

Health Access and Health Maintenance from a Refugee Resettlement Perspective

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Nationalities Service Center (NSC) is an organization that was established in 1921 that provides a variety of services for all refugees and immigrants. NSC provides a large range of supports such as case management, housing support, legal services, youth services, language proficiency classes and many more. One of NSC's missions is to provide supports that promote health, wellbeing, and a higher quality of life for the population that they serve.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

In 2021, 13,700 refugees were resettled in the United States. Refugee resettlement agencies experienced additional challenges in the past year given the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

Inspire Summer Youth Group:

- o Coordinated with NSC staff members to plan 7 youth group sessions consisting of field trips, group activities, and educational resources to aid in the learning of the importance of maintaining good cardiovascular health

Research:

- o Gathered information about potential funding sources to further expand an already existing medical case management program.

Refugee Health Team:

- o Organized and escorted NSC clients to healthcare visits
- o Assisted clients in resolving unpaid healthcare bills and making necessary changes in health insurance.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/ CHALLENGES/ JOYS

"I was able to make new friends through youth group this summer. I had so much fun!" – 2022 Youth Group Member

I was so grateful for the opportunity to serve as an advocate for our clients, but it was disheartening to observe how inaccessible our healthcare system currently is to those who have limited English proficiency, are new to our healthcare system, or are pre-literate." - Carolyn, 2022 Health Access Intern

REFLECTION

Participating in the Bridging the Gaps program was an enlightening experience that has taught us many valuable lessons. Being able to fully immerse ourselves within a community with such a rich cultural history has allowed us to better develop our interpersonal skills. We were able to give back to the city of Philadelphia and to enhance our educational experience. We were able to develop our interprofessional teamwork and communication skills. We were also given opportunities to network, collaborate, and learn from other healthcare professionals. This invaluable experience will help us in our future occupational and medical practice. - Nike Adedoyin

Additionally, we were able to view the healthcare system we will work within from the lens of refugees and social service workers, lending us some perspective to the challenges these groups might face when attempting to access care. As we become professionals and eventually leaders in our respective fields I think that our work at NSC can provide a model for enhancing accessibility for patients of all backgrounds and life experiences.- Carolyn Ream