

# Refugees and jobs

## Highlights from three ORR-sponsored conferences: Arlington, Los Angeles, Chicago

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### **DISCLAIMER**

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The statements made in the pages that follow, and the summaries of the conversations at the conferences, do not necessarily reflect the views of either the Office of Refugee Resettlement (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), which provided much of the funding for the conferences, or of SEARAC, which managed them. They are the responsibility of the author.

### **INTRODUCTION**

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One of the most difficult challenges of coming to the U.S. as a refugee is finding a job in the great buzzing confusion that is the American labor market. Refugees have much to offer American employers, and a small band of professionals, usually in ill-paid jobs for small non-profits, help the refugees get their first, and often their second and third jobs in the U.S.

These professionals often work with little contact with their peers and so the Office of Refugee Resettlement, in the fall of 1994, decided to sponsor three regional conferences to draw them together to discuss the challenges of their work, and the good practices within it. Most of the sessions were to be exchanges of ideas among peers, rather than lectures or more formal training sessions. The conferences were held in Arlington, Virginia, in May 1995, in Los Angeles, in June, and near Chicago, in November.

The three conferences were, in a sense, a sequel to a single conference sponsored by ORR in January 1992 called "Refugees Work," which had a similar format, and the same conference designer. The decision to hold three regional conferences rather than a single, national one, was made in the hope (which was realized) that hundreds more refugee-serving people would attend the several regional conferences rather than a single national one, and that in the smaller sessions, more individuals would have a chance to speak.

Speak they did, sometimes with frustration, sometimes with pride; some statements were shy, some bold, some in halting English, but they all were made with a strong interest in the work at hand, and often with insights worth preserving and sharing.

This leads us to this document, a summary of some of the more interesting conversations that took place in the more than 110 breakout sessions at the three conferences. Any such summary is, by definition, arbitrary; some wonderful ideas and great success stories are always left out of any such compilation. Since these were informal, off-the-record sessions, we have deliberately not used the names of those who made the quotable remarks -- we did not have their permission in advance, and, frankly, sometimes we have lost their names. (In other cases, however, we have named presenters who were listed in the conference programs.)

A note follows on how to best use this volume. We hope this report (along with the three conferences) will be helpful to the employment specialists, to their managers, and, of course, to the refugees that they serve.

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## HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

While some may find it useful to read this report from cover to cover, that is not its primary purpose. These are the ways it is expected to be used.

**As a short reference work** -- If you want some condensed information on, for example, encouraging older refugees to take jobs, read the section on that subject. If something within that article looks interesting, check on the resources and resource people listed.

**As a training tool** -- The portions of the book on job development, and on employment counselling, will be helpful to people taking jobs in these fields for the first time. So will the management portion for new managers of employment programs.

**As a stimulant** -- Many conference participants had stimulating ideas; some of the best are scattered through this report. Look, for example, at "Three New Approaches to Local Employment Programs" which reports on totally new ways to organize existing resources in this field.

**As a checklist** -- Many practices described may already be used by the reader's agency, but the agency may not have tried some approach that someone else has used elsewhere.

**As a reminder** -- Most people seeing this report will have been at one of the three conferences; this will remind them of what they experienced (or what they missed in sessions they did not attend).

At the back of the report are two useful elements, an index of subjects covered, and a listing of the fax and mail addresses of many of the resource people who spoke at the conference.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A large number of people worked together to make these three conferences possible, and we are grateful to them all. The state refugee program coordinators' offices in Illinois (Ed Silverman) and in California (represented by Al Martinez) helped to organize the sessions in their states and provided financial support as well.

We had three dynamic keynote speakers: Dorian Fliegel, the cross-cultural expert, in Chicago; Demetrios Papademetriou, the immigration policy specialist, in Arlington; and Larry Townsend, Director of the Riverside County Department of Public Social Services, in Los Angeles. In Chicago we also heard a stimulating description of how states plan to handle block grants from Joseph Antolin, Deputy Director, Illinois Department of Public Aid.

Ron Munia of the ORR staff played a key role, designing and presenting the core curriculum on job development at all three sessions, facilitating a total of 18 of the breakout sessions in the process. There were excellent presentations at breakout sessions made by, among others: Richard L. Knowdell, President of Career Research and Testing, Inc. (San Jose, California); Karol S. Moxley, Supervisor of Refugee Employment Services, Jewish Vocational Service (Southfield, Michigan); Tipawan T. Q. Reed, Director of Applied Innovations, DePaul University (Chicago, Illinois); Pamela Seubert, Director of Government Programs, Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago; Michael Walling, Service Management Associates (West Chester, Pennsylvania); and by Dorian Fliegel, Dorian Fliegel Associates (Cambridge, Massachusetts).

A number of employers -- all nominated by refugee-serving agencies for their outstanding work with refugees - added a special dimension to the conversation. Similarly, a group of particularly skillful job developers shared their secrets with the conference participants.

Each of the 110+ breakout sessions had a facilitator, sometimes an ORR staffer, sometimes not, who had the assignment of keeping the conversation lively, but not too lively; they are listed with the sessions they handled.

And of course there were the more than 600 participants, some of whom traveled long distances. They were both the audience and the attraction at all of the sessions.

None of the conferences would have taken place without the unflappable hard work of Diana Bui and her colleagues at the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, the conference managers, and without the underlying support of the leadership of ORR Director Lavinia Limon and Deputy Director Regina Lee.

Finally there is ORR's Allan Gall who had the original idea for the peer-exchange structure of the conferences, and whose cheerful and perceptive leadership kept the enterprise going through a variety of challenges.

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## DIVERSIFYING SOURCES OF AGENCY SUPPORT

**The Challenge:** Given decreased refugee inflows, and even more rapidly decreasing flows of federal money for refugee-specific programs, as well as for programs for the low-income population generally, refugee-serving agencies need to look beyond Washington for sources of funds. Participants discussed seven different non-federal sources of funding for employment and other refugee programs.

### The Seven Sources of Funds:

**1. State and Local Government** -- Although it is unusual, several participants spoke of securing state and local tax moneys for refugee-specific programs. These funds are different from ORR moneys handled by state agencies.

For example, the Illinois legislature, according to State Refugee Coordinator, Ed Silverman, has voted state funds for promoting citizenship, including naturalization classes; Minnesota has allocated state funds to help refugees secure jobs; and various city, county and state funds have been secured in the Seattle area for refugee purposes.

Effective advocacy and public relations secured these funds. Agencies were encouraged to get to know their state legislators, and, where appropriate, seek to encourage them to serve on their boards of directors.

**2. Corporations** -- Corporations, particularly ones with records for community support generally, and those hiring refugees, can be approached for support.

Three kinds of support can be sought:

- 1 Funds for agency operations;
- 2 In-kind donations for the agency, e.g. used furniture, computers and other types of office machinery; and
- 3 Various consumer goods for refugee use.

Agencies were encouraged to talk with their existing contacts within local corporations (such as in the personnel offices) and to check out the corporate giving office as well. Some corporations that hire large numbers of refugees make annual contributions to the agencies arranging the hiring.

**3. Foundations** -- There are many more local foundations than national ones, and though they do not have the fame of Ford or McArthur, collectively they have a lot of money. Agencies were encouraged to use the *Directory of Foundations*, an expensive book that can be found in most

large public libraries, to secure lists of local foundations, their charitable goals, their ground rules for making grants, and the names, addresses and phone numbers of their decision-making officers.

Participants said that local foundations often have highly specific goals, and these should be borne in mind when refugee agencies meet with foundation officials. The foundations are usually more interested in a specific project, particularly an innovative one, than in providing general support.

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**4. United Way** -- There were spirited discussions as to the utility of spending staff (and executive director) time seeking these funds. Some agencies, after lengthy (sometimes multi-year negotiations) have secured a place in United Way and in the Combined Federal Campaign systems and have found it worthwhile. Others say that the United Way rules are more demanding than federal ones, and produce much less money.

**5. In-community Fund Raising** -- Most refugee agencies represented at the conferences, particularly the MAAs, raise only tiny fractions of their budgets from within the refugee community; yet organizations representing migrants of earlier generations (particularly among the Jews, Armenians and Chinese) have been remarkably successful within their own communities. How do they do it?

One way is fundraising tied to a major ethnic celebration, such as the Chinese New Year. The following model was described at the Chicago conference.

The Chinese community pulls together a number of different fund-raising techniques at these events; tickets are sold for a major, joyous dinner which has become a "must event" for the broader community's political and business leaders; corporations inside and outside the Chinese community are asked to buy ads in the dinner program or to provide valuable door prizes (or both); in-kind donations (food, drink and flowers) are also sought to cut the costs of the dinner itself. The events are a major source of funds for the community organizations mounting them.

Regarding on-going fund-raising within refugee communities one basic rule was proposed by a West Coast executive director: see to it that the individual members of the agency's board of directors set a precedent of giving annually to the agency. Some boards, informally, set a minimum level for such gifts.

Another approach is for the agency to buy, at a 5% discount, thousands of dollars worth of grocery coupons from such supermarket chains as Safeway and Giant; the agency keeps the 5% and the friends of the agency spend the coupons at the supermarkets as if they were cash. There is no cost to the agency's supporters, and a mild boost to the agency's treasury.

**6. Contracts for Services** -- While the mind-set of most of the participants was on the provision of employment and other social services using governmental and charitable funding, an additional approach was suggested: act like a business, sell your agency's services! (See, for example, the account of how a non-profit agency for the disabled turned itself into a now-

profitable temporary employment agency in “Three New Visions of Employment Programs” elsewhere in this report.)

- p. 3      Speaking of supermarkets, do they want to reach out to the refugee community? Sell them a direct-mail program, using the agency's language talents and its mailing list of refugees!

Or, more traditionally, does the local mental health agency want to provide services to refugees but knows it lacks the needed linguistic and cultural sensitivities? Sign a contract with them.

Another, related approach is to charge fees to agency clients for services not covered by government grants; for example.

- 4      Several agencies own cars and provide, for a fee, training on how to drive and how to pass the driver's license test.
- 5      Many provide photo and fingerprinting services to clients seeking greencards; others get some slight income by giving standardized naturalization tests, such as those of the Educational Testing Service, to would-be citizens.

Few agencies can do this, but one MAA in Chicago found itself in possession of a strategically-located vacant lot. After protracted negotiations with the city (regarding zoning and licensing), the MAA is now making a \$10,000 a year profit from its parking lot.

**7. Fees for Interpreting and Translating** -- Several agencies reported that they secured substantial income by providing interpretation and translation services to governments, corporations and individuals, all for a fee. Some agencies do this as a minor by-product of their work, others actively market it.

One of the cardinal rules in this business is to charge what the market will bear. Many companies and public agencies pay at higher levels than many of the non-profits imagine. To check the market rates, look in the yellow pages of the phone book under “Translators and Interpreters” and ask a couple of the organizations listed what they would charge for two hours of services in Amharic or Lao, for instance. The quotation may surprise the caller. (And then think about getting the refugee-serving agency listed in the same yellow pages.)

Sometimes the agency's own staff does the interpreting; the agency charges more than it pays the staff and uses the profit for social purposes. Sometimes the agency acts as broker, matching orders for interpreters with non-agency people with the needed skills, making a profit on each transaction.

In addition to services for corporations or for units of government, agencies can, and do, charge modest fees to clients for translation and interpretation services not covered by government grants.

**Sources:** The facilitators for most of these sessions were executives of refugee-serving agencies who have successfully tapped many of the resources listed above. They

were: Vilay Chaleunrath, Ngoc Linh Nguyen, and Ha Nguyen. Anna Mary Portz and David North also facilitated some of these sessions. Other sources are:

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Re: State and local government: Jan Rohweder-Kohrt.

Re: Corporate giving: Joy Foster.

Re: Foundations: see the latest edition of *Directory of Foundations* in your local library; it can be purchased from the Foundation Center, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036, but it costs several hundred dollars a year. Another source of information about the field, broadly, is the bi-weekly *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, at \$67.50 a year; the address is 1255 23rd Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037.

Re: United Way, for a positive report: Vilay Chaleunrath.

Re: Contracts for Services, Dr. Dennis Hunt.

Re: Interpreters and Translators, for the experience of an agency in a small city (in which it has a near monopoly on the business), Matthew Duffy.

For experience in a larger metropolitan area, and with the court systems of two jurisdictions, Dr. Tsehay Teferra.

For experience in a mid-sized city, and for an organization that specifically trains interpreters for work in social service situations, Felicidad Frenette.

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## USING VOLUNTEERS TO EXPAND THE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

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It probably is a good idea to think of recruiting volunteers in a systematic way -- maybe most of the best will be:

- 6 Retired friends of the executive director;
- 7 Idealist young people attracted to your office because it is a place where there is *always* an abundance of other good-hearted, young people; and/or
- 8 Ex-Peace Corps volunteers seeking to become re-acquainted with America;

but do think in terms of **Systems**.

For example, there are some high schools that demand that young people volunteer at something -- find out which ones do, and reach out to the principals. The USCC agency in Kansas City, Kansas, for example, is in touch with the local Catholic schools that require volunteer work by their students.

Some colleges and graduate schools in social work have structured programs, ranging up to internships, that require volunteer work. Some of these are for academic credit. Find out which institutions have these requirements.

If you are working with Southeast Asians, remember that there are American veterans with a special interest in this part of the world. Agencies working with the Montagnards in North Carolina, for instance, have recruited useful volunteers from Americans who used to serve in the Special Forces (Green Berets).

Refugee-serving agencies in Utah and Idaho reach out to ex-Mormon missionaries who have served overseas in Haiti when they need interpreters. (Many Mormons spend a year overseas as lay missionaries; it is part of the life cycle and does not imply a career in the ministry.)

And do not forget your board members. You can probably convince some of them to take on specific tasks if you design (and present) these tasks to make them look like Senior Executive Assignments.

Also, if the agency has a Match Grant program, as many do, it can use the time of unsubsidized volunteers as a match to the federal funds.

Remember that volunteers have their own needs (perhaps for recognition, for sociability, for an opportunity to get out of the house, etc.) and you are much more likely to keep them coming if you meet those needs.

Each volunteer should be treated as an individual, a valued individual, and agency managers should devise a special work assignment for each of them. These assignments need to relate to the volunteers' desires, preferences and skills. Some may be terrified to make phone calls to strangers, others may enjoy the challenge of this kind of work; some

p. 6      may be bored to death with filing or envelope-stuffing chores; others will thrive on those tasks.

## **Two Other Types of Volunteers: The Subsidized and the Coerced.**

As you think about volunteers, open your mind to a couple of categories that you might not have thought about. Both can be tricky, but both can be productive.

When we talk about subsidized volunteers, we are thinking of people who get some income, maybe not much, for this kind of work. There may still be a few VISTAS around in the year to come, and even the AmeriCorps program may survive.

A much stronger program (vis-a-vis the Congress) is Title V of the Older Americans Act which provides minimum wage pay, at 20 hours a week, to people over the age of 55 who would like to help your agency. The people have to have incomes below a certain level. You can nominate someone from your own community and ask that the person be assigned to your agency.

And then there are the coerced volunteers, some of whom are within the refugee community. Many AFDC programs require people to take community service jobs -- and many of those forced into this role resent it. Some of the Hmong in Wisconsin call it "slave labor." But some agencies (such as the Detroit area LIRS operation) find this to be an excellent resource for the agency, and a much better-than-average work opportunity for the welfare recipient involved. So, find out ahead of time if some of your clients are going to be pushed into community work programs; if you think they would help your agency -- ask the appropriate people in the AFDC system for their services.

Finally, you might think about a really obscure resource - white collar criminals who have been given a sentence to perform hundreds, maybe a thousand hours, of community service. They may be great at talking people into doing things for your agency. They might be useful auxiliary job developers, for example. If you have a lawyer on your board of directors -- and if you don't you should - ask the lawyer to check out this resource for the agency.

**Sources:** Diana Bui, facilitator; on Title V, Gale Gibbons, DOL; on VISTA, Jim Scheibel and his staff at the Corporation for National and Community Service; on use of AFDC recipients, Joyce Sayyed.

## ESL AND PREPARING FOR THE JOB MARKET

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**The Challenges:** It is well known that refugees with good English usually have better jobs, lower rates of unemployment, and higher wages than those who do not. So English language training is important. On the other hand, in some of the high-welfare-benefit states it is tempting for some AFDC recipients to spend too much time in ESL classes, thus postponing the first job.

Learning a new language is more difficult for some parts of the population than others. Women often have less exposure to the outside world, and its language, than men; older people have more trouble than young ones; and people who are illiterate in their own language have particular difficulties, as they are learning how to read and write *and* a new language, all at the same time.

The fundamental challenge, then, is to deliver the right amount of ESL in such a way as to be highly effective, and to enroll and keep as many ESL students as long as it is useful to them. These matters, and the rising interest in work-site ESL, were discussed at all three conferences.

**General Rules:** Most agreed that these four principles undergirded most successful ESL programs.

1. Dedicated, involved teachers. Formal training is needed, but the teachers' warmth, patience, and persistence are vital.
2. A welcome, non-threatening institutional setting. A beat-up church basement in the right neighborhood is often better than an elegant college; and nearness is always better than distance.
3. As many support systems as possible; such as day care and transportation.

4. As much customer (ethnic community) involvement in the decision-making about schedules, locations and supportive services as possible.

**Good Practices:** Mobilizing several different kinds of resources helps build a healthy ESL program. One agency, for example, uses donated space from a church for the classrooms, the provision of van transportation by the Salvation Army to get people to classes, and volunteer instructors recruited from a nearby college as the teachers in the classrooms.

In the best of all possible worlds the volunteers come to the apartment complexes in which the refugees reside, and provide the ESL instruction there.

Another common pattern is the creation of a day-care center at the location where ESL is provided to refugee parents. Some other practices of interest:

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- 9 In a few places, where resources permit it, illiterate refugees are being taught to read and write in their own language (e.g. Creole, Hmong) prior to instruction in English.
  - 10 Massachusetts gives priority in admissions to ESL (and vocational training) classes to those who have full-time jobs.
  - 11 Some agencies find it useful to provide ESL (which, by definition is in English only) to classes where all the students speak the same (refugee) language. In this way, the faster students can help the slower ones.
  - 12 In some situations where the ESL and the employment functions are separated, the ESL providers will not release students from class for job interviews, on the grounds that ESL only takes up four hours a day and the interviews can be arranged for some other time. In this unusual situation, an ESL student's welfare check could be endangered *because* he skipped class for a job interview.

Regarding work-place ESL, the participants had several practices to report.

- 13 Many employers will make space available, on-site, for such classes, just before or just after the work day; the space used in some situations is idle space controlled by the employer, such as the plant cafeteria when meals are not being served, or an un-rented hotel meeting room.
- 14 Some provide ESL opportunities at the change in shifts, so that everyone attends for say an hour a day, with half the time being paid by the employer, and half volunteered by the worker.
- 15 Often ESL under these circumstances includes instruction in the words and concepts related directly to the job.
- 16 Some employers arrange for public-supported ESL instruction, while others pay refugee-serving agencies to provide it.

At the Chicago conference, Tipawan Reed suggested a model approach to implementing workplace ESL. It included an on-site meeting with the employer to to assess the company's needs, a careful review of the workers' educational needs, the preparation and the presentation of the agency's findings on these subjects, securing the support of all parties concerned, the

development of a specific curriculum for the workers and company involved, the delivery of the instruction, and an evaluation.

**Sources:** Karol Moxley, Nancy Iris and Anna Mary Portz served as the facilitators. Beverly Jean Smith knows about work-place ESL, generally, and also about charging employers for instruction. The Center for Applied Linguistics is studying work-place ESL, and has a newsletter about it, *The Connector*, c/o CAL 1118 22nd Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037; fax (202) 659-5641.

## HOW TO ORGANIZE A LOCAL REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT OPERATION

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This was a series of discussions on how best to organize a refugee employment activity. Among the subjects discussed were: division of labor within the agency; the use of publicity; the sharing of job vacancy leads with other agencies; and relationships with non-refugee-specific organizations.

**Internal Division of Labor:** There are two basic patterns used; in some, everybody does everything, counselling refugees, seeking job vacancies, following up with workers and employers. In others there is a sharp division of labor; one or two job developers work with employers, and usually a larger staff of employment counselors work with the refugees.

There are advantages and disadvantages to the generalist approach.

- 17 Advantages -- the staff member knows all that there is to know about both the refugee and the employer; there are no internal communications problems, because there is no need to communicate.
- 18 Disadvantages -- different sets of knowledge, and linguistic and cultural skills are needed to communicate with U.S. employers than with the refugees.

Small operations, where there is only a single staffer assigned to employment matters, by definition, use the generalist approach. New York Association for New Americans (NYANA), the largest resettlement agency in the nation, uses the division of labor approach, with bachelor-level (usually in business) job developers working with employers and master-level counselors working with the refugees. This amount of attention to credentialing is unusual in most organizations; in many the job developer is U.S.-born, often a former business person, while the employment counselors are often bilinguals, usually refugees. In most operations there is little or no formal training.

**Use of Publicity:** Some refugee employment operations use publicity to promote their activities; some choose not to do so; others do little of it because they do not know how to do it.

The best use of the general media is a success story about a specific refugee who is working in the U.S. after a trauma overseas; it helps if the refugee-generating situation is still in the news (e.g. Bosnia and Somalia are both better than Poland and Laos for these purposes.) Pictures help. The advice from participants was *not* to seek to generate sympathy for refugees in

general, but to stimulate admiration for one of them. Small city newspapers and TV stations are usually more interested than big city ones. Lenny Glickman of ORR stressed that those seeking publicity for their programs should pay close attention to the specific needs of the media, in terms of deadlines, pictorial requests, quotations and the like.

- p. 10      Other ideas: create a newsletter for and about employers, and distribute it to them, writing about successful uses of refugees as workers. Or distribute glowing (but accurate) resumes of newly-arrived refugees to employers, seeking both placements for the refugee in question, and good relations with employers in general.

**Sharing of Job Vacancy Information:** Participants discussed three approaches to this ticklish question -- many agencies are loath to share such information.

1. NYANA has a computerized list of vacancies which it shares with its own set of local service providers in the city.
2. In the Kansas City region the Jewish agency and the Catholic agency have a computerized joint job bank, perhaps the only one in the country; since the education levels of refugees served by the two agencies is different, there is little competition between the two agencies over specific job openings.
3. A more general practice, used in many places, is for an agency with a job order it cannot fill to share it with other refugee-serving agencies. The rationale: the first agency wants to meet the employer's needs so that it will call it again in the future.

**Relations with Non-refugee Agencies:** There were a number of suggestions along these lines, from "make friends with the manager of the local employment service," to "join the Chamber of Commerce," and "join the trade association (for hotels, for example) whose members hire your people."

In special circumstances handicapped refugees are eligible for the (sometimes comprehensive) services of the vocational rehabilitation and blind agencies of state governments.

The general notion was that it is helpful on both a long- and short-term basis if refugee-serving agencies are part of broader coalitions. This is relatively easy for the religion-based service providers, often already part of a broader-based network, than it is for the MAAs.

For more information on closely related subjects see: Diversifying Sources of Agency Support (on resource-raising strategies) and Using Volunteers to Expand The Employment Program, in this report.

**Sources:** Barbara Day, Joyce Schuman, and Allan Gall were the facilitators of these sessions, and Lenny Glickman led the discussion on publicity in Arlington. For the shared job bank in Kansas City, contact Joy Foster or Karen Janas.

## WORKING WITH THE JOBS PROGRAM

**The Challenge:** The conferences took place during 1995 when AFDC and other welfare programs were being revised by the Congress. While the precise shape of those revisions was not known at this writing, three things were clear:

1. There will be major changes in the AFDC program;
2. Many refugees will still be receiving assistance through this program; and
3. State human resources (welfare) agencies will seek, even more vigorously than in the past, to find employment for welfare recipients.

Throughout 1995 human resources agencies delivered employment services to AFDC recipients through systems with names varying from state to state; it is GAIN in California, for instance. The federal term for this program was JOBS (Job Opportunities and Basic Skills.) The participants discussed the pros and cons of this program as it applied to refugees.

While some welfare systems worked closely and successfully through JOBS to help refugees on cash assistance to secure employment, in many other places the participants reported that their experiences had not been positive.

Many mainline welfare case workers with heavy caseloads see refugee welfare recipients with little English-speaking ability as unemployable. They may do little other than refer the individual to ESL programs, rather than making an effort to place that person in a job. Participants commented that while ESL is valuable, the approach often merely postponed a job search for a job-ready refugee.

**Good Practices:** Perhaps the most successful harnessing of the JOBS program for work with refugees takes place in Wisconsin. The State Refugee Coordinator encouraged her colleagues in the state human resources agency to administer a proportional share of the JOBS program through the state's network of refugee-serving agencies, largely Hmong MAAs.

In many Wisconsin locations refugees on AFDC are sent to the MAAs where they learn, in their own language (or in English), what they must do. (The State, like many others, has a tough welfare reform program that demands work, created before the Congress acted on this issue.) Participants reported that while many of the welfare recipients were unhappy about the requirement to provide unpaid community service to retain their monthly check, others were stimulated to seek paid employment in the private sector.

One of the reasons why state leaders in Wisconsin took this position is that refugees make up a major (and visible) fraction of the AFDC caseload.

Other comments about the JOBS program included these.

Work Supplementation is an element of JOBS in many but not most states; in some places it is called grant diversion. It allows money that would otherwise go for AFDC benefits to be used for

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subsidies to employers who hire, and retain, AFDC recipients. A particularly creative approach to the otherwise obscure Work Supp program (as it is called) was described at the Chicago meeting. (See “Three New Approaches to Local Employment Programs” elsewhere in this report.)

In some California and Massachusetts communities cash assistance recipients are encouraged, even required, to find job openings for others on the rolls before they go job seeking for themselves; this is designed not only to locate more job openings, but to build a team spirit among the job applicants.

In Idaho, New York, and other places as well, conference participants reported that the JOBS program provided certain fringe benefits for job-seeking refugees not normally available through ORR-funded programs.

These benefits included such elements as subsidized child care and training-related transportation allowances. An Idaho participant said that getting these extra benefits for job-seeking refugees was welcome, but it took a great deal of effort to make the arrangements.

The Iowa program reported that it had, like Wisconsin, managed to have AFDC recipient refugees sent to the refugee program for services rather than to the JOBS program, but had secured no funding from JOBS for the work done with refugees.

The California version of JOBS, GAIN, came in for mixed reviews at the Los Angeles conference. One criticism was that the structure of the program is designed without consideration of: 1) the different cultural approaches to work, to society, and to family that characterize many refugee situations; or 2) for what may be realistic training and employment prospects for limited English-speaking adults; or 3) for the job development needs of such persons. Another was that in some cases JOBS-funded ESL programs would not release a student from class to go on a job interview.

**Sources:** Facilitators were Barbara Chesnik and Allan Gall. For more information on the Wisconsin model, Sue Levy, the refugee state coordinator; for more on Work Supplementation, John Horejsi, USDHHS/Washington; also see the sections in this report entitled “Jobs, Not Welfare,” and “Three New Approaches to Local Employment Programs.”

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## **JOB DEVELOPMENT IN SMALL AND MID-SIZED LABOR MARKETS AND CAR POOLS**

**Smaller Labor Markets:** There are distinct advantages and disadvantages, participants said, about getting jobs for refugees in the smaller labor markets. On one hand, there is usually not the big city tradition of a rainbow of ethnicities, and there is more reluctance to hire people from another culture; but on the other it is easier for refugee agency managers and job developers to know the community's decision-makers -- they are less shielded by layers of staff than ones in the big city.

Some job development techniques used in smaller markets:

- 19 A participant told how she had learned about the affirmative action hiring requirements laid on some government contractors, in this case a paper mill, and then offered the mill help in meeting its need to comply (by hiring refugees).
- 20 Several agencies have joined the local chamber of commerce. Others have joined specific local industry associations, such as those in light manufacturing.
- 21 Refugees often go to work for factories or service establishments (where knowledge of English is less important). What happens if the town's principal industry is government and universities (as in Madison, Wisconsin)? The agency must learn about city, county and state civil service rules; also, remember that most units of government *need* bilinguals if they are to reach out to all of their constituents.
- 22 Specific mention was made of the county tax collector in Arlington, Virginia who sends out bills partially in Vietnamese and Spanish, with a line saying, in those languages "if you do not understand this bill call [a phone number]." A person speaking that language then answers the phone, and helps the caller. This creates better service to those with limited English, *and* a job for a bilingual.
- 23 One agency reported that it encouraged temporary employment agencies to use their offices to interview agency clients, and that some temp agencies paid the refugee agency for placing clients with them.
- 24 While Nashville is clearly *not* one of our small cities, a refugee-serving agency there is experimenting with a program that could be used in them. It is an agency-supervised, home-based employment program for Middle Eastern women who traditionally do not work outside the home. The agency regards it as a step on the way to getting the women to work in factories.

One job developer from a small city in the West said that she found that some employers were fearful (because they were unknowing) about hiring workers who could not speak English well; they did not realize that in many factory situations the presence of one or two bilingual workers would take care of most communications problems. The agency could handle that employer's reluctance only after realizing its existence.

**Car Pools:** In many small cities there is little or no public transportation and, further, many job sites are located many miles from where the refugees live. (The meat

plants in the West, for instance, are often miles out of town.) Refugee-serving agencies have developed many different models for handling this problem.

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- 25 One director of a local refugee program is also a deacon of his church; when he preaches he asks parishioners to donate old but operative cars, preferably big ones, to the church. (There is a tax benefit for the donor.) As director of the refugee program, he takes possession of the cars and then gives them to refugees who: 1) have drivers' licenses and will buy auto insurance, and 2) have a job and agree to start a car pool.
- 26 In one city a refugee-serving agency bought a van, hired a regular driver, and a backup driver, and began a home-to-job van service, charging the refugees a per-trip fee. It is on

the verge of becoming self-supporting. Another agency used a staff member and an agency-owned van to take refugees to work; later the driver bought the van and now runs it as a self-supporting activity.

- 27 Several HIAS-affiliated agencies work with interest-free loan programs that lend money to refugees buying cars to get them to work. They report very low default rates.
- 28 Car pools need not be composed of people from a single background; in one California car pool a Bosnian from Lakewood drives a Vietnamese from Norwalk to work in the mornings, and then, at night, drives home an Albanian from LaMirada.
- 29 Several agencies use strategic job placements to solve transportation problems; one uses a "buddy system" placing a refugee with a car, and one without one, at the same job site. Another will offer job placement services to secondary migrants only if they create a home-to-job car pool that will help other refugees.
- 30 Many agencies obtain bicycles for refugees to ride to work.

A driver's license, of course, facilitates travel and often employment as well. At least one agency has a self-supporting program teaching driving, which allows, among other things, some of its alumni to work as cab drivers. In Wisconsin an agency cautions refugees about watching out for deer on the highway, and tells what to do if they hit one.

Another agency, noting that refugee women are more likely to be home-bound than men, secured a small grant and taught a number of refugee women how to drive. Others provide interpretation services needed to obtain driver's licenses.

Finally, in Sioux Falls a refugee agency staff member who also happened to be on the local public transit board, found an employer who badly needed refugee workers; the staff member persuaded the employer to subsidize the bus system for extending its route to the refugee-employing plant.

**Sources:** The facilitators were Frank Bien, Barbara Day and Joyce Schuman. For an article on car pools, see *Refugee Reports*, February 28, 1995, p. 14.

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## THREE NEW APPROACHES TO LOCAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Three revolutionary new ways to mount employment programs for refugees (and other low-income people) were outlined at the Chicago conference. All were established within the then existing frameworks of laws and funding patterns; none required either statutory changes or even federal waivers. One was designed in a refugee-specific setting, the other two were not. All could be duplicated for refugees and others elsewhere.

The creators of the programs are Carol Sims of Jewish Family Service, Rochester, New York, whose background is refugee job development; Michael Walling of West Chester, Pennsylvania, who works with HIAS and has a background in vocational rehabilitation; and John Gardner, a former union organizer now with the Private Industry Council (PIC) of Milwaukee County, Wisconsin.

**Carol Sims:** Her target population consisted of Soviet refugees, receiving AFDC, and undergoing job training in the Rochester school system. Hers is a story of an innovative use of existing funding streams within the welfare system. It changes the way existing public sector agencies do business.

Instead of going to class, the refugees worked at no pay for selected employers who had promised to hire them permanently if they were good workers. While being unpaid interns for the selected employers, the refugees were regarded by AFDC as being in “training.” This permitted the refugees to retain AFDC benefits and to receive the fringe package that, in New York, goes to AFDC people undergoing training. The school covered the workers with liability insurance while they worked in the factories. The 26 workers, in fact, did well, the employers hired them at \$6 to \$8 an hour, and the refugees left the AFDC rolls. It is called WorkFirst Rochester.

**Michael Walling:** The target population, originally, consisted of disabled potential workers in southern Wisconsin. A non-profit agency in Fort Atkins, Wisconsin, decided to seek a way of serving them without the use of federal funds. It called for a fundamental change in the mission of the non-profit agency, but involved no decision-making by any public sector agencies.

The Fort Atkins agency decided that it would convert itself from a government-funded, disabled-specific organization into a market-oriented temp agency, and would devote its excess revenues to funding the placement of the disabled. One of the agency's attractions is that it waives its permanent placement fee to employers who have used a worker (on the agency's payroll) for 400 hours, so employers get both the services of a temp agency and the opportunity to test out potential workers at the same time.

The agency changeover worked; after eight years of growth in the private sector, the agency earned excess fees of \$331,000 last year, which it recycled into placement services for the disabled.

**John Gardner:** His target population are unemployed potential workers on AFDC in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, many of whom are refugees. He has, with substantial local political support, redesigned an obscure part of the AFDC system called Work Supplementation to cause it to make a long-range difference in the careers of these AFDC beneficiaries. It called for a fundamental realignment of agencies and programs working with AFDC beneficiaries. p. 16

Work Supplementation routinely (like the better-known OJT) pays employers a subsidy for hiring an AFDC person. Under the Gardner plan temp agencies secure, initially, that subsidy, but most of it is fed back into a future employment fund, where it is used to reward (on a sliding scale) the same temp agencies for building solid careers for one-time AFDC recipients.

Each temp agency that joins the program is assigned one or more groups of 50 AFDC people. The amount of money paid to the temp agencies relates to the average wages of the group of 50 over a period of three years. The workers need not be employed by the temp agencies to create fees for those agencies, but since the agencies' fees are based on the success of the workers,

over time, the agencies can be expected to help their group of 50 workers to get and hold good jobs.

Work Supplementation is potentially available in all states under the current AFDC system, but is used in only some of them.

Gardner's ambitious program was getting underway at the time of the Chicago conference; Sims' program was a couple of years old, and the one described by Walling had been going for eight years. Any or all of these presumably could be replicated elsewhere in the country, no matter what happens to welfare reform.

**Participants' Reaction:** "It's good to hear about mind-blowing ideas like these," one participant said, "It makes us think."

Some others had difficulty grasping the Walling and Gardner notion that the temp agencies could be used for a social purpose, and a few did not realize that it is perfectly acceptable for a non-profit to go into the market to make money, and then turn around and spend that money on the disadvantaged. Still others marvelled at Ms. Sims' ability to convince the school and welfare systems that work for free in a factory could be defined as job training.

"With public funds shrinking, we all need to look to the market to find new ways of supporting our work," said Walling.

**Sources:** For the fax and postal addresses of the three presenters, see the list of resource people at the back of this report. An article on WorkFirst Rochester can be found in the April 29, 1995 issue of *Refugee Reports*.

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## **STATE-LEVEL MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

These sessions focused on the issue of performance-based contracting. More and more states/counties are specifying performance outcomes in contracting for refugee services and have some direct relationship between outcomes and the contract payment or renewal process. This trend is expected to continue, because of increasing emphasis on the culture of the for-profit world, on "reinventing" the non-profit sector, and on "accountability" for measurable outcomes.

Performance-based contracting is a tool to improve outcomes, to change the behavior of contractors, and to clearly identify the good performers. It has the potential to simplify budgeting by eliminating line items and to reward good performers by permitting discretion in how funds are spent and in simplified reapplications if outcomes are met or exceeded.

Some negatives observed were the potential to discourage risk-taking, to codify mediocre performance, to encourage negative competitiveness and to discourage local collaboration. Summarized here are the most extensive descriptions presented by state and county representatives.

**Michigan** is initiating a true performance-based contracting system. In the past they had performance objectives only. Performance goals are based on the 5-year history of the program and increased by 8% to increase outcomes. Contractors are paid a “basic rate” for an initial placement and a lower rate for each additional placement of the same client per year for 5 years. These payments are made as follows: 50% of the rate for placement, 20% for 30-day retention, and the final 30% for 90-day retentions. Incentive amounts above the basic rates are available for certain job and client characteristics. (Judi Hall, State Coordinator, fax (313) 256-1082)

**Los Angeles County** uses four payment points. The first is for enrollment. The next three are the same as Michigan's. The contracts permit up to a 15% “bonus” for agencies exceeding their goals. This is a unique feature which builds in incentives for over-performance. If you over-perform, you can receive additional payment. If you under-perform, the money saved from your contract can be used to pay the over-performer. While goals exist for each of the payment points, the placement goal is weighted higher for purposes of being refunded. Because payment is tied to performance, poor performers tend to weed themselves out. (Joan Pinchuk, County Coordinator, fax (213) 480-0939)

**New Jersey's** refugee program is the first in the State to use performance as the criteria for taking program funding cuts. The other agencies simply cut everyone the same percent across the board. But the contracts are not pure performance based. Award amounts are set in a “range” with an upper limit that can be paid. Although goals are set for number served, number placed and number retaining jobs for 90 days, there is no specific fiscal penalty for not meeting the goal. The contract does, however, permit that in the second year the amount payable under the contract would be reduced if 80% of the first-year goal is not met.

A unique standard used by New Jersey is that 60% of those served must be placed in a job. This discourages inflating the numbers served. Because New Jersey mostly serves new arrivals, there is a fixed number of potential enrollees. Contracts are awarded regionally in a way that also precludes duplicate enrollment. (Jane Burger, Program Manager, fax (609) 292-8224) p. 18

**New York's** contracts are based on unit costs. Unit costs are established based on historical costs and goals also reflect historical experience. Payments are tied to specific outcomes, *i.e.* specific amounts per placement, per 90-day retention, etc. There is no reward for over-performance. There is no hold-harmless feature. Failure to perform results in lower payment.

Failure to achieve objectives does not necessarily result in non-renewal of contract. Serious shortcoming would require explanation and might result in technical assistance. (Wayne Barnard, Program Manager, fax (518)432-2865)

**Massachusetts** uses a negotiated “capacity level.” Contracts have clearly defined and measurable performance outcomes, but payment under the contract is not directly tied to performance. Although funding is not tied to outcomes, each contract is based on a standard of performance which is expected. The emphasis is on serving refugees individually based on their needs. (Judith Whitmarsh, Program Manager, fax (617) 727-1822)

**Texas**, at the time of the conferences, was using a unique outcome measure, but they have subsequently dropped this measure. The measure was the earnings of the refugees who achieve 90-day retention relative to the cost of the contract. This resulted in a ratio which, at the time reported, was \$1.51 - \$3.40 of earnings per dollar of contract award.

Texas went to performance-based contracting for objectivity in the award and continuation of contracts. The measure is not used to determine how much the contractor is paid, but only whether or not the contractor will get renewed. If contracted, the contractor gets the full amount of the contract even if performance is less than expected. Performance is measured relative to that of other contractors in the same area. This is not the only measure used to determine renewal but it is the principal one. (Lisa Barton, Program Manager, fax (512)438-3884)

**Minnesota** has a true performance-based contracting system, basing its contracts on a family self-sufficiency outcome. Contracts provide for a specified payment amount per self-sufficiency. At least 90% of the clients must be public assistance recipients. To count as a successful outcome, the refugee must achieve 90 days off cash assistance, and 70% of those must be families. Welfare savings are tracked electronically. Agencies which do not meet 80% of their quarterly goals must submit a corrective action plan within 15 days. Minnesota has achieved a very high retention rate of 88% at an average wage of \$7.50. (Jan Rohweder-Kohrt, Program Manager, fax (612) 215-1818)

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## **THE EMPLOYERS' SIDE OF THE STORY**

In the respective sessions, local resettlement agencies nominated employers to be honored at the conferences for their work and employment of refugees. The selected employers represented a number of industries including banking, food processing, light industry, assembly, retail, hotels and insurance. All had a history of hiring refugees at above the minimum wage, usually with benefits and good job retention rates.

Representatives from these companies held varying positions. Some were owners of their company, others were corporate executives, supervisors and personnel managers. Many came in business suits, but some arrived in blue jeans with cowboy hats on top of shoulder-length hair and with equally long beards. They were as diverse as the refugees they employed.

Employers spoke on the advantages and disadvantages of employing a multi-ethnic workforce. They also spoke of their respective working relations with refugee service providers and job developers in particular.

The one thing that was common to all employers was the realization that refugees collectively are good workers. Refugees, in their desire to put their lives back together and to provide for their families, demonstrate good work habits and contribute to the profitability of the respective companies.

It does take some additional work to manage such a workforce and employers rely on agency job developers to varying degrees to get over the initial phase of job orientation. Refugees as employees do make mistakes and certainly challenge the skills of management in very unique ways. The importance of job developers following up on job placements and being available to employers to address these unique problems was cited as critical to successful placement of refugees.

Surprisingly, there was no consistency in English language requirements. While the majority of employers want refugees to speak more English, some even viewed limited English as an asset. One employer stated that by not speaking English, there was less talking and more work done. Another viewed minimum English as an asset for the task at hand since this virtually assured that no one would be reading confidential health-oriented files.

Employers, generally, told the conference participants that they do not want to be hounded by a host of job developers from competing service providers, nor by a single overzealous job developer. But unlike comments given in earlier conferences, employers no longer are annoyed by untimely phone calls. This change is attributed to advances in technology, notably voice mail. If the employer is not available, the caller was simply referred to voice mail.

Job developers, according to the employers, are critical to the success of refugee employment and are reminded that they serve two constituencies, the refugee employee and the employer. The needs of both must be understood and met. (For more on this point, see "How to Think Like an Employer," on pp. 29-30 of this document.)

What was learned in these sessions is simply that just as refugee needs are diverse, employer needs are equally diverse, and job developers must take the time and effort to learn what those needs are and to creatively meet them. p. 20

**Sources:** Ron Munia was the facilitator/presenter at these sessions in all three cities.

## **TOP JOB DEVELOPERS TELL THEIR SECRETS**

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To begin with, State Coordinators and resettlement agencies were invited to nominate top job developers in their service areas. From these nominations, three were selected to present at each conference. An attempt was made to get a variety of styles and expertise and specialization so that conferees could have a broad range of experiences to draw from. For example, some job developers were ethnically focused in their clientele, some specialized in particular industries, while some had a specific geographic area to serve. Some did not fit into any neat category.

But one thing was common to all sessions -- put a group of job developers together in a room and the place buzzes! The job developers that were selected did an outstanding job and greatly contributed to the success of the conferences.

While each job developer had specific strategies that he/she pursued, there were several broad commonalities. The first was a theme that rang true throughout the conferences. As a job developer, you always have two clients to serve -- the refugee and the employer. Both must succeed and their respective needs must be met.

To achieve that goal, a job developer must know both clients, often better than they know themselves. For example, one job developer reviewed the work requirements specified by the company. In touring the plant and watching the work requirements, it was shown that the job description requirements were far more stringent than need be, and that in fact a refugee with far fewer linguistic abilities for example, could do the required tasks effectively. The result was placements in a plant where no job openings were thought to exist.

This understanding of the task at hand must also be applied to the refugee client. That is, that the skills of a refugee must be understood and presented effectively. This often requires a breaking out of the actual skills involved in a particular profession that might not otherwise appear transferrable.

A good job developer never works an eight-hour day. Across the board, job developers are constantly in search of a new lead, a new job opening. They carry their business cards with them at all times and are involved in other activities that expand their level of professional contacts. Jobs are everywhere and a good job developer never stops looking.

Another common key to success is following up on placements, again for both the refugee and the employer. Job developers who follow up and are available for employers to help resolve problems will get the benefit of the doubt when things do not work out according to plan. They will also have a good sense of when new jobs become available and what the real requirements are to get the job done. All agreed: when you make promises, you must keep them.

Good job developers are diplomats, comfortable with the employer as well as the refugee client. In fact, he/she should serve as a role model for both employer and refugee.

p. 22      Good job developers build on success. Good placements result in more placements with the initial employer, with his competitors and with their neighbors. According to the participants, job development is a marketing job that starts hard and gets easier, or at least evolves into a new set of challenges.

Good job developers are thoroughly involved in their communities, in organizations such as trade and civic associations and in the local chambers of commerce.

A specific suggestion: join Toastmasters International. Toastmasters is a club that is devoted to improving public speaking and listening skills. It will help you improve your public speaking skills, make many new contacts with aspiring and influential people in your community, and give you a forum to educate the public about refugees. Check your local listings for a club near you.

**Sources:** Ron Munia was the facilitator/presenter at these sessions in all three cities.

## THE TOOLS OF THE JOB DEVELOPMENT TRADE

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Research shows that employers decide to hire or not hire someone within the first 30 seconds of the interview!

That is an incredibly short time to get across a critical message to someone who, more often than not in the case of refugees, may be seeing obstacles rather than opportunities. The message that must be delivered in that fraction of a minute must demonstrate an eagerness and ability to overcome obstacles and be an asset to the employer and the company.

What should be said, to whom, where to begin, where to go, how to identify and address the needs of employers, how to prepare brochures on your agency and what to include and exclude, different strategies to expand your employer base, and ways to say thank you were topics covered in this session on the basic tools for doing job development.

Written scripts were provided as starting points on what to say and what not to say. Participants were invited to give their own pitches in answer to the question, "What do I say to a potential employer by way of introduction?" Participants also provided questions most frequently asked by potential employers. These questions were put to the floor for ideas on the best response.

Typical service provider agency brochures were critiqued and tips provided on how to make the written message more effective. Effective brochures promote refugees as human resources, have testimonials from satisfied employers of refugees, provide human interest in the refugee clients served. Samples were provided.

Strategies to expand the list of potential employers were discussed. Effective job developers often focus their efforts by geographical areas or industries and expand their lists by building on successes and contacts made through current employers. Good job developers are constantly networking to build their list of contacts. Joining different community based organizations such as Private Industry Councils, civic organizations and clubs such as Toastmasters will afford you the opportunity to expand your network of business contacts significantly. It was frequently suggested that job developers should become well known in the local business world. A specific thought: become familiar with specialized lists of employers, such as local industry trade association lists. In some cities, there are commercial/industrial Yellow Pages Books, in addition to those published for general consumer use.

Placing the best available refugee for the job is critical for building a strong working relationship with an employer. Follow-up services with both the employer and employee are critical for job retention and satisfaction. When problems arise, job developers must be available to address the problem promptly. Satisfied employers are ones whose work force needs are met by the employees hired.

Saying thank you to employers for taking the risk of employing refugees was discussed. There are many ways to do this; the important thing is not necessarily how,

but simply to DO IT. Some agencies have employer appreciation luncheons or dinners, others award plaques to hang on the employers' office walls, and still others mention employers in their agencies' newsletters.

Invitations to cultural events are important because they afford the opportunity to educate others so that they may better understand and appreciate the treasures inherent in every culture. And of course, such sharing breeds new friendships and a more successful integration into the community.

Few job developers have received any kind of formal training. In fact, many participants said that there simply is very little formal training out there. (It is, however, being offered in the HIAS network of agencies.)

Many of the job developers were former refugees themselves. While this means that these job developers are more culturally astute, they often had limited experience within the American workplace. The ideal situation is to build bridges within your own agency by having multicultural staff whose resources can be called upon in the arena of job development, and other staff and board members with deep roots in the host community.

**Sources:** Ron Munia was the facilitator/presenter at these sessions in all three cities.

Participants in these sessions were provided a 26-page workbook on tools of the trade for job developers, covering all the matters described above in some detail. Additional copies are available free of charge by contacting Ron Munia at the Office of Refugee Resettlement, USDHHS, 370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW - 6th Floor, Washington, DC 20447.

## **SUBSIDIZING THE EMPLOYERS OF REFUGEES**

**The Challenge:** A few years ago many job developers had little difficulty finding ways to subsidize an employer who was willing to hire someone on AFDC, or sometimes a worker who was otherwise regarded as disadvantaged.

The local Labor Department-funded programs often had on-the-job-training (OJT) moneys available; these often met 50% of the worker's salary for six to twelve weeks; this program is still on the books, but in few places is there money for it.

Similarly, until Dec. 30, 1994, there was a tax-break program for employers called Targeted Jobs Tax Credit (TJTC), which some of the hotel and fast-food chains loved. If the employer hired a pre-certified AFDC recipient, and kept the person on the payroll for a while, the employer got a credit of \$3,000 against corporate income taxes.

Neither of these programs were refugee-specific, but they were often used to help refugees.

**Three Obscure Federal Programs:** But, as many conference participants learned, there are three obscure federal programs that still can be used in much the same way as the old TJTC.

1) **EIC** -- The program of broader application, advanced Earned Income Credit (EIC), does not put money in the employer's pocket, but it can give an employer using it a competitive edge -- because he seems to be paying the workers as much as \$100 more a month than he actually is paying them!

But before describing how employers could use advanced EIC, the speakers at the conferences described the basic program. It is a refundable federal income tax credit for low-income workers; workers may be eligible for the EIC even if they do not owe federal income tax.

EIC is designed to supplement wages and to make work more attractive than welfare. In its usual form a low-income family with a dependent child files a special income tax form at the end of the year. For example, workers who were raising two or more children in their home and earned less than \$24,396 in 1995 were eligible for an EIC ranging up to more than \$3,110.

How does EIC help employers? If an employer pays *advanced* EIC to his eligible workers he can boost their pay check by \$ 100 a month or more, at no cost to himself. This is the case because the employer pays the EIC to the worker instead of sending an equal amount of money to the Internal Revenue Service for withholdings.

Peter E. Daniels, an employment specialist at Saint Anselm's Cross-Cultural Community Center in Garden Grove, CA, said that his organization had used the program -- and said that it had been highly popular with employers and refugee workers alike.

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"Refugee agencies can always use an angle to get and keep an employer's attention; we started to use advanced EIC once an earlier tax break for employers, TJTC, died on Capitol Hill," he told the Los Angeles conference. He said that this gave EIC-using employers a break, because it made their wages appear more competitive when hiring.

2) **Work Supp** -- Work Supplementation is an obscure part of the JOBS program, that part of the AFDC program that encourages recipients to become employed.

It works just like OJT in that it is a subsidy to an employer for hiring someone who had been on AFDC. The money comes out of AFDC funds, however, and Work Supp is not used in all states. Job developers were encouraged to check with their local JOBS program to see if it operates in their areas. (For an interesting use of Work Supp see the section of this report entitled "Three New Approaches to Local Employment Programs.")

3) **Empowerment Zones** -- There is an attractive employer's tax break available in federally-designated Empowerment Zones (EZs), but there are only six of them, and they are in the inner cities of New York, Philadelphia-Camden, Baltimore, Atlanta, Detroit and Chicago. Few refugees appear to live in these zones. But if they do, and get a job within these zones, the employer gets a \$3,000 tax break, no matter what the size of income of the resident worker.

Federal officials handling this program suggest that the zones would be a good area to place incoming refugees - for they would start out in America with a nice potential tax break for an employer.

**Sources:** For basic information on EIC (or other federal tax matters) call 1-800-829-1040.

For information on advanced EIC, contact John Wancheck, Center for Budget Priorities, #705, 777 N. Capitol Street, Washington, DC 20002; fax (202) 408-1056.

For information on how St. Anselm's uses advanced EIC to encourage employers to hire refugees, contact Peter E. Daniels, St. Anselm's Center, 13091 Galway Street, Garden Grove, CA 92644; fax (714) 537-7606.

For information about the Empowerment Zones's tax breaks for EZ residents, contact Marek Gootman, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Dept. of Health and Human Services, #118, 200 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20447; fax (202) 690-8252.

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## **COMPETENCE-BASED JOB DEVELOPMENT**

Competence-based job development is a systematic approach that focuses on the competence needs of employers and the competence benefits our clients offer to them.

The primary reason for using a competence-based approach in trying to place refugees in jobs is that we are in a strong position when we work in competence terms. Benefits include:

- 31 More job leads
- 32 Placing more clients
- 33 Faster placement time/improved job retention
- 34 Better client control
- 35 Improved client development
- 36 More positive working environment for clients and staff
- 37 Reduced stress and "burnout" for staff, and
- 38 Shift from pre-employment to post-employment services.

The fundamental challenge to working with clients in competence terms is that *culture distorts perceptions of competence*.

The essential task of job development is to help correct for competence distortion so that our clients come across in ways that more accurately reflect their true strengths and abilities. The overall process of correcting for the cultural distortion in the competence that clients already possess is a lot easier and faster than trying to develop skills on a remedial basis.

The critical skill we need as job developers is the ability to work with clients and employers in ways that correct for cultural distortion of competence.

Competence-based job development is a comprehensive approach that applies to *all of the job development functions* on both the supply side (the employee) and the demand side (employer) of the employment equation.

On the supply side, competence-based job development helps us:

- 39 Assess/interview clients
- 40 Develop employment plans
- 41 Manage clients more effectively, and
- 42 Design and deliver pre-employment training.

On the demand side, competence-based job development helps us:

- 43 Identify prospective employers and develop job leads
- 44 Market clients, and
- 45 Provide post-employment support.

**The Credentialed Employment System:** In the credentialed employment economy the key employment question is: “Who are you?” as defined by your credentials. This system usually puts refugees at a disadvantage. (The traditional resume, still demanded by some employers, is a reflection of the credential-based system.)

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**The Competence Employment System:** In the competence-based employment economy the key question is: “What can you do?” as defined by your competence. This system is more favorable to refugee clients.

‘The Main Point of the Competence-based Approach Is That Whenever Possible We Should Be Working in Competence-based Terms -- Developing and Marketing Our Clients' Competence To Competence-oriented Employers.’ ‘The Main Purpose of Competence-based Training Is to Enable Us to Better Assess, Develop, and Market The Workplace Competence of Our Clients And to Better Identify and Work with Competence-oriented Employers.’

To support this process our agencies should be organized more functionally around the concept of competence.

We need to understand that in this current funding environment our primary business is the development and marketing of our clients' competence.

We have to organize ourselves from soup to nuts so that every staff member -- not just the job developers, but resettlement workers, case managers, ESL teachers, administrative staff, and directors - all understand how their role can best contribute to finding jobs for refugees.

**Sources:** Dorian Fliegel made several presentations on competence-based job development at both the Arlington and the Chicago conferences. His address can be found along with those of other Resource People at the end of this volume.

HOW TO THINK LIKE AN EMPLOYER

Karol S. Moxley, who made presentations on this subject at all three of the conferences, stresses that it is vital that job developers learn to think like employers, so that they can work more closely with them, and be more effective in securing jobs for refugees.

The refugee, in short, is not the *only* client on the scene. The employer is at least equally important. Without an employer, there is no job. Since many job developers come to this assignment without experience, or much experience in the American private sector, it is important that they get inside the heads of employers, and learn about the real and perceived needs of employers who are potentially employers of refugees.

Ms. Moxley, whose background was in vocational rehabilitation prior to entering refugee work, argues that there is a need for a paradigm shift in the minds of many refugee job developers. It is not enough to say that refugees are good people, and need work, one must learn to meet the needs of employers. She provided the following check list of traditional attitudes, and the more useful entrepreneurial ones at her sessions.

Traditional Job Development    Entrepreneurial Job Development<sup>1</sup>

|                                                                      |                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sees a limited job market                                            | Sees a world of possibilities                                                                                      |
| Views the corporate world as impenetrable, inhuman                   | Views the corporate world as a frame for approachable, human systems                                               |
| Sees organizations as static institutions                            | Sees organizations as ever-changing processes                                                                      |
| Expects organizations to make sense                                  | Expects the unexpected from the people who make up the organization                                                |
| Focuses on the decision to hire, wants to talk to the decision-maker | Focuses on the need to hire, the screening and recruitment process, and the decision to hire; will talk to anybody |
| Recognizes employers as experts in hiring                            | Recognizes employers as experts in the business they are running but possibly amateurs at hiring                   |
| Defines a job by the duties and minimum qualifications               | Defines a job by the results produced or the needs met                                                             |
| Works to give applicants the best edge against competing job seekers | Works to remove applicants from competition with other job seekers                                                 |

<sup>1</sup> Bissonette, Denise. *Beyond Traditional Job Development* (Chatsworth, CA, Milt Wright & Associates, Inc., 1994)

**Seeks openings in the open job market**      Seeks opportunities in the hidden job market

**Responds to job orders for existing positions**      Proposes to create new employment

**Utilizes resumes**      Utilizes employment proposals and resumes

**Sees scarcity of identified employment opportunities**      Sees abundance of as yet unidentified employment opportunities

**Hears, "We're not hiring."**      Hears, "We're not hiring YET."

**Reacts to the whims of employers**      Proacts to the needs of the business community

**Additional Reading:** The following books deal either with employment arrangements in the private-sector labor market, or with techniques for selling ideas, generally.

Covey, Stephen. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York, Fireside, 1989).

Fabian, Ellen S.; Luecking, Richard G.; and Tilson, George Jr. *A Working Relationship* (Baltimore, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 1994).

Jackson, Tom. *Guerilla Tactics in the Job Market* (New York, Bantam Books, 1991).

LeBoeuf, Michael. *How to Win Customers* (New York, Berkeley Books, 1987).

Reich, Robert. *The Work of Nations* (New York, Vintage Books, 1993).

Zukerman, Irv. *Hire Power* (New York, Perigree Books, 1993).

## **JOBS NOT WELFARE**

p. 31

**The Challenge:** In the states with relatively high AFDC benefits, there are some refugees who need persuasion to move from the welfare rolls to the job rolls.

In addition to the general sense of security that a combination of cash assistance, Food stamps and Medicaid can bring to some families, others are even further discouraged from work, the sessions were told, because of the additional subsidies some refugees receive by living in public housing.

Most participants said that media coverage of the welfare discussion, and announcements that grants would be limited or terminated in the future, had made relatively little impact on many assistance-receiving refugees. A frequent comment: "They won't believe it until they don't get their own check."

There were some reports of refugees who, in fact, work, but do so under the table, resisting legal employment on the grounds that it would endanger or end their cash assistance.

**Good Practices:** A variety of approaches, some stick-like, some carrot-like were reported.

- 46 Massachusetts uses a carrot, with its refugee-serving agencies offering priority in ESL and naturalization courses to those refugees who hold jobs.
- 47 Similarly, a Seattle agency reported that it would only help *employed* refugees with the fast-track naturalization program it had worked out locally with INS.
- 48 In Wisconsin the pattern in the ORR-funded MAAs is that to be on the board of directors, or to be on the paid staff of the MAA, one must be a member of a family with two workers. This requirement is designed to encourage men to permit their wives to work, because two wage earners are usually needed in large families if the families are to leave welfare.
- 49 Some volags using churches to resettle refugees find that the use of a conservative congregation as the sponsor can encourage refugees to take jobs and stay off welfare. In some refugee churches, positions of responsibility within the local church are denied to those on cash assistance.
- 50 Many agencies hold up role models within their own community as examples of why it is a good idea for refugees to work; for example, a favored technique with agencies serving Pentecostals is to hire the minister's wife as an employment specialist.
- 51 Los Angeles County, worried about some refugees retaining cash benefits by faking illness, has hired what amounts to a medical detection agency to eliminate this kind of fraud.

p. 32 Another set of discussions dealt with ways that individual employment counselors work with the problem of under-motivation among some refugees. For example, these stories were told.

- 52 "I talk of the social stigma of AFDC," said one participant. In reply, someone else in Chicago said:
- 53 "I like a softer approach. I like to tell refugees that they came to the U.S. to be free; and you are not really free if you are on welfare."
- 54 "I tell people that private-sector medical care is better than Medicaid, and you can only get private-sector care if you work."
- 55 "My tactic is the life-style discussion; I try to get people to think about the broader range of choices that they have when they have a job. For example, you cannot get a credit card if you are on welfare."
- 56 "Self-esteem is terribly important; I always find some way to compliment the client, particularly on their use of English."

There was also some discussion of the use of sanctions (*i.e.* financial penalties) to encourage some of the most resistant of the assistance beneficiaries. It quickly became apparent that this not only was a controversial matter but that the situation varied from state to state, and sometimes county to county.

In most instances participants said that refugee employment counselors were more strict about sanctions than people working for the AFDC system, and that sometimes it was difficult to impossible to get that system to agree to sanction a refugee reluctant to accept employment.

Among the specific points made about sanctions:

- 57 Minor penalties, against an adult member of a family, rather than against the whole family, were rarely effective in causing people to take jobs.
- 58 In some states, the loss of part of an AFDC grant simply meant an increase (a smaller one) in the amount of Food Stamps.
- 59 In New York, where the Medicaid cards are (physically) like credit cards, a decision in the central office to eliminate Medicaid coverage, as a sanction, kills the use of the card instantly and state-wide.

**Sources:** Two or more sessions at each of the three conferences dealt with this subject; among the facilitators were David North, Anna Mary Portz, Carol Sims and Gayle Smith.

## GOOD JOBS FOR WOMEN

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**The Challenge:** Getting good jobs for refugee women has often been a challenge. They are less likely to have labor market experience than the men; they are less likely to have English; and they often face resistance from spouses who are not used to women working for pay. (Soviet and Bosnian women, for example, are more likely to have had paid labor market experience in their homelands than Middle Eastern women.)

Welfare reform simply raises the stakes, as it threatens to throw a lot of refugee women off AFDC and Food Stamps and into the job market. Many of the refugee women who have been receiving benefits are more disadvantaged than refugee women in general. For years they had thought they were safe on AFDC, or in some cases SSI, plus Food Stamps, but now that is no longer true. Many of them probably did not attend ESL courses, or learn much about the American labor market during those years.

Now they probably have a year - at most - to get their labor market act together -and they should start doing that immediately, not when the checks stop coming.

To complicate matters, when these refugee women are pushed into the labor market, they will not be alone. They will be competing with American-born women who are also being forced out of the welfare system.

**Good Practices:** Among the good practices cited at the three conferences were these.

- 60 Many agencies use a "family plan" to help refugees move off the welfare rolls. This often involves an agency staff member meeting with the adults in a family, and then seeking to arrange all the important variables: jobs for both husband and wife; a work pattern so that day care is resolved, either with alternating shifts, or by the use of a family or institutional day care program; and, transportation to and from the job for both parents. Further efforts are made to make sure that at least one family member has a job with benefits.
- 61 In this connection there were discussions of the advantages and disadvantages of both parents working for the same employer.
- 62 - On the plus side, an employer who likes a worker will be more likely to hire the worker's spouse than someone else; also, transportation to the job-site is easier.

- p. 34
- 63 - On the minus side, if the plant closes down both husband and wife are likely to lose their jobs, and at the same time.
- 64 It is helpful to give refugee women motivational support as they enter the job market. As one participant put it: "Let refugee women know that many American women have to juggle families and jobs; let them know that many
- 65 American women cannot drive either. Telling them these things makes them feel less alone."
- 66 Ethnic role models are useful for refugee women who have not yet worked in the U.S. Find refugee women, speaking the same language, who have arrived earlier and who are working; get them to talk to the newcomers, it was suggested.
- 67 Refugee women from many societies need to be told that it is OK to be more assertive in the U.S. than it was at home; a positive attitude helps in the labor market.
- 68 A good way to prepare Kurdish women for work in the U.S. is to run women-only ESL programs; if men are present, they tend to dominate the conversation, and the women have less chance to practice their language skills. Also, such settings give the agency a chance to orient the women about work in the U.S. This may work well with other populations as well.

The participants also had some cautionary tales.

- 69 In some locations there is too much training of refugee women in the same set of skills; there are, for example, too many women trained for the beauty business (manicurists, hairstylists, etc.) according to a Texas participant.
- 70 An agency in Nashville has established a work-at-home scheme for Middle Eastern women unaccustomed to working outside the house; while the agency thinks that the women are paid adequately, agency staff have had to shuttle the raw materials and finished products between the factory and the workers' houses.
- 71 Hotel employment for women (primarily cleaning of rooms) was regarded positively by a participant from Iowa and less so by a Michigan staff member who has found staunch opposition to such work (for their wives) from Iraqi males. The Iowa agency has translated a basic set of instructions for room cleaners for local hotels employing Bosnian women. (Iraqi Moslems have stronger religious attitudes, apparently, than Bosnian Moslems; this complicates job development for many of the married Iraqi women.)

**Sources:** Facilitators included Frank Bien, Marta Brenden, Nancy Iris and Karol Moxley. For the work-at-home operation in Nashville, William Towle; for differing experiences with employment in hotels, Zeljka Krvavica of Iowa, and Joyce Sayyed of Michigan.

## GETTING REFUGEES READY FOR THE LABOR MARKET<sup>2</sup>

**The Challenge:** Both refugees and U.S.-born employment specialists working with them need to recognize and act upon the fact that the U.S. labor market, though rational, is a strange place

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<sup>2</sup> These sessions dealt with the general question of getting refugees ready for work in the U.S.; other sessions were held on the special situations of women, of older people, and of the deeply religious (see Specific Populations).

for newcomers. It is, among other things: fluid, formal, demanding, rewarding, and culture-bound.

**Fluid** -- Most refugees come to the U.S. from state-run economies in which one is assigned a job. The American economy does not work this way. Most Americans hold several jobs in their careers. They often move up the ladder. This is a vital concept particularly for people who have middle class backgrounds but who must accept entry-level jobs when they first arrive.

**Formal** -- Hours tend to be rigid; one is expected to be there when the shift starts; if not, the worker should give the employer as much warning as possible; there are job-place rules; there is paper work to be done; and tax deductions from the paycheck - this is all new and different to many refugees.

**Demanding** -- Most employers of refugees are in the private-for-profit sector; they either make a profit or go out of business; there is no room for sloppy work or laziness on the job; "this is not the Russian post office" as one participant put it. If the refugee does not shape up, he or she loses the job.

**Rewarding** -- While the boss's kids will always get a break, and there is discrimination in some places (particularly against Blacks) the American labor market is pretty fair. If one works hard, picks up the necessary credentials (diplomas or experience) and acts pleasant, one has a chance to get ahead.

**Culture-Bound** -- We all tend to take our culture for granted. We have to step back and recognize that American employers, too, have their own tribal patterns, such as:

- 72 Non-evasiveness: employers expect straight answers, not flowery, indirect ones.
- 73 Interview manners: employers expect a firm handshake, a smile, a neat resume, eye contact, and an interest in the job. Refugee job applicants are urged to ask at least one question about the job (even if they are not interested in the answer); it shows that they care about the job.
- 74 Time: employers are very time-conscious.

**Good Practices:** In the course of the conferences many good practices were discussed; here are a few of them.

- 75 Repetition is needed to get across the messages listed above, so some agencies consciously build labor market orientation into the ESL curriculum.
- 76 Seeing is believing. Some agencies take newly-arrived refugees for a tour of local factories. "I want the newcomers to see that Americans do this work, and I want my people to see the fast pace of the American job site." p. 36
- 77 Some agencies, deliberately, use temp agencies, or employers with seasonal needs, as the first placement for a newly-arrived refugee. This provides a brief exposure to U.S. work, and if the assignment does not work out, not much is lost.

- 78 "I always use humor when I explain to refugees about Americans' funny notions about showering with soap every day, and wearing clean clothes; it makes the message much easier to accept."
- 79 "My agency tries to make sure that when making multiple placements, that someone who already works there speaks both English and the refugee's language." (Some agencies pick out a bilingual to be the first placement with a new employer, so that others with lower English skills can be hired later.)
- 80 Several participants said that it was important to give refugees self-confidence as they take their first American job, "That's right, you never worked in an American factory before," they would counsel the refugee, "but you had important skills and good work habits back in the home country." Similarly, skills learned in refugee camps sometimes can be used in the American labor market.
- 81 Some agencies use bilingual videos showing factory floor working conditions, and explaining what is happening both in English and in the refugee's own language.
- 82 One agency does videotapes of refugees going through mock job interviews both before and after interview training; these are then shown to newly-arrived refugees from the same country; this kind of show-and-tell is more effective than simply lecturing on how to handle such an interview.
- 83 It is important to alert refugees to American employers' expectations about worker initiative - self-starting workers are often appreciated in the U.S. culture, while that kind of behavior might not be appreciated in another society.

At the Chicago conference Tipawan Reed suggested a comprehensive approach to counseling refugees approaching the American labor market. She said that refugee clients should be asked to complete the following part-sentences: "I think I was born to..." "I have always had a keen sense of..." "My favorite way to spend time is..." "I am very good at..." "Some of the things I most treasure in life are..." Then the counsellor can use what the client says to guide that person into an appropriate job. Ms. Reed also commended Ms. Bissonette's book on this subject (cited on page 29).

**Sources:** Barbara Day, Judith May, and Karol Moxley were the facilitators.

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## ENCOURAGING OLDER REFUGEES TO TAKE JOBS

**The Challenge:** The reluctance of many older refugees to seek or to accept jobs is widespread, and was the source of concern for most of the conference participants. It is particularly difficult in states with above-average cash benefits, and, even more so, with people who both have benefits and live in public housing.

The reluctance is based on many factors, not the least of which is that older people are less flexible, and flexibility is needed in taking on a new job, particularly in a new culture. Also, many older refugees feel that they have done the hard part, of getting their families out of harm's way; others are deep in the rural tradition that when children are grown, they start doing the work that needs to be done, and the parents, or at least the fathers, go into retirement or semi-retirement.

Further, the American definition of who is too old to work is different from that of some other nations; retirement on a pension, at ages as early as 55, is common in some of the socialist countries.

The Congressional threat to cut back on public assistance - such as the denial of life-time access to SSI - is simply not yet regarded seriously by many recipients of cash assistance. Their assumption, as several participants put it, is that "the government is lying again."

"They will start paying attention only when the checks stop coming," was heard repeatedly at all three conferences.

**Good Practices:** Although the tone of the sessions was not very encouraging, a few suggestions emerged.

1. Look for jobs in the U.S. which are very much like the jobs the refugee had in the homeland. A Bosnian bookbinder got a job binding books in Indianapolis; her limited English was not a problem because the work in America was so similar to her old job.
2. Use role models. An employment counselor who is working full-time and is *older* than refugees who say they are too old to work, is a good idea. So is the use of refugee agency board members who continue to work despite their age. Such role models are much more effective if they are within the ethnic group.
3. Ease older people into part-time employment with the refugee-serving agency first before pushing them into the broader labor market. This strategy has been used by many agencies and can be financed by a U.S. Labor Department program that has survived the Congressional budget-cutting, the Senior Employment Program under Title V of the Older Americans Act. This program provides half-time employment at the minimum wage to low income people over the age of 55. (See "Using Volunteers to Expand the Employment Program" for more information on this.)
4. Continue to emphasize the high likelihood that many older people will be pushed off cash assistance should welfare reform be enacted. Two particularly vulnerable groups,
5. at this writing, appear to be Cuban-Haitian Entrants, and refugees who have been in the U.S. for more than five years, collecting assistance throughout those years. The Entrants, under some scenarios, would lose funding the day the new welfare law is signed. The long-term recipients may have one year's grace before being dropped from the programs. ORR Director Lavinia Limon, ORR Deputy Director Regina Lee, and Pamela Seubert, Director of Federal Programs for Chicago's Jewish Federation, briefed Arlington, Los Angeles, and Chicago conference participants, respectively, on the status of welfare reform proposals at the time of those conferences.
6. Participants were encouraged to emphasize the many advantages of securing social security eligibility through work in the above-ground labor market. For one thing, social security has *not* been threatened by this Congress. Further:
  1. Benefits are stable, and climb every year.
  2. Social Security brings with it Medicare which is much better than Medicaid, and will survive despite the current controversy.

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3. Under most circumstances a worker needs only ten years of work covered by social security taxes<sup>3</sup> to be eligible for a retirement pension; in addition, it appeared that the Congress, in 1995, would make the ten years' coverage mandatory for those under the age of 70 seeking Supplemental Security Income (SSI); without the ten years of coverage, such persons could draw only five years' worth of SSI. So encourage people to preserve their eligibility for social security and SSI later, by working now.
4. Ten years of FICA coverage is relatively easy to get. It takes only eight and a half years, if it is done right; a few months in the first year, then eight years in a row, and then a few months at the start of the tenth year, and earnings of only \$2,520 a year are enough to qualify. Workers can get the coverage even if they are self-employed (provided they report - and pay taxes on - the self-employed earnings). The advice to such persons is: pay a little now, and get back much more later.
5. Social security beneficiaries can take their social security checks back to the homeland under most circumstances, in fact every month 300,000 checks are mailed to people elsewhere in the world, but not yet to Vietnam, USSR, Cuba and Cambodia. This is a wrinkle of the social security system which is not well known, and apparently refugee agencies have not used the prospect of retiring to the homeland with a U.S. monthly check as a tool to encourage employment in the U.S.

**Sources:** Chicago session, David North (facilitator) and segments of other sessions at earlier conferences; on Title V (subsidized work for those over 55), Gale Gibbons, DOL; for information and publications on social security eligibility, call 1-800-772-1213.

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## **SPECIFIC POPULATIONS**

**The Challenge:** While an agency may have become very skilled in working with several refugee populations, it always faces a new challenge when a new group arrives; the newcomers often have a language, a background, and expectations that differ from those of the previous set of refugees.

Further, what does the agency do when it finds that many of the employment counselors and other staff have linguistic skills that no longer relate to the languages of the incoming clients?

**Good Practices:** Participants were full of stories about the expectations and behavior patterns they found among newly-arriving refugee populations, and how this helped, or complicated, placing these clients in jobs.

Some reports dealt with agency practices and others with the specific needs of specific groups of refugees; regarding agency practices there were these comments.

- 84 The manager of a West Coast agency, facing a declining Asian refugee population, raised enough non-ORR funds to provide comprehensive training in the Russian language to a Lao staff member, who was already versed in Lao, Thai and English.

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<sup>3</sup> Often called FICA taxes (Federal Insurance Contributions Act).

- 85 Other agencies used their placement skills to out-place their own staff members whose linguistic skills no longer matched the needs of the client population.
- 86 Several participants spoke of the need for bi-cultural as well as bilingual backgrounds; a U.S.-born person speaking Russian, for instance, may know little about the how the cultural background of the Pentecostals impacts their adjustment to the U.S. labor market.
- 87 On the other hand, foreign-born translators cannot automatically be expected to convey an agency's pro-employment philosophy to newly-arrived refugees.
- 88 Several tips were given for securing volunteer interpreters from the majority community. For example:
  - 89 - The Catholic agency in a Nevada city went to the local Serbian Orthodox Church to get translators to talk with Bosnian Muslim refugees.
  - 90 - Universities are another resource - both the departments that teach languages and the foreign-born students on campus.

There was general agreement that it was crucial for refugee-serving agencies to know as much as they can about the job-related strengths and weaknesses of the new refugee populations. Among the many bits of specific information about the adjustment of new refugee populations to work in the U.S. were these.

- 91 Many people coming to the U.S. from socialist (command) economies (e.g. ex-USSR, ex-Yugoslavia, Cuba) have an expectation that government will take care of them, and they need not work. p. 40
- 92 Retirement ages (based on lower life expectancies) are lower in some countries than in the U.S., and many in their fifties and early sixties do not expect to work. (See section in this report on older workers.)
- 93 The Moslem religion and related cultural practices have had differing labor-market impacts on various refugee groups; many men from Iraq are reluctant to see their wives work, Bosnian husbands do not react this way; many Moslems (in Detroit) work in liquor stores, but some will not work in the pork packing plants of the West.
- 94 Some Bosnians have worked in other European countries, which is a plus.
- 95 Many Cubans, it was reported, have a more casual view of time than do American employers.
- 96 Sudanese men are willing to do heavy industrial work.
- 97 Placing people from the same country in the same work place is not always a good idea; people from Iraq include both Shi'ite Arabs and Kurds, who have little in common; people from Bosnia include members of various religious and ethnic groups.
- 98 One-on-one mentoring programs have been established for some of the highly educated refugees, such as those from the former Soviet Union. An American (or an earlier refugee) who is an engineer, for instance, is paired with a newly-arrived refugee engineer. (But Russian definitions of engineering and that used in the U.S. are not always identical.)
- 99 Some agencies have worked out short-term training programs for some Soviets with scientific backgrounds, such as for hemodialysis technician, a skill much in demand in the U.S.

**Sources:** The facilitators of these sessions were Frank Bien, Judith May, and Carol Sims. The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) has published a series of extremely useful profiles of the newer refugee populations; to secure a list of them (they are free) contact Ms. La Ditthavong, CAL, 1118 22nd Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037; fax (202) 659-5641.

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## **HELPING REFUGEES WITH NON-JOB PROBLEMS WITHOUT MAKING THEM DEPENDENT ON THE AGENCY**

**The Challenge:** It is a delicate balance; the refugee-serving agency often feels an obligation to help its clients with non-employment related problems (e.g. the landlord, the doctor's appointment for the sick child) without making that refugee overly dependent on the agency.

It is not always clear to either the agency staff or the refugee when the agency should help, and when it should not. In some cases, refugees find it easier to lean on the agency than to learn the ropes themselves; some agency staff members receive (sometimes unknowingly) psychic income from the continuing dependence.

Further, there were reports of staff members feeling that they could solve the problems faster and more easily by doing things for refugees, rather than teaching the refugees how to take care of it themselves.

Some of the results of not addressing the problem directly are staff burnout and individual staff members deciding to unlist their home phone numbers, as a defense mechanism. At a time of diminishing resources and growing caseloads, such confusion and over-utilization of staff time cannot continue; hence these sessions.

**Good Practices:** One participant outlined a three-part approach to the problem.

1. Continue to encourage attendance at ESL classes.
2. Whenever possible compliment refugees on their English, to build greater confidence in their ability to cope with life.
3. After a while press the refugee into making, and keeping, a self-sufficiency plan of action.

Another had a tougher standard: "I make it a rule for myself and for my staff that we never go along on a *second* appointment (with another agency or with a doctor); I will show them the way, once, then they are on their own."

A third had worked out a formal, four-page contract on refugee and agency obligations in this connection.

The basics were repeated again and again: press the refugees to learn more English; tell them that they have to find someone in their own community to drive them to the appointment, or to provide the interpretation; insist that they learn how to use the buses and subways, where they exist.

A particular problem in this regard is the home-bound woman, who learns less about the broader community than her husband (probably working) and her school-age children.

One approach, not always welcomed by the man of the house: teach her how to drive a car and help her get a driver's license. p. 42

A couple of agencies said that an architectural accident had helped in this connection; each agency has short-term refugee housing adjacent to its office; the residents are newly-arrived refugees. Earlier groups of refugees see the newly-arrived ones and, in many case, realize that the agencies are too busy to help the longer-term ones with non-job problems.

One agency director had worked out a detailed plan. She said:

1. Start the relationship with the refugee (during the reception and placement period) with clear-cut definitions of who does what, and for how long.
2. Encourage the new arrivals to develop ties with their own ethnic communities.
3. Write down the rules in the manual, and translate them into all the languages used in your agency, and then post them, so that the staff can show refugees that they *cannot* do what is being asked; it is no longer a staff-level decision.
4. "Tell your staff that if they have to they should blame the b----upstairs [*i.e.* the boss] for that ruling."

Another tactic, hard on some proud parents, of course, is to suggest that their own children can often play the role of interpreter; the children, being in school and being young, are sure to pick up English faster than their parents. This is an approach to be used selectively. It may not be appropriate in some medical/health situations.

Still another approach is to make sure that the refugees know about other, mainstream systems that can help. For instance, in some communities taxi companies provide rides to hospitals and doctors for Medicaid patients, at Medicaid expense. Many refugees, of course, are not on Medicaid.

With some refugees (always excepting those illiterate in their own language) locally-translated materials on health, education, employment and welfare programs are useful.

**Sources:** Facilitators for these sessions included Barbara Day, who suggested the topic in the first place, Beverly Smith, who did a lot of pre-dawn driving to facilitate the Arlington session, and Carol Sims. We looked, maybe not hard enough, but saw nothing in writing on this subject.

## RESOURCE PEOPLE

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At the end of each report on a subject, we listed resource people on that topic; many of them are mentioned several times in the course of this document. All of their names are below.

We have deliberately provided only postal and, in most cases, fax addresses, for the resource people. We have noted, in a word or two, one of their areas of expertise.

Please feel free to fax or write to them, asking for more information on a specific topic. We trust, but cannot guarantee, that they will try to be helpful.

Frank Bien (mid-sized labor markets), Director, DHS/Maryland Office for New Americans, 311 W. Saratoga Street, Baltimore, MD 21201; fax (410) 333-0079.

Diana Bui (volunteers), Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, 1628 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009; fax (202) 667-6449.

Vilay Chaleunrath (diversification), Executive Director, Indochinese Community Center, 1628 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009; fax (202) 462-2774.

Barbara Day (non-job problems), Director, Refugee and Immigration Programs, Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota, 620 W. 18th Street, Sioux Falls, SD 57104; fax (605) 357-0178.

Matthew Duffy (translators), Refugee and Immigration Services, 1106 9th Street, SE, Roanoke, VA 24013; fax (504) 344-7513. (Ask for his mailing piece on the agency's translation services.)

Dorian Fliegel (competence-based job development), Fliegel Associates, 21 Granville Road, Cambridge, MA 02138; fax and phone (617) 354-3120.

Joy Foster (diversification and shared job banks), Refugee Program Director, Refugee Assistance Center, 220 South 9th Street, Kansas City, KS 66101; fax (913) 621-7066.

Felicidad Frenette (translators), Program Supervisor, International Institute of Buffalo, 864 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209; fax (716) 883-9529.

John Gardner (innovative employment programs), Executive Director, Milwaukee Jobs Connection, Private Industry Council of Milwaukee County, 101 W. Pleasant Street, Suite 104, Milwaukee, WI 53212; fax (414) 225-2375.

Gale Gibbons (older workers), Older Workers Program, Employment and Training Administration, DOL, Mail Stop N 4641, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20210; fax (202) 219-6338. (Ask for a copy of his program's purple book listing local sponsors of Title V programs in all the states.)

p. 44 John Horejsi (work supplementation/grant diversion/JOBS program), Administration for Children and Families, DHHS, 370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW -- 5th Floor, Washington, DC 20447; fax (202) 205-5887.

Dr. Dennis Hunt (diversification), Center for Multi-Cultural Human Services, 701 W. Broad Street, Suite 305, Falls Church, VA 22046; fax (703) 237-2083.

Karen Janas (shared job banks), Manager, Resettlement Services, Jewish Vocational Service, 1608 Baltimore, Kansas City, MO 64108; fax (816) 471-2930.

Zeljka Krvavica (job developer), Job Developer/Case Manager, Iowa State Bureau of Refugee Services, 1200 University Avenue, Suite D, Des Moines, IA 50314; fax (515) 283-9160.

Sue Levy (coordination with JOBS programs), State Refugee Coordinator, Department of Health and Social Services, 131 W. Wilson Street, Room 802, Madison, WI 53703; fax (608) 267-3652.

Karol S. Moxley (how to think like an employer), Supervisor, Refugee Employment Services, Jewish Vocational Service, 29699 Southfield Road, Southfield, MI 48076-2063; fax (810) 559-0773.

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<sup>i</sup> **Note:** names, agencies, postal and fax addresses for the resource people listed above, and those mentioned in connection with other sections of this report, can be found in the Resource People listing at the end of this volume.