An Overview of Refugee Mental Health: A Federal Perspective

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Overview

• Global resettlement needs and ORR populations
• Mental health needs of refugees and survivors of torture
• Strategies for promoting emotional wellness in the U.S.
  - Mental health screening
  - Mental Health First Aid
  - Bhutanese “Stories of Hope” Video
• Sharing family stories to create resilience and empathy
• Questions
Global Forced Migration

65.6 million forcibly displaced people worldwide

Refugees 22.5 million
- 17.2 million under UNHCR mandate
- 5.3 million Palestinian refugees registered by UNRWA

Stateless people 10 million

Refugees resettled 189,300 in 2015

Source: UNHCR
Global UNHCR Submissions by Category January – December 2017

*http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/resettlement-data.html*
Post-Migration Factors are Critical for Refugee Mental Health

http://www.euro.who.int/en/home
Populations Served by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asylees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cuban and Haitian Entrants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Refugees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Holders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM)</td>
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<td>Victims of Trafficking</td>
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Estimates of Torture Survivors Among Refugees in the U.S.

- 3.3 million refugees resettled since 1975
- An estimated 44% of refugees are survivors of torture
- Utah refugee health screening (2000–2013): 36% reported a history of torture; 58% of Iraqi and 50% of Sudanese
Services for Survivors of Torture: Healing Centers

http://www.healtorture.org/content/domestic-healing-centers
Red pin indicates full members of National Consortium of Torture Treatment Centers (NCTTP)
Torture Treatment Centers in the Region

• DC:
  – Torture Abolition Survivor Support Coalition International (TASSC)

• MD:
  – Tahirih Justice Center

• VA/DC:
  – Northern Virginia Family Service
Services for Survivors of Torture

Number of Clients Served
9/30/16 - 9/29/17

- Total Clients Served: 7965
- New Clients: 2869
- Continuing Clients: 5096
Reasons Survivors of Torture Seek Care

Primary Presenting Problem
09/30/2016 - 09/29/2017

- Emotional/Psychological (39%)
- Interpersonal/Social (23%)
- Legal (21%)
- Physical/Medical (15%)
- Other (2%)
Survivors of Torture: Countries of Origin

Number of SOT Clients Served from Top 10 Country of Origin: 09/30/2016 - 09/29/2017

- Guatemala: 145
- Somalia: 150
- Bhutan: 151
- Cameroon: 176
- Cambodia: 206
- Bosnia: 208
- Uganda: 358
- Ethiopia: 416
- DRC: 550
- Iraq: 668
- Total: 7965
ORR 5-Point Plan for Promoting Emotional Wellness in Refugees

- Partnership
- Data Collection
- Emotional Wellness for Refugees
- Awareness & Education
- Screening & Referral
- Community Support
Mental Health Screening in States, FY17

Mental Health Screening of Refugees

- Refugee Program Having Direct Oversight of MH Screening: 63% (n=32)
- Refugee Program Having No Oversight of MH Screening; Decided by PCP: 23% (n=12)
- Don’t Know: 12% (n=6)
- No Refugee Program: 2% (n=1)
Mental Health Screening Tools, FY17

Types of Mental Health Screening Tools

- Others only: 7
- RHS-15 + others: 10
- RHS-15 only: 15
- State Refugee Program Having Direct Oversights of Screening Protocols: 32
Stories of Hope From Bhutanese Refugees:
Moving From Distress to Wellness
Mental Health First Aid is the initial help offered to a person developing a mental health or substance use problem, or experiencing a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate treatment and support are received or until the crisis resolves.
What Participants Learn

• **Risk factors and warning signs** of mental health and substance use problems

• **Information** on depression, anxiety, trauma, psychosis and substance use

• **A 5-step action plan** to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or in crisis

• Available evidence-based professional, peer and self-help resources
Who We’re Reaching with Mental Health First Aid Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>First Aiders</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhutanese</td>
<td>666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burmese</td>
<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iraqi</td>
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<td>Congolese</td>
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<td>Somali</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yezidi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mized</td>
<td>74</td>
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Who We’re Reaching with Mental Health First Aid Training

Refugees and Refugee Serving Staff Trained in MHFA by State: FY 2014 - FY 2018

- Georgia: 7
- New Jersey: 19
- Kansas: 19
- Tennessee: 20
- Iowa: 20
- Connecticut: 22
- North Dakota: 22
- Vermont: 24
- Illinois: 25
- Nevada: 26
- Alaska: 27
- North Carolina: 27
- Washington: 28
- Wisconsin: 28
- Kentucky: 30
- Maryland: 60
- New York: 83
- Minnesota: 85
- Oregon: 102
- Nebraska: 113
- California: 123
- Arizona: 124
- Ohio: 126
- Texas: 169
- Pennsylvania: 337
Trauma-Informed Care

• A strengths-based approach for service providers, programs, and systems
• An awareness of the prevalence of trauma
• An understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma
• Emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for survivors and providers
• Creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.

(Hopper, Bassuk, & Olivet, 2010)
The Trauma Story is Central to the Healing Process

The New H5 Model: Trauma and Recovery

Resources:
- *Trauma Story Assessment and Therapy (TSAT): Therapist Journal for Field and Clinic.*
- *Healing invisible wounds: Paths to hope and recovery in a violent world.* [www.hpert-cambridge.org](http://www.hpert-cambridge.org)

Caring for Refugees and Other Highly Traumatized Persons and Communities
© Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma
Assessing for History of Torture and Trauma

• Utah Health and Human Rights study of refugee health screening

• Multiple studies confirm that refugees will not share a history of torture unless directly asked

• Screening Patients for a History of Torture*

*Eisenman, D. P., Keller, A. S., & Kim, G. (2000). Survivors of torture in a general medical setting: how often have patients been tortured, and how often is it missed? Western Journal of Medicine, 172(5), 301–304.
Resilience and Post-Traumatic Growth

Photo Credit: Evans 2014. Kintsugi: The Art of Broken Pieces
Connecting with Our Family History and Cultural Heritage

• Increases cultural awareness, empathy and ability to work cross-culturally

• Creates an “intergenerational self”—belonging to something greater than ourselves

• Contributes to our own and our children’s emotional health and happiness
Irish Famine Memorial
Boston, MA
Applying Lessons from our Family and Cultural Heritage

Photo Credit: UNHCR
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