

Published in the Newsletter of the ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH SERVICES (AHDC):
Somali American United Council plans a wide range of training on
US Healthcare, parenting skills and guidance for proper
empowerment, self-sufficiency and integration.

News from the Network

A Somali Volunteer Caseworker Training Program to Be Established

Based on the needs of the Somali-American refugee community in Arizona, the Somali American United Council of Arizona (the Council) is planning for a Somali volunteer caseworker training program. The goal of the program is to act as a bridge between health care providers and refugees in order to provide a support system that will enable refugees to complete a treatment program without feeling culturally isolated or getting lost in the system.

In addition to unfamiliarity with how the healthcare system functions in the U.S., many Somali refugees suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) resulting in a tendency to turn to spiritual guidance instead of Western medicine. Language and cultural/religious barriers are also important factors that impact how Somali refugees seek health care.

"The proper diagnosis and treatment must be translated into a culturally relevant context. Treatment of PTSD and other health issues in a culturally relevant manner is the unmet need. The initial trained caseworkers will provide a bridge that meets this need," said Dr. Mohamed Ali Abukar, Founder and President of the Council.

To collaborate with local health care providers, the Council plans to provide a wide range of training to its volunteer caseworkers on the U.S. health care system, patient confidentiality, interpretation guidelines and referral information. Through such training, it is expected that health care providers will in turn become more familiar with the unique needs of the refugee population as well. The Council plans to recruit nine individuals to attend its training program and will select them from both genders and among the active members of the Council. ♦

Somali Refugee Women: Empowerment of Self-Sufficiency Program



Somali American United Council's Annual Membership Meeting 2010

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**Somali Refugee Women: Empowerment of Self-Sufficiency Program
St. Luke's Health Initiative Community Partnership Project**



Organization: Somali American United Council of Arizona
Address: 2425 E. Thomas Rd., Suite 10/12, Phoenix, AZ 85016
Telephone: (602) 522-2100 (O); (602) 667-9700 (F)

Topic: Post-traumatic stress disorder:
Symptoms result to: Depression, anxiety, flashbacks and misplaced anger. People feel very passive and "shut down" overly aggressive, or unable to concentrate.

Results also to: Cultural dislocation/Emotional trauma and anti-social behavior.

Keeping in mind that: Somali refugee has no experience with Western Medicine. Basic cultural barrier begin with unfamiliarity of how medical providers function in American society.

SAUC is committed to: Provide a support system and make sure that refugees receive access to appropriate healthcare before it's too late.

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Attorney Melody Harmon (Board Member- Development Chairperson) being presented with an award for her pro-bono work with Somali American refugee communities; helping to empower and improve the lives of the refugee community in our Greater Phoenix area.



Somali American's Women Group at World Refugee Day Celebration

Conclusion:

The outcomes are intended to ensure a positive effect on the improvement of human condition and socially committed people who are able to work successfully, achieve self-sufficiency by properly integrating into the mainstream American society, and have the wisdom and skill to work toward ignorance eradication. This approach will help the Somali refugee women to become immensely powerful in a positive way and receptive to the new social change. The Somali American United Council of Arizona will share the results and information with other nonprofit organizations working with refugees in Arizona.

Analysis of experiences and feedback within the group will be rich resources for empowerment. The Council is committed to gathering evidence to show that the used method effectively achieves the goals and creates an effective and meaningful empowerment process for self-sufficiency. The Council will follow-up with the beneficiary or client after completion of the program to demonstrate the level of progress and achievement.

The Somali American United Council of Arizona has close relationships and partnerships with many other community organizations and agencies. These include collaboration with other agencies, such as the Department of Economic Security, St. Luke's Health Initiative, Maricopa Integrated Health System, City of Phoenix's Workforce connection, City of Phoenix Neighborhood Services Department, and all other institutions that support refugees. A few deserve special mention here, such as Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program, which coordinates all refugees' activities in Arizona. Additionally, the Council has good working relations with the Catholic Charities Community Services, The Welcome to America Project, St. Luke's Health Initiative, Refugee Women Health Clinic, Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest, the Area Agency on Aging and Mountain Park Health Center, whose staff work with refugee populations and provide valuable insights and training. The Somali American United Council of Arizona receives valuable referrals from these organizations. The Council also works closely with Bhutanese Community of Arizona, Australia's Friends Helping Friends, the Sudanese Association and the Iraqi Community Center.



Mr. Charles Shipman, State Refugee Coordinator and other
AZRAC Board Members in Session



Somali American United Council's Board of Directors in session:
Mr. Haji, Mr. Shikhey, Mr. Dawariq, Mrs. Ali, Dr. Abukar,
Mr. Salvatore, Ms. Harmon and Mr. Sheikh Mohamed

The Somali American United Council of Arizona fills a critical need by helping newly arrived families adjust to their new lives, location, language, and culture. **The mission of the organization is to promote a better understanding between the Somali refugee community and other American communities, and help members of the Somali community properly integrate into the mainstream American society while preserving their own culture.**

Currently, there are about 11,000 Somali residing in Arizona, of which the majority (70%) are female and live in Maricopa County, particularly in the Greater Phoenix area. Many of the Somali are from larger displaced families with a high percentage of women and others who suffer from emotional trauma.

The Somali population, the majority of who are underserved and disadvantaged refugee women, is left with the difficult task of trying to integrate to American culture. Many of the Somali refugees suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and respond with a variety of symptoms, such as depression, anxiety, flashbacks, misplaced anger, and feelings of disconnection from the world. These symptoms often result in traumatized people who feel very passive and “shut down,” overly aggressive, or unable to concentrate. These responses in turn trigger a lack of initiative to take care of any issues that may arise and often lead to chronic situations.

These women are being disproportionately impacted by the recession, and they are feeling a loss of control. However, there are many cultural barriers that prevent them from seeking appropriate medical care and assistance, or completing their integration process. Very basic cultural barriers begin with an unfamiliarity of how medical providers function in American society. For example, refugee women must overcome language barriers, cultural and religious barriers, and discomfort receiving care from male providers.

Treatment with western medicine is a method with which the Somali refugee has no experience and often the result is further mental confusion. This distress can be avoided by providing a liaison such as a mentor/advocate with the same cultural background as the refugee, who has already made successful strides with cultural integration. The structure of the organization's program to overcome these barriers, is recruiting and utilizing mentor/case management volunteers that advocate by providing emotional support, and serving as a cultural intermediary as well as a role model who has achieved success at cultural integration. These volunteers are helping the refugee women to benefit from the healthcare providers, provide interpretation, transportation, advocacy and emotional support.

This presentation will identify ways in which an effective mentor/case management model is possible using volunteers and subject matter experts from the community. **In addition, results of program participant essays and surveys will be shared as well as future plans to establish and conduct a socialization program through the use of cultural gatherings and a “sisters support group.” This approach will promote debate and group discussions on several existing sensitive issues and will increase the women's exposure to new ideas and enhance their acceptance and receptivity to their new society.**



Women Empowerment Session



Breast Cancer Education and Outreach Session

Women Empowerment Sessions

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Refugees have no experience with western medicine, and the result is often mental confusion. The proper diagnosis and treatment must be translated into a culturally relevant context. Currently, explaining the treatment of PTSD and other health issues in a culturally relevant manner is the unmet need. Our volunteers are helping the refugee women to benefit from the healthcare providers, and provide interpretation, transportation, advocacy and emotional support. We are also organizing and conducting a Socialization programs through cultural gatherings and “sisters support group”, promoting debate and group discussions on several existing sensitive issues; and encouraging new ideas and acceptance of change.

In order to ensure the success of treatment continuum, our volunteer Mentors/ case workers are trained to understand that they are bound by the rules of confidentiality regarding information under the HIPPA laws, and are in a unique position of receiving this information only because they are an intermediary due to language and cultural barriers. The structure of the program is that the volunteers advocate for greater integration by providing emotional support, and serving as a cultural intermediary as well as a role model who has achieved success at cultural integration. This certainly results to increase the positive social change and a successful integration process for Arizona's Somali refugee community.

Used Methodology in the transferring knowledge for the group training, is based on outreach, lectures and educational videos containing all possible information relevant to the program's topics. Visual Aids are also used to show additional information. Group discussion and open debate is always facilitated, and all questions are entertained, discussed and properly answered by qualified professionals.

Measuring Success:

The Council's program leads toward meeting many expectations and have the necessary support and credibility. Usually the result of a successful empowerment will be shown practically and will produce an effective and more productive refugee community. Positive behavior and outcomes will determine the value and success of the program. These include conducting assessments and client satisfaction surveys on a regular basis. At the end of the program, evaluation and community group surveys are conducted, which provides an evaluation that measures the effectiveness of the program. A progress report is submitted each quarter to the Board of Directors, and midterm and final evaluations will be properly executed, indicating goal attainment, problems encountered and success stories.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Somali American United Council of Arizona, a non-profit organization, was formed in July 2006 in response to the growing need to connect Somali communities in Arizona with each other and the rest of the American society.

The Somali American United Council of Arizona fills a critical need by helping newly arrived families adjust to their new lives, location, language, and culture. The mission of the Somali American United Council of Arizona is to promote better understanding between the Somali refugee community and other American communities, and help members of the Somali community properly integrate into the mainstream American society while preserving their own culture.

Currently, there are about 11,000 Somali residing in Arizona, of whom the majority (70%) are female and live in Maricopa County, particularly in the Greater Phoenix area. A recent survey of health providers in Maricopa County, reported in the Arizona Republic, revealed that Somali placed second to Spanish as the most requested language for health interpreters, a testament to the need for an advocate for this community.

This Somali population, the majority of who are underserved and disadvantaged refugee women, is left with the difficult task of trying to integrate to American culture. Many of the Somali refugees have experienced trauma and suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and respond with a variety of symptoms, such as depression, anxiety, flashbacks, misplaced anger, and feelings of disconnection from the world. These symptoms often result in traumatized people who feel very passive and “shut down,” overly aggressive, or unable to concentrate.

The Somali American United Council of Arizona envisions programs that address the cultural barriers that prevent refugee women from utilizing the resources available to them. Traditionally, Somali women have been encouraged to play a passive role in both family and public spheres. The Council's program results to educate Somali American refugee women to help themselves properly integrate and become self-sufficient. Additionally, by developing a program of behavioral and physical wellness within a culturally relevant context, the Council always makes sure the refugees receive the necessary healthcare before it's too late.

Finally, the Council serves as a model for other non-profit organizations working with refugee communities and immigrant populations. By building a foundation and structure of best practices, the Council always shares these learning with other non-profit organizations to help them build programs designed to address cultural barriers and emotional trauma.



Breast Cancer Education and Outreach Session



Breast Cancer Education and Outreach Session

Traditionally, Somali women have been encouraged to play a passive role in both family and public spheres, and they had very defined gender roles. However, since arriving in the United States, these same women are forced into leadership roles due to the high ratio of women to men. As the head of household, these women must seek employment and medical attention, while making numerous other decisions regarding their lives and families.

These women are being disproportionately impacted by the recession, and they are feeling a loss of control. However, there are many cultural barriers that prevent them from seeking appropriate medical care and assistance, or completing their integration process. Very basic cultural barriers begin with an unfamiliarity of how medical providers function in American society. Refugee women must overcome language barriers, cultural and religious barriers, and discomfort receiving care from male providers. It is a significant challenge, and yet, a huge opportunity for change.

The Somali American United Council of Arizona envisions a program that addresses the cultural barriers preventing refugee women from utilizing the resources available to them. With this program the Council made able to build a foundation and structure of best practices that can be shared with other nonprofit organizations who work with refugees to assist with programs designed to address cultural barriers and emotional trauma.

The Somali American United Council of Arizona program works to educate Somali American refugee women so that they can help themselves, become self-sufficient, and properly integrate into mainstream American society. The Council is getting help from several volunteer mentors, acting as caseworker and giving continuous and good advices to overcome all obstacles. These mentors/ caseworkers have received specific training to act as an advocate on behalf of the Somali refugee women. These volunteers have been also trained for case management and advocacy; and are familiar with community resources and provide referrals that will best address each issue.

The council provide a support system that will enable the Somali refugee women to complete an empowerment program, which focuses on understanding and receiving access to appropriate healthcare, without getting lost in the system or becoming discouraged due to cultural differences. Our volunteers act also to be a general intermediary between the service provider institutions and the refugee women so that the women do not feel culturally isolated. Although the refugee may suffer from cultural bereavement or **PTSD**, this meaningful relationship has increased chance of recovery and integration. We help that proper diagnosis and treatment must be translated into a culturally relevant context. Traumatic events experienced by refugee populations are magnified by cultural dislocation. Many refugees experience an initial period of well-being but then become alienated from their host society and retreat into troubled private worlds or exhibit anti-social behavior.



Parenting and Education Session
Group Discussions



Women Empowerment Session

NARRATIVE:

About the Somali American United Council of Arizona:

The Somali American United Council of Arizona, a non-profit organization, was formed in July 2006 in response to the growing need to connect Somali communities in Arizona with each other and the rest of the American society. The organization fills a critical need by helping newly arrived families adjust to their new lives, location, language, and culture. The mission of the Somali American United Council of Arizona is to promote better understanding between the Somali refugee community and other American communities, and help members of the Somali community properly integrate into the mainstream American society while preserving their own culture.

The mission of the Somali American United Council of Arizona is carried out through community development programs. These community development programs are organized according to the needs of the Somali-American refugee community in Arizona. Our activities includes: case management, translations, referrals, job replacement, housing concern, community outreach, youth development, Foster Grandparent, transportation, senior assistance, community empowerment, family crisis prevention, adult education, breast cancer education and outreach sessions, English as second language (ESL) programs, Citizenship classes, after-school activities, sports interaction, and parenting education. Additionally, the Council provides help managing community issues such as immigration, health concerns, and crucial cultural services.

Our volunteer executive, mentors/ caseworkers served 2,017 individuals in 2008; 2,777 in 2009; and 4,300 in 2010. These refugees were helped with the needed services and guidance to properly resettlement and to satisfactory integrate.

The Somali Refugee Community in Arizona:

Currently, there are about 11,000 Somali residing in Arizona, of which the majority (70%) are female and live in Maricopa County, particularly in the Greater Phoenix area. Many of the Somali are from larger displaced families with a high percentage of women and others who suffer **emotional trauma**. A recent survey of health providers in Maricopa County, reported in the Arizona Republic, revealed that Somalis placed second to Spanish as the most requested language for health interpreters.

This Somali population, many of whom are underserved and disadvantaged refugee women are left with the difficult task of trying to integrate to American culture. There are many factors potentially working against these women. **First, many of the women have experienced violence, such as rape or witnessing the murder of a family member. As a result, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is not uncommon, and many Somali refugees do not understand there are western medical treatments available to them. The Somali refugees respond to PTSD with a variety of symptoms, such as depression, anxiety, flashbacks, misplaced anger, and feelings of disconnection. These symptoms often result in traumatized people who feel very passive and “shut down,” overly aggressive, or unable to concentrate. These responses in turn trigger a lack of initiative to take care of any issues that may arise and lead to chronic situations.**



Hospitality Training



Group Support:
Women Empowerment Program



Breast Cancer Education and Outreach Session