



Refugees in Metropolitan Atlanta Get Help With Family Violence

Two community agencies provide culturally sensitive education and intervention services to 985 refugees

SUMMARY

From December 2007 through December 2010, the Georgia Department of Human Services contracted with two community agencies to expand services to refugees affected by domestic violence. The goals of the project were to increase awareness and reduce the occurrence of domestic violence among refugees living in metropolitan Atlanta.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) funded the project through its *Fresh Ideas: Improving the Health of Immigrant and Refugee Communities* program. *Fresh Ideas* was a targeted solicitation for strategies that give immigrants and refugees the tools and support they need to improve and maintain their health. See the [Program Results](#) for more information and links to other projects.

The project's subcontractors—the [Center for Pan Asian Community Services](#) and [Tapestri](#)—are established community organizations serving refugees in the Atlanta region. Staff at the two agencies:

- Created and facilitated 354 community education classes on family violence. The sessions aimed to increase participants' knowledge and awareness of family violence, relevant U.S. law and available services that address domestic violence.
- Organized and taught a 24-week family violence intervention program certified by the Georgia Commission on Family Violence and the Georgia Department of Corrections. The program targets refugee males who were arrested or at risk of being arrested for family violence, including men mandated by the court to attend the program.
- Provided support services such as counseling and job training to partners and family members of participants enrolled in the state-certified family violence intervention program.
- Conducted outreach in foreign language print and broadcast media to increase awareness about domestic violence.

Results

Project Director Michael B. Singleton, Georgia's State Refugee Coordinator reported the following key results of the project:

- Some 985 refugees received domestic violence intervention and prevention services through either state-certified family violence intervention programs, other men's groups, women's groups or co-educational community education classes.
- Based on standardized preprogram and postprogram tests, the average rate of increased knowledge among all program participants was 90.96 percent.
- Of 36 court-ordered males who participated in the state-certified 24-week program, 33 decreased their rate of domestic violence perpetration.
- Many participants who said they previously tolerated acts of domestic violence reported that they sought help to address domestic violence as a result of the program.
- The extensive, culturally-specific media outreach campaign proved an effective recruitment strategy. Participants reported that they were informed about the classes via the ads and spread the word in their communities.

Lessons Learned

Singleton offered the following lessons in a report to RWJF and during an interview:

1. Meet with refugee community leaders to present class material and explain how the program helps their communities. Once community leaders became invested in this project, they became the greatest recruiters and helped develop networks of community support.
2. When presenting a sensitive topic such as domestic violence, hire staff who are familiar with and sensitive to the cultural norms and linguistic barriers specific to each refugee group.
3. To reduce and/or prevent acts of domestic violence, offer services or be able to link refugees to trustworthy service providers that address familial issues such as employment, education and gender equity.
4. "Meet people where they are. To build trust, bring the program to where refugees live, to places like the living rooms in their apartment complexes."

Funding

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) provided a three-year grant of \$226,048 to support this project under its *Fresh Ideas* initiative.

Afterward

The project continued after RWJF funds ended, but due to funding limitations, services have been targeted to refugees who have been in the U.S. for five years or less.

In 2009, the Center for Pan Asian Community Services received a three-year grant from RWJFs *Strengthening What Works* program that seeks to improve the evaluation capacity of agencies working with immigrant and refugee communities.

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