

Blackline Masters

Blackline master 1: Common stress and protective factors affecting young people of refugee background

Stress Factors: The most common stress factors which can hinder refugee young people's capacity for resilience can be divided into three groups: familial, community and environment, and individual. The factors in the familial group include things that directly impact the family dynamics such as having only one parent, being abused or isolated, and having an unemployed parent. The second group, community and environment, is comprised of factors that directly impact the social integration of the youth such as poverty, discrimination, and an absence of role models and support. The individual factors which comprise the third group are factors that are specific to a particular individual such as health factors at birth, suffering from depression, and social deficiencies.*

Protective Factors Promoting Resilience: Studies show that protective factors are similar across different cultures and despite different experiences. Similarly to stress factors, the most common protective factors promoting resilience which can further young people's capacity for resilience can also be divided into three groups: familial, community and environment, and individual. The factors in the familial group include things that directly contribute to the family dynamics such as good relationships, supportive family environments, and so on. The second group, community and environment, is comprised of factors that directly contribute to the social integration of the youth such as help in school, good relationships outside the home, a strong cultural identity, and access to the necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, and so forth. The individual factors which comprise the third group are factors that are specific to a particular individual such as self-esteem, a sense of belonging, problem-solving skills, and other similar factors.**

A more extensive list of stress factors and protective factors can be found at www.crr.unsw.edu.au/media/File/Refugee_Resilience.pdf on pages 37 and 38.

* Adapted from Raymond, Rebecca. (2005). *The Mental Health Impacts of Trauma on Refugee Young People and Therapeutic Interventions Promoting Resilience*. The Resilience Research Centre (RRC). A Background Paper for the *Hopes Fulfilled or Dreams Shattered? From resettlement to settlement Conference*, November 23-28, 2005. 37. www.crr.unsw.edu.au/media/File/Refugee_Resilience.pdf.

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Blackline master 2: Common strengths and challenges reflected by immigrant youth

Immigrant youth have many common strengths that enable them to adjust and thrive when settling in a new country such as Canada. According to information found on the National Mentoring Partnership website at <www.mentoring.org>, some of these strengths include cultural and family values, bilingualism, two-parent families, community bonds, health, and value of education.

The National Mentoring Partnership website also details many of the challenges and risks that immigrant youth face when settling in a new country. These include separation, adjustment, traumatic experiences, living in poverty, student disconnect from education, parent disconnect from education, discrimination, and inter-generational conflict.

For detailed explanations of these common strengths and challenges, go to <www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_457.doc>.

Blackline master 3: A planning checklist for schools, families, and communities

Local governments, agencies, school boards, and schools must develop policies and practices, which will compassionately and effectively support refugee children and youth in schools. Planning for EAL and other supports/programming for newcomers is essential. The checklist below will provide some ideas of things that should be considered. These should not be seen as “special initiatives” but simply as good education which is normal to a country and a province such as Canada and Manitoba that support immigration to stimulate growth.

Policies and Protocols

- Do local governing bodies have a corporate policy for the settlement of refugees and claimants? Such a policy might include housing, social services, and education as well as funding and in-kind support for refugee community organizations. Some areas of the province and cities have formed multicultural task forces to ensure that the needs of newcomers are met in a holistic and interagency cooperative manner.
- Do the local schools and school boards have policies for supporting newcomer children and youth? Such policies can draw on experiences of working with bilingual and multilingual children, promoting diversity education, and working with families with transitory accommodations.
- Are schools working cooperatively regarding supports needed by youth that are without parents or adequate family resources?
- Are there identified staff members in the school who are responsible for refugee children and youth? Has the school started to develop an information bank about cultural backgrounds, countries of origin, and local resources for referral and assistance? Who listens to the needs of newcomer children and youth as they identify them for themselves?

Professional development

- Do school counsellors, teachers, educational assistants, and parent groups support specialized learning and counselling initiatives for the needs of newcomer children and youth? Do they have access to the training, resources, teaching materials, and continued learning opportunities needed to develop local responses to the influx of newcomers into the neighbourhood and schools? What policies support these changes?
- Are there appropriate in-service training opportunities on meeting the needs of newcomer children and youth? Are there opportunities for further training and professional growth for staff and volunteers in the areas of trauma recovery for children and youth, multicultural settlement issues, and personal and corporate support of existing and new initiatives?

Extended Opportunities for Learning and Recreation

- Are there opportunities for specialized or inclusive play, recreation, and cultural and social pursuits in the area? Are there any after school clubs, school year initiatives, summer months camps, and holiday initiatives and projects for newcomer and bilingual children and youth in their specialized needs? Is there local cooperation with these initiatives offered regionally, including financial and resource allocations as a school?

School Environment and Supports

- What is the quality of hospitality for newcomers in a particular school or neighbourhood? The school support staff personnel are often the first point of contact for new students who are accessing the education system.
 - Is your school newcomer/refugee friendly?
 - Is there a reception protocol in place?
 - Are staff members aware of the reception protocol?
 - Are certain staff members identified as being responsible for carrying out the protocol?
- Is there a “buddy” system for newly arrived students in their first days? Are buddies briefed for the job, which should include making sure that the new students know where the toilets and water fountains are and how to use them, as well as what to do about lunch and making sure that the new students know where to go for different classes and that they are introduced to their teachers? Are the teachers given appropriate and timely information about the new students as well?
- What encouragement can newcomer children and youth find to speak their language and celebrate their culture?
- Does the school acknowledge different religious and family holidays, special occasions, grieving ceremonies, and inclusive attitudes in more mainstream community observations?
- How does the school act to counter hostility and the racist bullying of refugees? Are their learning opportunities to help with hospitality, communication skills, and conflict resolution skills that include these situations for newcomers?
- Do teachers, school counsellors, and administrative staff have a good working knowledge of the range of programming and referrals available, and gaps in services for the needs of refugee newcomer children and youth? Do these include language, mental health, settlement needs, conflict resolution skills, communication skills, family cultural assumptions and differences, and opportunities for advocacy for mainstream and newcomer children and youth to develop together that acknowledge their experiences of war and organized violence in the world?
- What is the quality of newcomer student assessments for past educational experiences and gaps in education? Is there an individual assessment about primary modes and preferred styles of learning (e.g., kinæsthetic, auditory, and visual) that will assist the teacher(s) in accelerating learning in order to close gaps in past and present learning?
- What provisions does the school make for tutoring, language acquisition, and ongoing assessment to monitor progress toward student and school educational goals and expectations?
- Are there alternatives to normal disciplinary actions that take into account the emotional needs of students who are survivors of war, multiple traumas, multiple losses, and missing resources? What supports do teachers require in these special circumstances so that the needs of all students are met? What impact do suspensions have on the family?

Parental and Community Involvement

- How does the school work make links with refugee parents, including those with beginning English or French skills, to assist in their children's learning?
- Does the local school have access to materials developed in languages spoken at home for caregivers and parents to help them understand the Canadian school systems, family law, and school work assumptions? Could these materials be developed and shared by schools and districts?
- Are there linkages with local cultural, religious, and language community groups appropriate to newcomer students?
- Do parents receive information about the schools' particular requirements and policies? Is this information translated? Do you have the opportunity to talk to parents about school rules and requirements? What expectations do parents have of the school?