

Bridging the Gaps



The Complexities of Medical Case Management for Immigrants and Refugees

Student interns

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Academic Preceptor

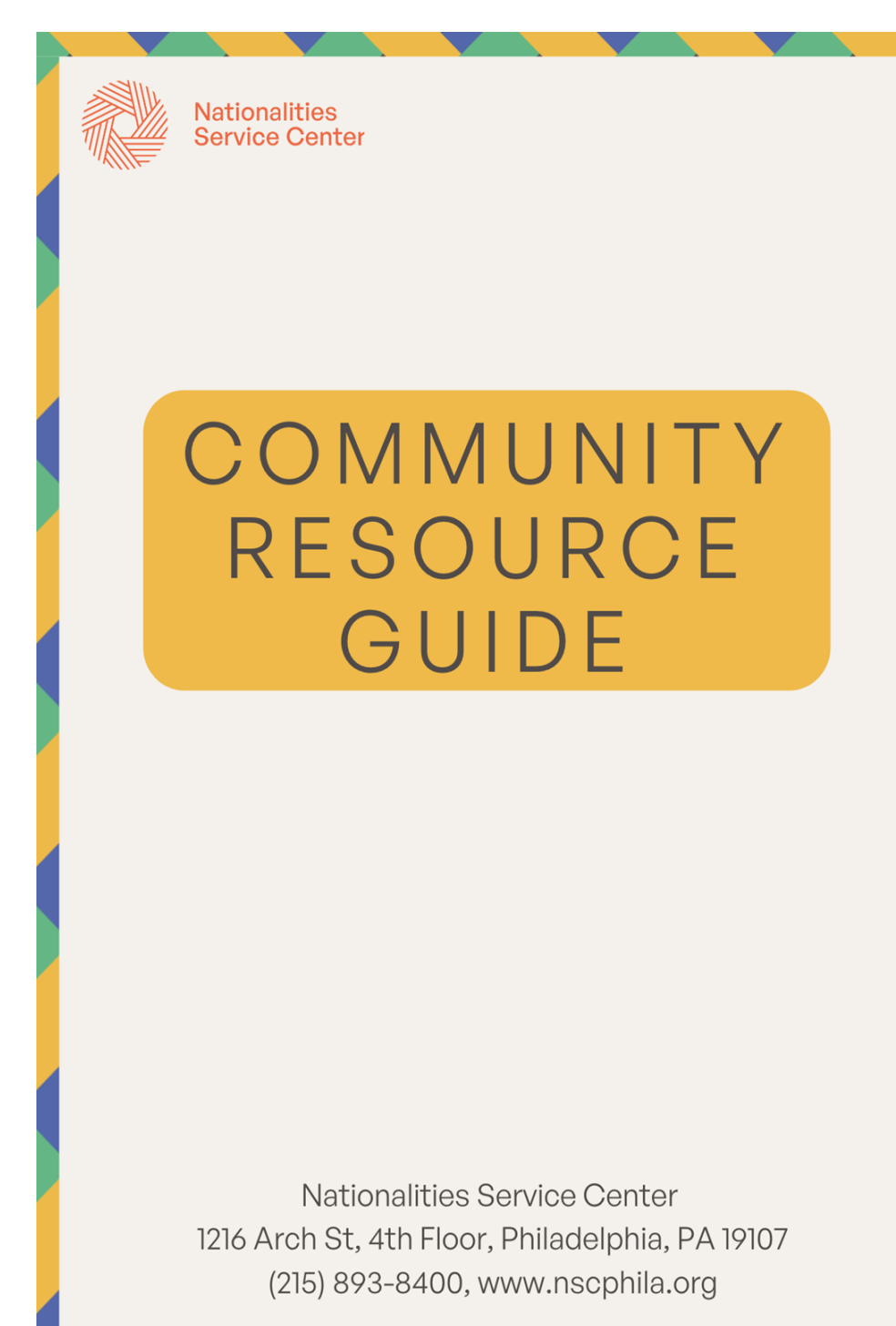
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Community Preceptors

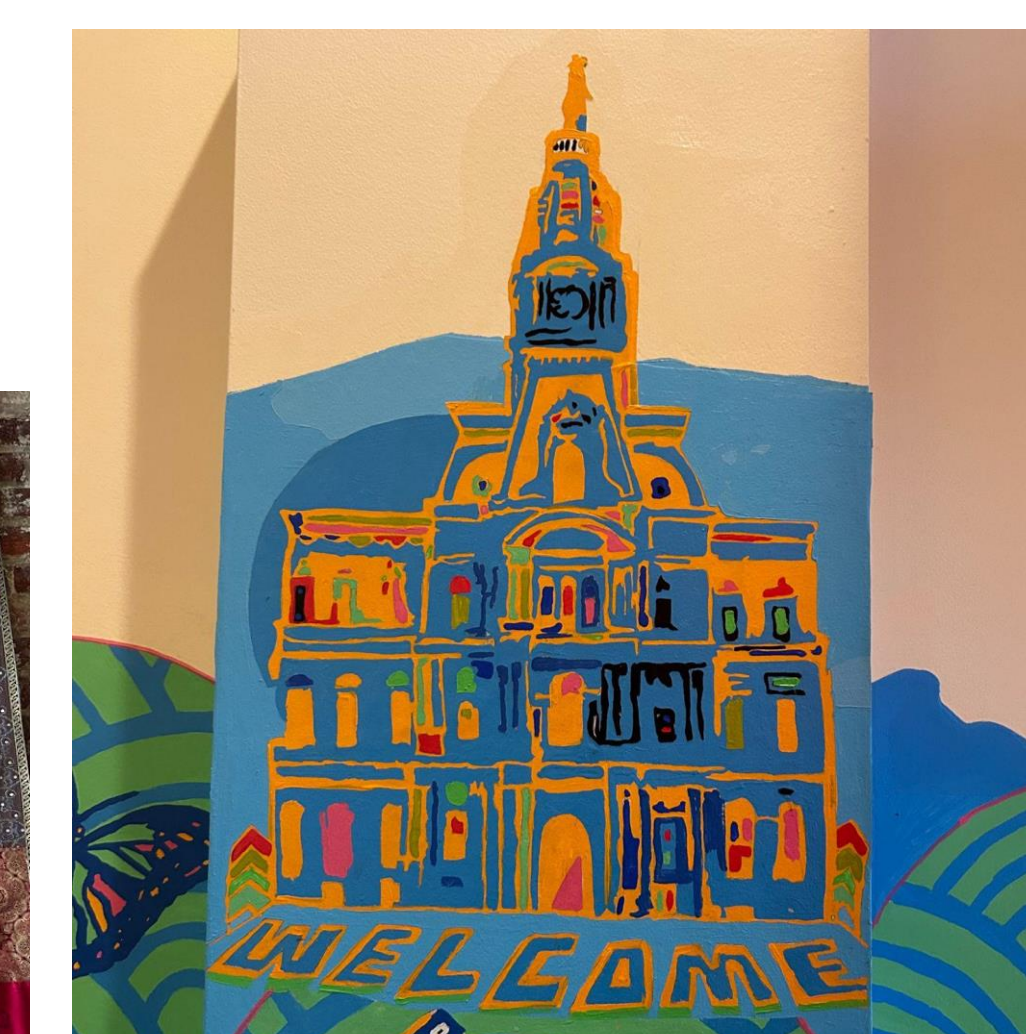
Kara Friesen, MA, Nationalities Service Center
 Lexy Chavez, Nationalities Service Center

COMMUNITY PARTNER

Nationalities Service Center supports and connects refugees to community resources. Their multidisciplinary staff offers services in legal protection, language access, health and wellness and employment. NSC begins assisting refugee clients as soon as they arrive, helping them to navigate the initial resettlement process- securing housing, attending health screenings, and completing applications for identification. Moreover, they continue to contribute to the many multiethnic enclaves in Philadelphia by holding various community activities. Not only do these events help refugees to form new relationships, but NSC also provides a variety of educational and material resources.



How do my gums look?
 ښکاري؟ څنگه گوتې زما
 رسدا؟ مي نظر به چطور
 Am I brushing and flossing correctly?
 او برش توکه سمه په زده ايا
 کوم؟ فلانس
 امدت؟ درست کردن لوس و زدن مسواک من ايا
 How can I prevent gum disease?
 د غاښونو د شم کولې څنگه
 وکړم؟ مخنيوی لارو غی
 کمد؟ جلوگیری لوم های بیماری از تولد می چگونه



BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

A refugee is a person outside their home country who is unable to return due to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Over 70% of refugees come from just five countries: Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Ukraine, and Venezuela. Becoming a refugee to the United States is a detailed and rigorous process involving many layers of security checks; it takes on average 2 years but can sometimes take up to 6-10 years. Less than 0.1% of the world's refugees end up resettling in the United States. The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) places all to-be refugees with local agencies, such as NSC. [<https://rcusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/USCRI-Security-Screenings-2016.pdf>; <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>]

TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

The Bridging the Gaps interns were placed in two sects of NSC: Refugee Health Access and Innovative Support Program for Immigrant and Refugee Empowerment (INSPIRE). The students acted as case manager supports by connecting clients, primarily refugees, to medical and dental resources while providing access to interpretation services. Within Refugee Health Access, the BTG intern compiled a list of common questions patients might ask at the dentist, and translated them into Pashto and Dari so that they could be distributed among the site's Afghan client population. The interns for INSPIRE updated and remodeled the community resource guide for clients to help connect them to further resources, such as legal services, utilities assistance, and medical assistance in the future. Additionally, the INSPIRE interns worked to update Ukrainian and Afghan disability primers to provide support to providers treating refugee patients with disabilities.

REFLECTION

Julia Katcher: My time at NSC not only provided me experience with a new patient population, but also allowed me to think more deeply about what makes a compassionate provider and patient advocate. Interacting with refugee clients on a daily basis has underscored the importance of treating the whole patient, not just their physiologic symptoms. It was also a pleasure to be a part of the coordinated teamwork at NSC, as the many branches work together with the same clients on multiple aspects of their lives. Everyone I encountered at NSC was deeply committed to serving refugee and immigrant populations and it was incredibly special to come to a workplace each day with people that share a common goal.

Catherine Lalman: During my internship this summer, I worked mainly with the refugee health department, which focuses on connecting recent refugee immigrants to health resources. To that end, I helped to complete a variety of paperwork, including lab requests and health insurance enrollment forms. I also escorted clients to their various health appointments around the city. Coordinating meeting with the clients was difficult at times; I had wished on more than one occasion, that I had been able to better communicate with them. Nevertheless, interacting with clients was definitely one of the best parts of my internship- everyone was patient and incredibly friendly. As well, I was also introduced to the concept of culturally sensitive communication; during my storytelling project, where I wrote about the journey of a former refugee family, I was able to further learn about how to tell a story honestly but not theatrically.

Eleanor Cheung: I had the privilege of working with the Innovative Support Program for Immigrant and Refugee Empowerment (INSPIRE) at the Nationalities Service Center this past summer. I was able to work closely with refugee families enrolled in the program and am left with a sense of awe at their resilience and ability to adapt while facing challenges in almost all facets of life. The individuals serviced by INSPIRE often have little to no English proficiency, are fleeing traumatic experiences, and are trying to manage complex medical conditions while navigating an entirely new healthcare system. While disheartening to realize how many barriers face these communities, I have come away better equipped to ensure future patient interactions are more accessible, in both language and cultural practices, as well as centered on trauma-informed care.