professional and personal) about resources in your area that they know about.

4th - Create a Workplan, Tools, and Systems

Once you you've decided the purpose and scope of the project, who will be involved, and what approaches you'll use, you need to create a workplan and timeline for carrying it out. The workplan should list specific tasks, who will be responsible for completing them, and by when.

You'll also need to create the tools – the surveys, interview guides, focus group questions, agendas for community meetings, etc. – you will use to collect the information as well as the system for documenting the information, including organized files and a database. These tasks should be part of the workplan. *See sample surveys.*

5th - Train Your Team and Carry Out the Workplan!

Once you have your team, your tools, and workplan, you're almost ready to go. But first, you'll need to provide training to the team. Make sure everyone understands the purpose of the project, how to use the tools, and what their assignments are. Trying using role plays before you go out into the community.

What are Some Challenges You Might Face?

- ✓ **Deciding what information to collect.** Especially in mapping the assets of your own community, it will be temping to want to ask about everything. You could easily create very long lists of knowledge, skills and experience that could easily become overwhelming. Think carefully about what you want to know and why.

- ✓ **Keeping the commitment of volunteers to do the work.** As with any new project, it can be easy to get people excited about the project, but harder to keep their commitment to carrying out the process. People have busy lives and it may be hard to keep them coming to meetings, doing the surveys, documenting the information, etc. Think about what kind of incentives you can provide for the project's volunteers, including stipends. Also think about recruiting members who may be especially interested in learning new skills, such as students. Students might also be able to participate in the project as a way to fulfill community service hours.

- ✓ **Gaining the trust of community members to share information.** Again, in mapping the assets of your own community, you might find that community members are hesitant to participate and share information. They might think: Why are you asking all of these questions? What will you do with the information? If your organization is already well known and highly trusted in the community, it will be easier to gain the community's trust and willingness to share personal information. If not, you may need to do some other kinds of community building activities first before you begin surveys, interview, or focus groups. Either way, it will be important for you to clearly explain the process, why you are collecting the information and what you will do with it.

- ✓ **Gaining the cooperation of other organizations and institutions.** Once you start reaching to other, mainstream associations, organizations, and institutions you might also find that people are "too busy" to meet with you. They will also want to know what you are doing and why.

- ✓ **Training volunteers to effectively communicate the organization's mission and the purpose of the project.** Again, the mapping process is a way to begin building relationships with many different kinds of individuals, associations, and organizations. Their interaction with the project's volunteers may be their first interaction with your organization. It is important to provide training to volunteers not just in how to carry out the surveys, interview, and focus groups, but also in communicating the organization's mission and vision, and how to be professional.

- ✓ **Creating a system for documenting the information.** Before you even begin collecting information, you need to set up a system for documenting the information from the surveys, interview, or focus groups. This could be a simple database, but something that allows you to aggregate and analyze the responses of the community into quantitative and qualitative data (e.g. quantitative: there are three after-school programs accessible to your target population; qualitative: community members feel unable to access healthcare services for a number of reasons).

- ✓ **Using the information to engage and mobilize the community.** Some mapping projects result in lists, directories, or literal maps that end up sitting on a shelf. Think about ways to present the information that connect it to how you will use it. The emphasis should not be on the data collection as an end in itself but on community mobilization. Sharing the data you've collected and use that as a starting point for organizing the community and engaging them in creating a collective vision, plans, and new projects. ("Wow, we found that we have 18 community members who have training and experience as teachers. What could we do with that? How can the organization mobilize those assets to benefit the community?")

- ✓ **Following up.** As you go out into the community and begin to talk to people, other issues may come up; people might share other concerns or problems and want your organization to help. To maintain trust, you should follow up, whether it's through connecting them your own organization's programs, making referrals, or organizing meeting of others who share the same concern to say, "What can we do about this?" It is important for your community to be heard. Your follow up and response will show them that you are listening and taking action.

A Quick Guide to Planning and Running Effective Meetings

Introduction

As a refugee community or ethnic community-based organization (ECBO) leader, the more active you become in advocating for your community, the more meetings you will need to organize and attend. Examples of the meetings you may need to organize and attend include meetings of:

- ✓ Coalitions
- ✓ Steering committees
- ✓ Task forces
- ✓ Neighborhood groups
- ✓ Boards of Directors of nonprofit organizations
- ✓ Staff of an agency or organization
- ✓ Advisory Boards
- ✓ Community Forums (or just meetings of community leaders who want to get together to do something about an issue they care about!)

Different kinds of meetings have different purposes. Some meetings focus on providing information, while others involve making decisions and developing actions steps/plans. Some meetings are special, one-time only meetings, while others may have a regular monthly or weekly schedule.

By building your skills to run meetings effectively, you can help make sure that the ultimate objectives of any meeting--improving the lives of people in your community--are met.

Helpful Hint…

Agree on a Process for Making Decisions

If the purpose of the meeting is to make a decision, you will need to agree on *how* you will make the decision. Will it be by a majority vote? A consensus? Groups that meet regularly – such as coalitions or Boards – usually identify how they will make decisions early on in their formation.

What Makes Meetings Effective?

Each type of group listed above may have its own criteria for what makes their meetings effective. Here are some common elements. A "good" meeting generally:

- ✓ **Is well planned.** In a good meeting, the organizers have planned the meeting well--they have the right items on the agenda, the right people at the meeting, and they've taken care of all the logistics (the space, time, child care needs, transportation, food, etc.).

- ✓ **Has clear objectives and meets them,** whether those objectives are to share information, make key decisions, create a plan, and/or assign responsibilities to people.

- ✓ **Provides clarity** to participants about why they are there and what is expected of them. Participants also have an understanding of who is making decisions, how they're being made, what needs to happen next, and why.

- ✓ **Starts on time and ends on time** to show respect for everyone's time. In a good meeting, the chair or facilitator allocates time appropriately among items on the agenda.

- ✓ **Involves all participants in the discussion** so the best decisions can be made. In a good meeting, the conversation is not dominated by only a handful of people. It is often the job of the facilitator to make sure that all meeting attendees have the opportunity to participate.

Comments you are likely to hear from people who were in a *good* meeting include:

"I was so confused before. Now I have a very clear idea about what we need to do."

"I know exactly what I need to do before the next meeting."

"Everyone shared their ideas and we came up with a solution that worked for us all."

"We talked about everything we needed to talk about."

"I felt like my opinion was really valued at the meeting."

"I can't believe we got so much done in that time period!"

While comments you are likely to hear from people who were in a *bad* meeting include:

"That didn't help at all. I'm just as lost as I was before – maybe even more."

"I don't think we made any decisions at all about what to do. They just kept talking."

"I didn't even get a chance to share my idea."

"Did you see how attacked Juan when he spoke? I don't want to be treated like that."

"Everyone was talking. I don't even remember what all was said."

"That meeting went on forever. I left before it ended."

What are the Steps to Organizing a Good Meeting?

1. **Agree on a clear purpose and objectives for the meeting.** What is the outcome you desire from this meeting? Setting a clear purpose and objectives will help you decide on who to invite, how many people to have, and what to talk about.

2. **Invite the right people to the meeting.** With some meetings, the people who need to be there may be a pre-defined group, such as the steering committee of a coalition. But sometimes, when you are planning something new or bringing people together to talk about an issue, you need to figure out who needs to be there. Again, think about the purpose of the meeting. Are you sharing information? If so, who needs the information? Are you brainstorming solutions to a community problem and developing plans to address it? If so, who is most affected by this problem and needs to be there? Are you making decisions about something? If so, who needs to be involved?

3. **Decide on a convenient meeting location.** Meeting locations are very important to the success of a meeting. Having a meeting in a location that is hard to access, or does not provide a safe environment for everyone to speak may not produce very good results. Think about time, location, where people are coming from, availability of parking, and room size before finalizing a meeting location.

   *For more on how to choose a location and set up the meeting space, see ***Tips for Choosing the Meeting Location and Setting Up a Meeting Space*** (Page 5)

4. **Make sure the people you invite understand the purpose of the meeting.** Share the agenda the people you invite beforehand so they know what to expect during the meeting. This allows people to think ahead and prepare for the meeting. It allows people to "self-select" and decide whether or not they need to be at the meeting. You want people at your meeting who feel they should be there and come ready to participate.

5. **Prepare a clear agenda.** Good agendas will provide information about what topics will need to be discussed, the amount of time allotted for each subject, and meeting objectives. Work with key people to create an agenda that everyone can agree on. Allow time for breaks and conversations when needed. If possible, provide the participants with the agenda before the meeting so they can prepare for the meeting. This is also a good time to provide the participants with any additional background material that they may need to make informed decisions.

   *For more on preparing an agenda, see ***Tips for Preparing A Meeting Agenda*** (Page 7)

6. **Make sure you have a good chair, moderator, or facilitator.** Meeting can start out "good" but go "bad" if the conversation gets out of hand, the agenda isn't followed, and then the objectives are never met. It's important for anyone who is going to chair or moderate a meeting to have good facilitation skills. Some people are naturally good facilitators, but your group or

Helpful Hint…

Do We Need an Outside Facilitator?

For some meetings, you may wan to get an outside facilitator who is not part of the group. Outside facilitators can be especially helpful for planning meetings in which it's important for all members of the group to participate. Or, in situations where there might be tension or disagreements and a "neutral" facilitator can help manage conflict as it arises.

organization can also get training for its members to build everyone's facilitation skills. With good facilitation skills, a chair or moderator of a meeting can keep the agenda on track, ensure that all attendees participate, monitor the energy of the group to adjust the agenda as needed, manage conflicts if they arise, and help the group make decisions.

*For more on meeting facilitation, see ***Tips for Meeting Facilitation*** (Page 10)

7. **Record meeting minutes.** Having good minutes will help everyone remember the decisions that were made and any commitments made by people who were at the meeting. In many situations, meeting minutes are the only records you will have about who took place in the meeting.

   *For more on meeting minutes, see ***Tips for Preparing Meeting Minutes*** (Page 14)

8. **Close the meeting by reviewing key decisions, action items, and/or next steps:** Make sure that at the end of the meeting, everyone you summarize the decisions that have been made, and any key action items. You don't want people leaving a meeting not sure about what happened or what they should be doing next. Participants should leave with a clearer idea of what needs to be done, not more confused.

9. **Thank everyone for coming, and close on a positive note!**

How Can You Make *All* Your Meetings *Good* Meetings?

Here are some things your group or organization can do to make sure that *all* of the meetings you organize and facilitate are *good* meetings.

✓ **Use ground rules.** Ground rules are the norms or rules the meeting participants agree to follow. For a new group or a one-time-only meeting, have the group suggest rules they want to follow, record them on flip chart paper, and ask everyone if they can agree to follow them. For groups that meet regularly, establish a set of ground rules you'll use at all of your meetings. Record these on flip chart paper, bring them to all your meetings, start the meeting off by looking back at them, and then enforce them!

✓ **Take turns with responsibilities.** A great way to build capacity is to rotate responsibilities for different aspects of organizing and running the meeting. For example, if you have a group that meets regularly, have different members of the group take responsibility for developing the agenda, calling people to remind them to come to the meeting, setting up the space, chairing the meeting, taking notes, and cleaning up. This helps people build skills and have a sense of *ownership* of the meeting.

✓ **Evaluate your meetings.** At the end of your meetings, do a quick "round robin" evaluation. Go around the table and ask everyone to share one thing that "worked well" and one thing that "could have worked better."

These steps will not only help your group or organization have good meetings all the time, but will build the skills and leadership of community members.

Tips for Choosing a Meeting Location and Setting Up the Meeting Space

Why is the Meeting Space Important?

Many things can affect meetings. One thing meeting organizers often overlook is the actual *space* that the meeting will be held in. Size, accessibility, location and other characteristics about the physical space can contribute to having a good or bad meeting.

Below, we provide a check list of things to think about and do before a meeting, during a meeting, and after a meeting to make sure the *physical space* contributes to a good meeting.

Before the Meeting

1. **Think about how many people will be invited** and select a location that will best fit that size. You don't want a room that is too small, but you don't want a room that is too big either. It can be hard to hear everyone if the room is too large. You don't want people to have to shout for everyone to hear. Also, sometimes participants may need to bring their children because the meeting is at night. Is there a space for the children to go so they are not a distraction? Have you hired a babysitter?

2. **Select a place that is easily accessible** by the people you have invited. Aside from being centrally located, also think about parking and access to public transportation. Will people have to pay in order to park? Will they have to walk a long distance in order to get to the meeting? If so, are the neighborhoods safe for walking if the meetings run late into the night? Also, make sure the place is wheelchair accessible if you have invited people that many need wheelchair access.

3. **Make sure you have enough chairs and tables** at the meeting place. Not all places are equipped to have large meetings so they may not have enough tables and chairs for everyone. Pick a place that has plenty of seats and tables so that everyone is comfortable and can take notes if they want to. Also, think about how you will want to set up tables and chairs. Do you want to set it up as a classroom-style for presentations, or will you want to set it in a circle so everyone can be seen? How the tables are set can set the tone about how participants can interact with each other.

4. **Make sure you know where everything is.** Bathrooms, air conditioners, heaters, drinking fountains may not seem important, but they are essential if you will be having a long meeting. Make sure they are working and the temperature is set at a level that will be comfortable for everyone.

5. **Make sure you have flipchart paper, microphones, markers, easels, projectors, and computers.** These just some of the items that you may want to have available – especially if you will be presenting information to the participants. Make sure that these – and anything else you will need – are available and working before the meeting starts. You don't want to be trying to figure out how the projector works in the middle of the meeting, or run out of markers while taking notes.

During the Meeting

1. **Once everyone arrives, make sure everyone has enough space** so they are comfortable – especially for long meetings. You may need to use extra tables and chairs in order to create enough space. If people are uncomfortable, they may get distracted and may not be able to fully focus on the meeting items.

2. **Let people know where the bathrooms and drinking fountains are** so they can go as necessary.

3. **Adjust the temperature as needed** so that everyone is comfortable. Remember that as more people come, the temperature will rise. Also, if you start your meeting in the morning, it will warm up in the afternoon. Likewise, if you start in the afternoon, it may cool down in the evening. If people look like they are too hot or too cold, check in with them.

After the Meeting

1. **Put everything back** especially if you are using someone else's meeting space. You want to make sure that they will let you come back if you want to use their meeting space again.

2. **Clean the meeting space and bathrooms** and make sure you throw away your trash. Some places may ask that you take your garbage with you.

3. **Turn the air conditioner and heater back to how you found it.** You don't want to waste any energy nor do you want to cause any damage by forgetting to turn the heater or air conditioner back to how you found it.

4. **Do a final check** to make sure you have all the equipment, material, and food that you brought.

5. **Lock the facility** or make sure you get the building manger to lock up before you go.

Tips for Preparing a Meeting Agenda

What is an Agenda?

When people get together to discuss an issue, it is very easy to let the conversation flow from one topic to another without even thinking about it. Unfortunately, sometimes the flow of the conversation can lead you away from addressing the issues that you came together to discuss or decision you came together to make in the first place! A meeting agenda is a good tool you can use to keep the meeting focused and on track with the objectives.

Some things you may want to include on your agenda include:

- ✓ Time, date, and location of the meeting
- ✓ Meeting objectives
- ✓ Key topics to be covered and key questions for each topic
- ✓ Length of time provided for each topic as well as for the entire meeting
- ✓ Background information that may be helpful for participants

Who Should be Involved in Creating the Agenda?

Creating the agenda is a very important process and should be done by someone who has a good idea of what needs to be discussed at the meeting. This could include the Chair of a Board of Directors, an executive committee, facilitators, and/or the community leaders who are organizing the meeting.

What are the Major Parts of an Agenda?

Meeting Objectives:

Stating the meeting objectives on the agenda is a good way to let the participants know what they will be working towards during the meeting. It helps provide clarity about the goal of the meeting and will also provide a framework for the discussion. When coming up with the meeting objectives, it may be helpful to think about the follow:

- ✓ What are you trying to accomplish during this meeting? Is it to make a decision? Is it to create a plan? Is it to provide information?
- ✓ What actions would you like to be able to take after the meeting?

Introductions:

The introduction should provide enough information for everyone at the meeting to meet all other participants, as well as provide enough time for a brief overview of the purpose of the meeting. When planning the introduction, it may be helpful to think about the following:

- ✓ How much time should you spend on introductions? Does everyone know each other?

- ✓ Does everyone know why the meeting is being held?
- ✓ What are the objectives of the meeting? Is it to make a decision? Is it to make a plan? Is it to provide information? Deciding this beforehand will help you decide what your meeting topics will be.

Meeting Topics of Discussion:

The key meeting topics of discussion will serve as the major components of your meting. They are the different topics that you will need to cover during the meeting in order to reach your meeting goals. When creating the topics of discussion, it may be helpful to think about the following:

- ✓ What are the 2-3 major areas of discussion? For example, it may be that not everyone will have the same level of understanding of the meeting topics. The first area of discussion may be just to provide information so everyone has enough information to make a good discussion. The next section may include a brainstorm of possible solutions to then possible solutions that people can discuss.
- ✓ How much can you cover in the timeframe that you have? You want to be careful to not put so many items onto your agenda that you won't have time to cover it all. As you get more familiar with the group and the topics that you want to discuss, you'll be able to assess the amount of time needed.
- ✓ Who will be attending the meeting and how much do they know about the topics that will be discussed? You want to make sure that your meeting topics are appropriate for the group of people that will be attending your meeting. If the people who will be attending are just starting to learn about the issues, you may want to dedicate some time at the beginning provide them with information.

Review of Meeting Highlights and Next Steps:

Regardless of the purpose of your meeting, one of the last things you should do at the end of your meeting is summarize and review the highlights of the discussion, including any "next steps" and action items. This is especially important to make sure that everyone leaves the meeting with a clear understanding of what was discussed and what the key decisions were if the objective of the meeting was to make a decision.

[Sample Agenda]

Title of the Meeting
Meeting Location
Meeting Month, Day, Year

Meeting Objectives
- Objective 1
- Objective 2

Start Time - End Time

Introduction
- Participant Introduction
- Agenda Overview

Start Time - End Time

Discussion Topic 1
- Key question #1
- Key question #2

Start Time - End Time

Discussion Topic 2
- Key question #1
- Key question #2

Start Time - End Time

Discussion Topic 3
- Key question #1
- Key question #2

Start Time - End Time

Summary and Review of Meeting Highlights

Star Time - End Time

Closing
- Next steps
- Next Meeting time and date

Tips for Meeting Facilitation

What is Meeting Facilitation?

Meeting facilitation, or facilitating a meeting, is the process of helping a group of people reach its meeting goals and objectives as effectively as possible. The role of the facilitator can include timekeeping, conflict management, encouraging participating, creating safe environments, and monitoring the agenda.

Who Should Be the Facilitator?

The facilitator(s) can be anyone in the group, or it can be someone outside the group that has some understanding about the group and the topics that will be discussed. The facilitator(s) can be one person, or a small group of no more than 2-3 people. In groups that meet regularly, the facilitator is often the chair of the Board or steering committee, the Executive Director, or some other group leader.

Facilitator's Role Before the Meeting

Many of these tips assume that the facilitator is a person from outside the group that normally meetings. However, many of these tips still apply in situations where the facilitator of the meeting is also part of the group. If you are facilitating a meeting that you will also be participating in, you may be able to skip some of these tips because the responsibilities are tasked out to other members of your group.

1. **Get a list of the participants** before the meeting, if possible, and familiarize yourself with the people that will be coming. Understanding what their skills and background are can help you understand their point of view, and can also help you gauge everyone's level of understanding of the issues to be discussed.

> **Keep in Mind…**
>
> Facilitators are trusted to remain unbiased and neutral when facilitating a meeting. They provide opportunities for everyone to speak, and work to create an environment where everyone feels safe to share their thoughts and opinions. In situations where a member of the group is facilitating but may also have valuable input, make sure they do not overpower the conversation.

2. **Help create the agenda** with the group that is holding the meeting so you know what to expect during the meeting, and also so you know what outcomes are expected.

3. **Research the topics to be discussed** in case there are new developments that you may want to be aware of. You don't need to know everything, but having a base level of understanding will help you understand the flow of the conversation.

4. **Arrive early** so you can pick a spot to sit that will allow you to see and hear everyone in the room. Check to see that the room is arranged in a way that will help facilitate the meeting. Make changes as necessary.

5. **Review the agenda and the participant list** with the meeting hosts in case there are last minute changes.

During the Meeting:

1. **Start on time** to show that you respect everyone's time and presence at the meeting.

2. **Welcome everyone and go through logistics** so everyone knows where the bathrooms are, where the food is, and anything else that people may need during the meeting. Introduce yourself and allow participants to introduce themselves.

3. **Review the agenda with the group** so they know what topics will be discussed, how much time will be allotted for each discussion, and when the meeting will end.

4. **Review ground rules** for the group, or establish ground rules for the meeting. This helps to create the safe environment for sharing by allowing everyone involved know what rules they need to follow during the meeting.

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> Note taking by the facilitator can be done in a notepad, but if possible, should be taken on flip chart paper and posted around the room. This can help stimulate conversations and remind people about highlights and decisions that have been made.

5. **Pay attention to participant behaviors.** By observing participant behaviors, you can tell when they are getting frustrated, tired, upset, enthusiastic, bored, or excited. One of your roles as a facilitator is to help groups move towards a decision and meeting objectives. Sometimes, this may require that you take an unplanned break if participants are becoming tired, or that you break up the group into small groups to encourage conversations if no one is talking, or if one person is dominating the conversation.

6. **Take notes** of major decisions, outcomes, and commitments. Although the secretary will also be taking notes, you want to make sure that you also have a clear understanding of the outcomes of the meetings.

7. **Maintain a neutral position** to ensure that all sides of a discussion is heard. One of your jobs as a facilitator is to make sure that anyone who wants to, has an opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions. This is hard to do if you side with one group of people over another.

8. **Ask questions** that help clarify ideas, and generate new ideas. If you don't understand something, there is a good chance that other people in the group may not understand either. Don't be afraid to ask questions that will help clarify the ideas, but be careful to not get into too many details if it's not needed at the moment. Also, when appropriate, ask questions that may help the group see things from a different point of view which may lead to new ideas. This is especially helpful if the group gets "stuck" and can't seem move forward on a decision or in a conversation. Although asking questions is helpful, try not to also provide them with an answer.

> **Helpful Hint...**
>
> **The Art of the "Check-In"**
>
> As a facilitator, you should periodically "check-in" – stop and ask how the process is going – with your co-facilitator, a group leader(s), and/or the full group of meeting participants.
>
> A "check in" can help you assess:
> - If the agenda is on track – are we spending too much time on some items and too little on others?
> - The level of participation in the room – are some people talking too much and others too little?
> - The energy in the room – do people need a break? Do they want to stop early? Can they keep going productively? Do they need to stand up and stretch?
>
> Remember that it's always okay to stop and adjust the agenda – but you should do that in consultation with a group leader(s) or the full group to let the full group know what changes you are making.

9. **Pay attention to the time and adjust the agenda as appropriate.** No matter how skilled a facilitator is, it is impossible to predict how long conversations will last. You may find that some conversations may be longer or shorter than you planned. You don't want to cut off a group when they are having a good discussion that has gone too long, but at the same time you want to make sure that they reach a decision. Work with the meeting hosts to adjust the agenda accordingly.

10. **Review key decisions, outcomes, and action plans** of the meeting and make sure that everyone is in agreement. Check with the Secretary to see if you missed anything.

11. **End on time** to show that you respect everyone's time and presence at the meeting. If, for example, you have "checked in" and the group has agreed to go another 15 or 30 minutes to get through an important item, then still respect that agreement and stop when you said you would.

After the Meeting

1. **Help clean up** and arrange the room back the way it was before the meeting. You want to make sure that you can use the meeting space again in the future.

2. **Review your notes** with the secretary to make sure that all important decisions and highlights are recorded into the meeting minutes or meeting summary.

3. **Write up your notes** and send them to the secretary and meeting hosts. If you are an outside facilitator, more than likely, you may have already discussed how you will need to provide the notes back to the meeting hosts. If you are a part of the group, the meeting minutes may be all that you need.

4. **Check with meeting hosts for additional follow-up** that may be needed. This may include reviewing the final meeting minutes, or possibly even facilitating a follow-up meeting.

Tips for Preparing Good Meeting Minutes

What are Minutes?

Meeting minutes are the official notes of a meeting. They are the records that show the highlights and key decisions that were made at the meeting, as well as who made those decisions. In some situations, meeting minutes are the legal records of the decisions that were made during meeting. Meeting minutes are usually taken by the Secretary or someone specifically designated to take minutes. This may be that person's only job, but oftentimes, they are taken by someone who is also participating in the meeting.

> **Keep in Mind...**
>
> Remember to rotate responsibility for taking notes or minutes so that everyone in your group can build their listening and note taking skills!

Before the Meeting

1. **Arrive early** so you can pick a spot to sit that will allow you to hear everyone in the room and so you don't miss any part of the meeting. If you will be late, call and ask someone to start taking notes until you get there.

2. **Have plenty of paper and pens** so you don't run out during the meeting.

3. **Write down the names of the participants** so you can record who participated in the decision making process (i.e., votes, motions, discussions, objections, etc.). Some people may not want to have their names recorded. Check to see if anyone would like to remain anonymous in the minutes.

During the Meeting

1. **Focus on writing accurate highlights, actions, and key decisions of the meeting** and *not the discussion.* Balance between recording too many details and not getting enough information. If you are unsure, it is safer to have too much information than not enough.

   > **Keep in Mind...**
   >
   > Minutes are not a verbatim transcription of the meeting. They capture the highlights of the discussion, key actions, and key decisions.

   Good Examples:

   "The Planning Committee will research and present options for a location for the event at the December Board meeting."

"A motion was made by Ahmed and seconded by Kim to participate in the July 4th parade. The Board approved of the motion by a majority vote."

"The Committee approved to send two representatives to the Mayor's first annual Community Listening Session, on April 21, 2009."

Bad Examples:

"John said that he doesn't like the convention hall because it doesn't have enough parking spaces. Miguel disagreed with John and said there are plenty of parking spaces."

"Ahmed really wants to be in the July 4th parade and wants us to be a part of it so he asked for a vote. Kim agreed with him and said that it will be hot in July so we should make sure we have lots of water."

"Someone will go to that meeting next week."

2. **Write down items as they are discussed** even they are not in the same order as the agenda. This will help you remember the conversation later when you retype your minutes.

3. **Participate in the meeting** if you are supposed to. This may be difficult but your opinion is just as important and should be reflected in the notes. However, make sure your notes are not biased by your opinions.

> **Keep in Mind...**
>
> **Record Disagreements With A Decision When Asked**
>
> Sometimes a meeting participant may request that the meeting minutes note that he or she disagreed with a decision. For meetings where the decisions are legally binding decisions of a legal entity – such as the Board of Directors of a nonprofit organization – this is especially important.

After the Meeting

1. **Organize and type up your notes as soon as possible** so that the information is still fresh in your mind. There may be some things that you may not have written down but may remember as you begin typing out your meeting minutes. As more time goes by, you will start to forget some of these things.

2. **Arrange the notes in the order that they were discussed.** This will help participants remember the discussions and the decisions that were made.

3. **Ask for clarity** from the chair person or whoever was leading the meeting if your notes are not clear. You do not want to send out meeting minutes that are incorrect.

4. **Send the minutes out as soon as you can** so other meeting participants can review them. They may need the minutes to remind them what they are supposed to before the next meeting. Also, if you made a mistake in your notes, this give you time to change the minutes before they are approved at the next meeting.

Other Things to Consider

- ✓ **Use a consistent format** to record and report your meeting minutes. If this will be your first meeting, establish a format that will be easy for you to use, and that will be easy to read. Use this format to record and report minutes for all meetings.

- ✓ **Using a voice recorder or video cameras at meetings** is one way to ensure that you have the most accurate notes. However, some people may not feel comfortable being recorded. Always check to see that everyone is willing to be recorded before using either a voice recorder or a video camera. If anyone is uncomfortable with being recorded, respect their wishes and only take handwritten notes.

Worksheet: Planning a Meeting

What is the purpose of the meeting?

____

____

____

____

What are the most important decisions that the group meeting will need to make at this meeting?

1.____

2.____

3.____

Who should you invite to the meeting?

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

Who will invite them? How will they be invited? (e.g., phone, email, flyers, mailed invitation, etc.)

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

Note: You might want to list individual people or categories of people such as "community members from x neighborhood," "nonprofit leaders," or "school officials." Although at some point, you will need names.

What items need to be on the agenda?

____

____

____

____

____

Who will create the agenda?

____

____

____

____

____

When should the meeting take place? (note the day, month, year, and time)

Where will the meeting be?

Who will reserve the space?

Who will facilitate the meeting?

Who will take notes at the meeting?

What materials will you need?

Who will get the material?

Who will distribute the agenda to the people who have been invited?

What will be the follow up?

Who will do the follow-up?

Checklist for Organizing A Community Event

This checklist will remind you of the key things you will need to think about in organizing any kind of community event – whether it's a festival, community meeting, health fair, job fair, training or workshop for community members or some other event.

The key things you will need to think about are:

1. **A Planning or Steering Committee:** To plan an event well, you'll need a group of people committed to coordinating the job and getting it done. Things to think about:
   - Who has the time to be on the committee?
   - How often do you need to meet?
   - How far in advance of the event should your first meeting be?
   - How much money will you need up front to pay for the costs of the event?

   This group should make a work plan of tasks with a timeline, and also determine the budget for the event.

2. **Location:** Choosing the location for an event is an important decision. As you think about what type of location will work best, think about the following:
   - How much space do we need?
   - What type of lay out do we need? (for example, do we need break out rooms? a stage? space for exhibitors? A space for food vendors?)
   - If we choose a location that is outdoors – such as a public park – do we need a permit?
   - Does the group that owns or manages the space have a contract they want us to sign?
   - How much is the rental fee?
   - Do we need our own liability insurance?
   - Does the space come with equipment – such as a sound system – and chairs/tables or will we need to rent all of that?
   - Does the space require us to use their food service or catering? Can we use our own? Can we have food vendors?

3. **Publicity and Outreach**: Publicity and outreach are crucial – without people to attend, your event is pointless! As you make your publicity plans, think about the following:
   - How many people do you want to reach? If it's a certain kind of meeting, there may be a maximum number of people you want. If it's a health fair, you may want to get as many people as possible.
   - Depending on how many people you want to reach, where and how should you do the publicity? (Note: For publicity, think about creating flyers, emails, doing a mailing, having announcements on the radio or TV. You may even want to go door to door! If you are trying to get a lot of people, think about putting your flyers in "high traffic" areas, such as malls and grocery stores.)

- Do you want to get media coverage? If so, write a press release, send it out and make follow up calls

4. **Sponsorships and Fundraising**: Even if the event is not specifically a fundraising event, you are going to need to cover your costs. Think about where you can go for sponsorships and other fundraising. Will you charge any fees to attend the event? Ask for donations at the door?

5. **Programming**: What's going to happen at the event? Depending on what type of event it is – a health fair, a cultural celebration, a community meeting, a training – you need to plan what's going to happen at the event. Think about the following:
   - What speakers will you invite?
   - Are you inviting performers?
   - Do you need an "MC" (Master of Ceremonies)?
   - Will you have music?
   - Do you need to work with potential speakers and give them guidelines? (Note: It's a good idea to help them keep their points short and to the point!)
   - How long will the formal part of the program last? (Note: It's best to keep the formal program to one hour or less, otherwise, you may lose your audience!)
   - If it's a health fair or job fair, will you have various points throughout the day when you have some speakers or entertainment?

6. **Volunteers**: With any event, you are going to need volunteers! Think about the following:
   - How many volunteers will you need?
   - What do you need them to do? Think about volunteers you will need:
     - Before the event – to help with the planning and organizing, as well as set up
     - During the event – to help as "greeters," "trouble shooters," "floaters," security and other roles (Note: If you are going to have a sound system, make sure you have a volunteer who can help with technical issues related to the sound system!)
     - After the event – to help with clean up and follow up, such as sending thank you notes

7. **Other**: Here are some other things you will need to think about:
   - Do you need to arrange child care and/or transportation?
   - Will you need translation or interpretation?
   - If the event is planned for outdoors, have you planned a rain date?