



Champaign County Board for Care and Treatment of Persons with a Developmental Disability, referred to as

***Champaign County Developmental Disabilities Board (CCDDDB), and
Champaign County Mental Health Board (CCMHB)***

Joint Study Session Agenda

Wednesday, October 29, 2025, 5:45PM

This session will be held in person at the Shields-Carter Room of the Scott M. Bennett Administrative Center, 102 East Main Street, Urbana, IL 61801. Members of the public may attend in person or watch the study session live through this link: <https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/81393675682> Meeting ID: 813 9367 5682

- I. Call to order**
- II. Roll call**
- III. Approval of Agenda***
- IV. Public Participation/Agency Input** *See below for details.***
- V. Presidents' Comments – Vicki Niswander, Molly McLay**
- VI. Comments from Board Member Facilitating the Session - Jon Paul Youakim**
- VII. Associate Director's Comments – Leon Bryson**

- VIII. STUDY SESSION: “Resources and Needs of Immigrants and Refugees”**
 - Maria Jimenez, Executive Director, Immigrant Services of Champaign-Urbana**
Presenter Bio and Organization Information (pages 3-6)
 - Awad Awad, Director of the UIUC Salaam Cultural Center**
Presenter Bio and Organization Information (pages 7-10)
 - Lisa Wilson, Executive Director, The Refugee Center**
Presenter Bio and Organization Information (pages 11-23)

The packet also includes the following additional information:

Results of Survey on Immigrant and Refugee Resources and Needs (pages 25-30)

Champaign County Immigrant Needs Data 2024 (pages 31-34)

- IX. Public Participation/Agency Input** *See below for details.***
- X. Board Announcements and Input**
- XI. Adjournment**

***Public input may be given virtually or in person. If the time of the session is not convenient, you may communicate with the Board by emailing stephanie@ccmhb.org or leon@ccmhb.org any comments for us to read aloud during the meeting. The Chair reserves the right to limit individual time to five minutes and total time to twenty minutes. All feedback is welcome. The Board does not respond directly but may use input to inform future actions. Agency representatives and others providing input which might impact Board actions should be aware of the [Illinois Lobbyist Registration Act, 25 ILCS 170/1](#), and take appropriate [steps to be in compliance with the Act](#). For accessible documents or assistance with this packet, please [contact us](#) (leon@ccmhb.org).*

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Immigrant Services of Champaign-Urbana (ISCU) provides trauma-informed, holistic case management and mental health support for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Champaign County. Our work centers on crisis intervention, emotional wellness, and helping clients connect with providers who understand the complex challenges tied to migration, displacement, and systemic barriers. We support clients in building meaningful support systems and advocate alongside them across educational, medical, and system-based needs.

Through our holistic care model, we bridge the gap between immigrant community members and mental health professionals who approach care with cultural understanding and compassion.

ISCU is currently expanding its mental health initiatives to include multilingual therapy and support groups that reflect the diversity and intersectionality of our immigrant community.

María Jiménez
Executive Director
Immigrant Services of Champaign-Urbana

The following resources are intended to help immigrants, refugees, and supporters find their way through the complex process of making the United States a refuge and home.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

In a life-threatening fire, police or medical emergency, always go to the nearest hospital or call 911

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

For tax forms, informational packets, some free tax assistance, and student financial

HOUSING & RELOCATION

Low-income housing, Section 8 Housing, local emergency shelters, tenant assistance

Champaign County Sheriff (217) 333-8911
 Champaign Fire (217) 403-7200
 Savoy Fire (217) 259-5814
 Urbana Fire (217) 384-2420
 Poison Control Center (800) 222-1222
 Champaign Police (217) 351-8911
 Savoy Police (217) 333-8911
 Urbana Police (217) 384-2320
 Crisis Line (217) 244-7911

ABUSE, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & NEGLECT

Organizations that defend, advise and assist those who have experienced cruelty

Adult Protective Services
Champaign County Child Advocacy Center
Courage Connection
Crisis Nursery
The Immigration Project
RACES (Rape Advocacy, Counseling and Education Services)
 National Domestic Violence Helpline:
 1-800-799-SAFE
 Illinois Domestic Violence Help Line:
 1-877-863-6338

ADULT EDUCATION

Below are conversation and tutoring groups:

English Corner
International Hospitality Committee Friendship Group
International Women's Connection
READ Project (Parkland College)
Wesley Foundation International Coffee Hour

FORMAL ENGLISH LESSONS

First Presbyterian ELL Program
First United Methodist Church of Urbana (ESL Visitor Center)
International Hospitality Committee English courses
Mattis Avenue Free Methodist Church
READ Project (Parkland College)
Parkland College Adult and Workforce Education
Urbana Adult Education Center
Wesley Foundation

EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

Programs that enhance child development through increased knowledge and skills

Before and After School Child Care Program (Urbana)
Champaign County Head Start/Early Head Start
Child Care Resource Services
Crisis Nursery
Don Moyer Boys and Girls Club
Kids Plus Before and After School Program (Champaign)
READY Program
Regional Education Office

CITIZENSHIP

Organizations and services that assist immigrants seeking immigration assistance

aid

Champaign Public Library
Salt & Light Ministries
Stevick Senior Center
University of Illinois Extension's Money Mentor Program
The Urbana Free Library Tax Information

FOOD ASSISTANCE

Local food banks, food pantries, and meal programs

Champaign Church of the Brethren
Champaign-Urbana Public Health District
Daily Bread Soup Kitchen
Eastern Illinois Food Bank
Empty Tomb
Friends of Champaign County Food Pantry
Grace Lutheran Church
The Jubilee Café
Newman Shares
Restoration Urban Ministries
Salt & Light Ministries
St. Andrew's Lutheran Campus Center
St. Luke CME Food Pantry
Salvation Army Pantry
Stone Creek Food Pantry
The Vineyard Food Pantry
University Place Church
Wesley Evening Pantry
Wesley Pantry at Parkland College
Windsor Road Christian Church

HEALTHCARE

There are many healthcare providers in town for adults, children, and families. If you need help finding the best fit for you, please contact ISCU for assistance (217-800-5725.)

CHILDREN

Free or low-cost medical care for children without insurance

Champaign County Healthcare Consumers
Champaign-Urbana Public Health District
Childhood Adversity & Resiliency Services (CARS) Clinic
Promise Healthcare Frances Nelson Clinic
Healthy Beginnings
The Pavilion
Promise Healthcare SmileHealthy
UIC (University of Illinois at Chicago)
Specialized Care for Children

DENTAL

Free or low-cost dental care for those with or without insurance

Champaign County Christian Health Center
Parkland Dental Hygiene Clinic
Champaign-Urbana Public Health District
Promise Healthcare SmileHealthy

MEDICAL

Free or low-cost medical care for those with or without insurance
Avicenna Community Health Center
Carle Foundation Hospital
Carle Mobile Health Clinic
Champaign County Christian Health Center

SHELTERS & EMERGENCY SERVICES

Austin's Place
Centralized Intake Champaign County
Regional Planning Commission
Salvation Army
Tenant's Rights and Long-Term Assistance C-U Tenant Union
Housing Authority of Champaign County: Emergency Shelter Program

PERMANENT HOUSING OPTIONS

The following website lists the apartment complexes that have both subsidized and unsubsidized units, listed alphabetically by city. If you sign a lease for full rent, you will owe full rent with no subsidy.

<https://www.lowincomehousing.us/IL.html>

The following document is produced by the Champaign-Urbana Tenants Union and is updated monthly. It explains how to apply for subsidized housing in Champaign County. It also lists a number of apartment complexes with low-cost housing units.

Champaign County Low-Cost Housing

The Champaign-Urbana Tenants Union can help tenants who have landlord problems.

<http://www.cutenantunion.org/>

IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE SERVICES

Supportive services for low-income and limited English-proficient individuals

The Refugee Center
Immigrant Services of C-U (this website)
New American Welcome Center (NAWC)

IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES

The Immigration Project
Law Office of Lauren A. Anaya
Scott D. Pollock and Associates PC
John M. Wilkie, Attorney at Law
Ruth E. Wyman Law Office LLC

GENERAL LEGAL SERVICES K

Legal services for matters such as adoption, estate planning, or traffic offenses.

Champaign County Courthouse Self-Help Desk
Bullock Law, LLC
John M. Wilkie, Attorney at Law
Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation
Law Office of Lauren A. Anaya
Maatuka Al-Heiti Emkes
Erwin, Martinkus, & Cole
New American Welcome Center (NAWC)
Ruth E. Wyman Law Office LLC
Student Legal Services University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Refugee Status Overview
Naturalization Overview
Asylum Overview
Overview of Special Immigrant Status

[The Refugee Center](#)
[New American Welcome Center \(NAWC\)](#)
[Urbana Adult Education Center](#)
[The Immigration Project](#)
[Law Office of Jason L. Spanghel](#)
[Immigration Law Office of Lauren A. Anaya](#)
[Matt Kuenning, J. Erwin, Martinkus, & Cole](#)

HOUSEHOLD GOODS & CLOTHING

Garments, shoes, jewelry, and more for low-income individuals

[ISCU Store](#)
[Goodwill](#)
[Salt & Light Ministries](#)
[Salvation Army](#)
[His Kid's Closet](#)

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Information on community businesses, events, travel, and fun

[2-1-1 Information & Referral](#)
[Chambanamoms.com](#)
[Champaign Park District](#)
[Disability Resource Expo](#)
[LGBT Resource Center](#)
[New American Welcome Center \(NAWC\)](#)
[Smile Politely](#)
[Urbana Park District](#)
[Visit Champaign County](#)
[YourewelcomeCU.com](#)

[Champaign County Healthcare Consumers](#)
[Promise Healthcare Frances Nelson Clinic](#)
[Planned Parenthood](#)

METAL HEALTH & COUNSELING

Confidential assessment and treatment
[ABC Counseling & Family Services](#)
[Champaign County Healthcare Consumers](#)
[Childhood Adversity & Resiliency Services \(CARS\) Clinic](#)
[The Dialogue Advisor, LLC Employee Assistance Programs](#)
[Elliot Counseling Group](#)
[Jacqueline Thomas | The Rock Counseling Group](#)
[P.A.T.S. Prevention and Treatment Services](#)
[R.A.C.E.S.](#)

VISION

Low cost or free eye exams low-income individuals and families
[Bard Optical](#)
[Carle Eye Care](#)
[Champaign Lions Club](#)
[The Eye Center](#)
[Jones Optical](#)
[Walmart Vision & Glasses](#)

Types

TRANSPORTATION

[Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District](#)
[Amtrak](#)
[Greyhound Bus Lines](#)
[Illini Shuttle](#)
[Driving Guide to the USCIS Indianapolis Office](#)
[Guide to Getting a Driver's License in Champaign, IL](#)

[ABOUT](#)[RESOURCES](#)[SERVICES & PROGRAMS](#)[VOLUNTEER](#)[DONATE](#)

Our Story

Programs and Services



Case management Program:

ISCU takes a holistic approach, supporting our clients in various aspects. From conducting depression screenings to connecting clients with mental health services and legal aid, we address concerns like food security, medical care, housing, employment, and education.



Transportation Program:

ISCU arranges transportation for clients to medical appointments, immigration court or related appointments within their legal process. This service removes a major barrier to accessing health services and legal justice. We also teach our clients to navigate the public transportation system.



New Beginnings Assistance Program:

This program extends a helping hand to new immigrants by providing gently used furniture and household items. This initiative operates through our volunteer-run warehouse, fueled by donations from our community members.



Community Health Program:

Using a Team of Community Health Navigators, ISCU screens clients for Social Determinant of Health Issues(SDOH), make service referrals as appropriate, sponsors, and participates in, outreach events promoting health awareness.



Volunteer program:

Our volunteer program warmly welcomes all community members who are interested in supporting ISCU with its daily operations.

Salaam Middle East & North Africa (MENA) Cultural Center

Director:

Meet **Awad Awad**, a first-generation, low-income, neurodivergent student and proud Palestinian-American global critical intercultural citizen. He embraces numerous multi-layered identities and strives to be the friend, mentor, teacher, and administrator he wished he had. Awad holds a Master's in Arabic from UCLA, with research interests spanning from Abbasid Baghdad, literary translation, and culinary history to Israel/Palestine, intercultural communication, multilingualism, and cultural centers. If you have a question about Arabic, Middle Eastern affairs, or food, he likely has the answer—or knows where to find it!



Post-9/11, Awad's been on a mission to make the world a bit more enlightened and a lot more connected. He's built and expanded Arabic programs from California to Georgia and established study abroad partnerships across the Middle East, North Africa, and the Caucasus. Currently, he's the inaugural director of the Salaam Middle East and North Africa Cultural Center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Stop by or reach out to collaborate over a cup of homemade Saudi-style light roast cardamom coffee, Persian extra bergamot black tea, Moroccan mint-tea-flavored sugar, or Adeni chai karak.

Mission:

The mission and vision of the Salaam Middle East & North Africa (MENA) Cultural Center are to provide a home for a border-fluid MENA community and to inspire holistic student success, inclusion, and belonging. By fostering the development of critical, intercultural citizens and global leaders who are better equipped to read and engage our complex and nuanced world, we hope to leave our communities better places than we found them.

Vision:

- Support the success, inclusion, and belonging of those who identify with and want to learn more about MENA in all of its diversity.
- Create a home for a border-fluid MENA and their global diasporas as a haven to explore their multi-layered identities.
- Promote safe spaces for all UIUC-registered student organizations, students, faculty, staff, and the community at large.
- Develop critical intercultural awareness and civil intercultural exchange that fosters intercultural sensitivity and cultural humility.
- Provide MENA-oriented leadership training, resources, events, workshops, conferences, and cultural experiences.
- Facilitate in-person and virtual community-based experiential learning that represents, includes, and humanizes all MENA peoples, communities, and cultures.
- Partner with organizations and individuals on campus, locally, nationally, and internationally, to achieve common goals.
- Develop an alumni network that creates opportunities for community engagement, mentorship, and support.
- Aid, support, and partner with stakeholders interested in creating a Salaam MENA Cultural Center at their respective colleges and universities.

Resources:

The **Salaam MENA Cultural Center** is a unit within Student Success, Inclusion & Belonging, which itself is a unit within Student Affairs, which provides support for students to reach their personal, academic, and professional goals through curricular and co-curricular engagement opportunities. The work is rooted in the goals of being more diverse, equitable, and inclusive to create a sense of belonging for students and other members of the university community. Below, please find some resources of interest.

Salaam MENA Cultural Center Space Reservations:

<https://salaam.illinois.edu/space-reservations>

Student Success, Inclusion & Belonging Cultural and Resource Centers:

<https://ssib.illinois.edu/units>

Student Affairs Statement and Resources for Those Affected by Violence in the Middle East and North Africa:

<https://studentaffairs.illinois.edu/news-stories/resources-for-those-affected-by-violence-in-the-middle-east>

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Lisa C. Wilson is the Executive Director of **The Refugee Center** in Champaign. She received her B.A. in Political Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and her J.D. from the University of Illinois College of Law. She completed a 40 hour Immigration Law course co-sponsored by the Immigrant Legal Resource Center and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights.

Over the last 7 years, Ms. Wilson has led The Refugee Center through a period of dramatic growth. What was once a small group of dedicated employees with a budget of less than \$300,000 has grown to a nonprofit corporation of over 25 staff members, both in person and remote, with a budget of 1.7 million dollars. In January 2024, The Refugee Center became an affiliate refugee resettlement agency with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Prior to joining The Refugee Center, Ms. Wilson worked as a transactional attorney with extensive business, management, real estate, fundraising and development experience. She is a former University of Illinois advancement professional, and former General Counsel of a Chicago based real estate development corporation and general contractor.

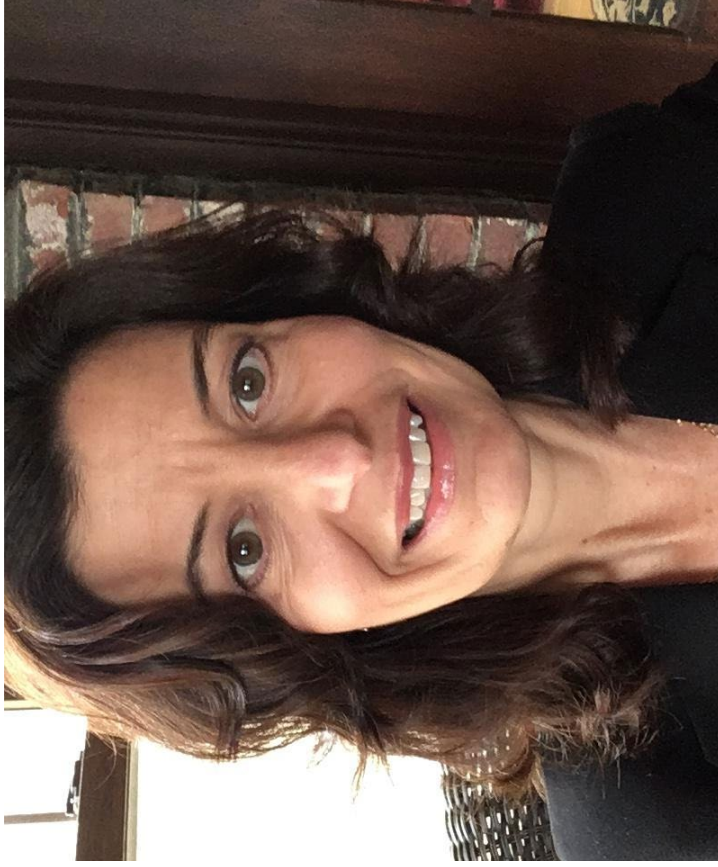
Ms. Wilson is a Past President and Trustee of the William R. and Clarice V. Spurlock Museum Board at the University of Illinois. Additional volunteer work includes strategic planning and classroom volunteer work with the Unit 4 School District, the Junior League of Champaign Urbana, and Kappa Delta Sorority.

Lisa was born and raised in Chicago, but has called Champaign-Urbana home for over 25 years. She and her husband, Matt, are empty nesters living in Champaign. They have two adult daughters, Celia and Julia.



201 W. Kenyon Rd.,
Suite 4D
Champaign, IL
217-344-8455
Open M-TH 9am-5pm
Friday by appointment
only

LISA C. WILSON,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



History

The Refugee Center was founded in 1980 by Vietnamese refugees and local Champaign-Urbana residents.

Originally called East Central Illinois Refugee Mutual Assistance Center, (ECIRMAC), The Refugee Center has expanded over the years to assist all refugees, immigrants, and asylees.

The mission has always been to help newly arrived immigrants acclimate to their new life in America by providing critical services and resources.

Since 2017, The Refugee Center has served as a refugee resettlement partner and became an affiliate refugee resettlement agency in January of 2024.



Mission

The Refugee Center exists to provide services essential to refugee and immigrant resettlement in East Central Illinois and to aid in the exchange and preservation of their respective cultures.

As an organization, we believe in the inherent worth of all human beings, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, race, sex, sexual orientation, or cultural heritage. We similarly believe that it is possible and desirable for all human beings to live peacefully together, and to work together to create a more loving and compassionate world in which everyone's basic human needs and rights can be secured.

Who We Are

A Refugee Resettlement Agency

Through the USCCB (US Council of Catholic Bishops), we've resettled families from Afghanistan, Guatemala, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burma, Lebanon, Honduras, and Iraq

Help resettle Refugees and those who have been granted SIVs (Special Immigrant Visas)

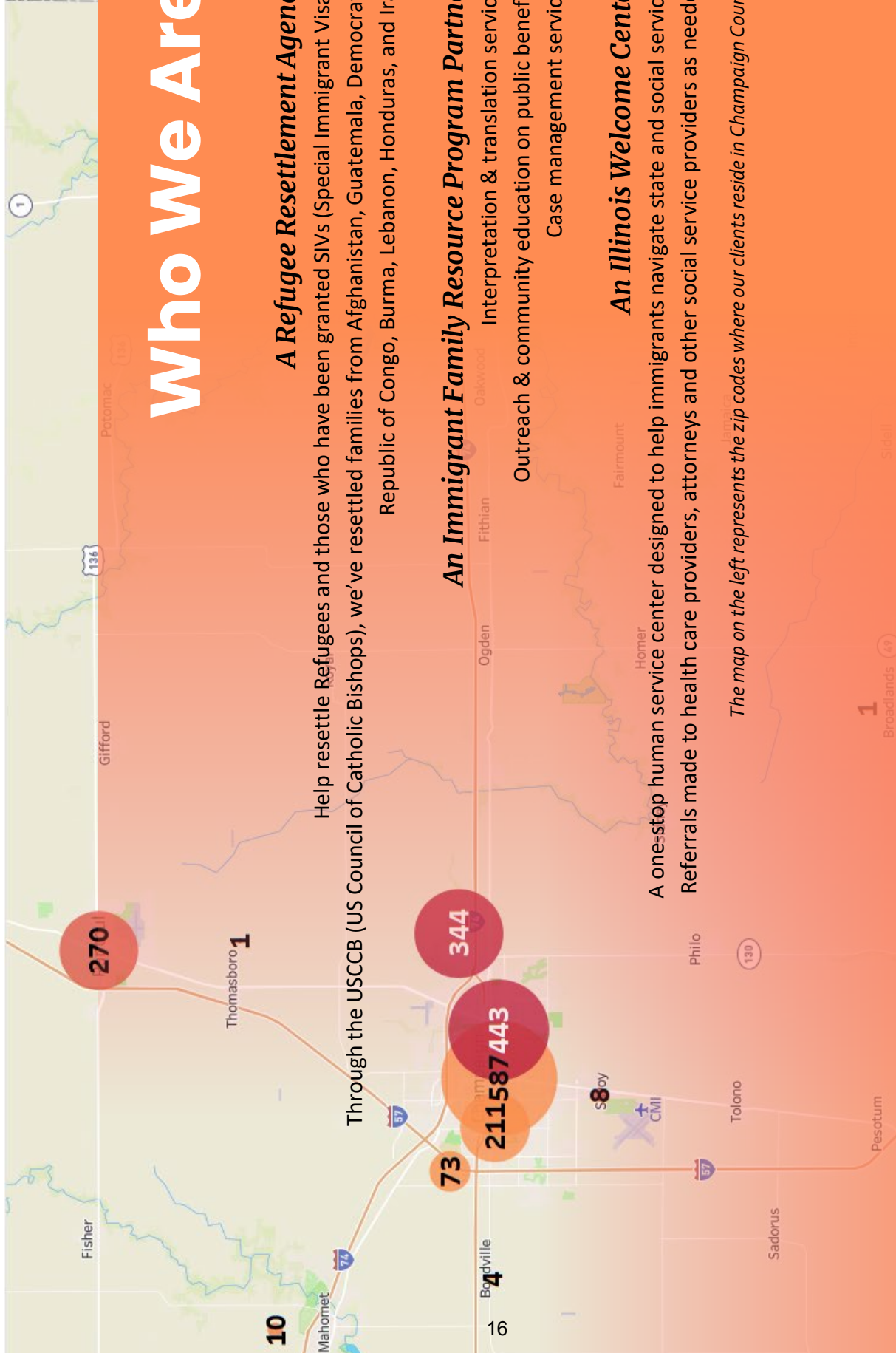
An Immigrant Family Resource Program Partner

Outreach & community education on public benefits
Interpretation & translation services
Case management services

An Illinois Welcome Center

A one-stop human service center designed to help immigrants navigate state and social services
Referrals made to health care providers, attorneys and other social service providers as needed

The map on the left represents the zip codes where our clients reside in Champaign County



Current Services

Refugee Resettlement

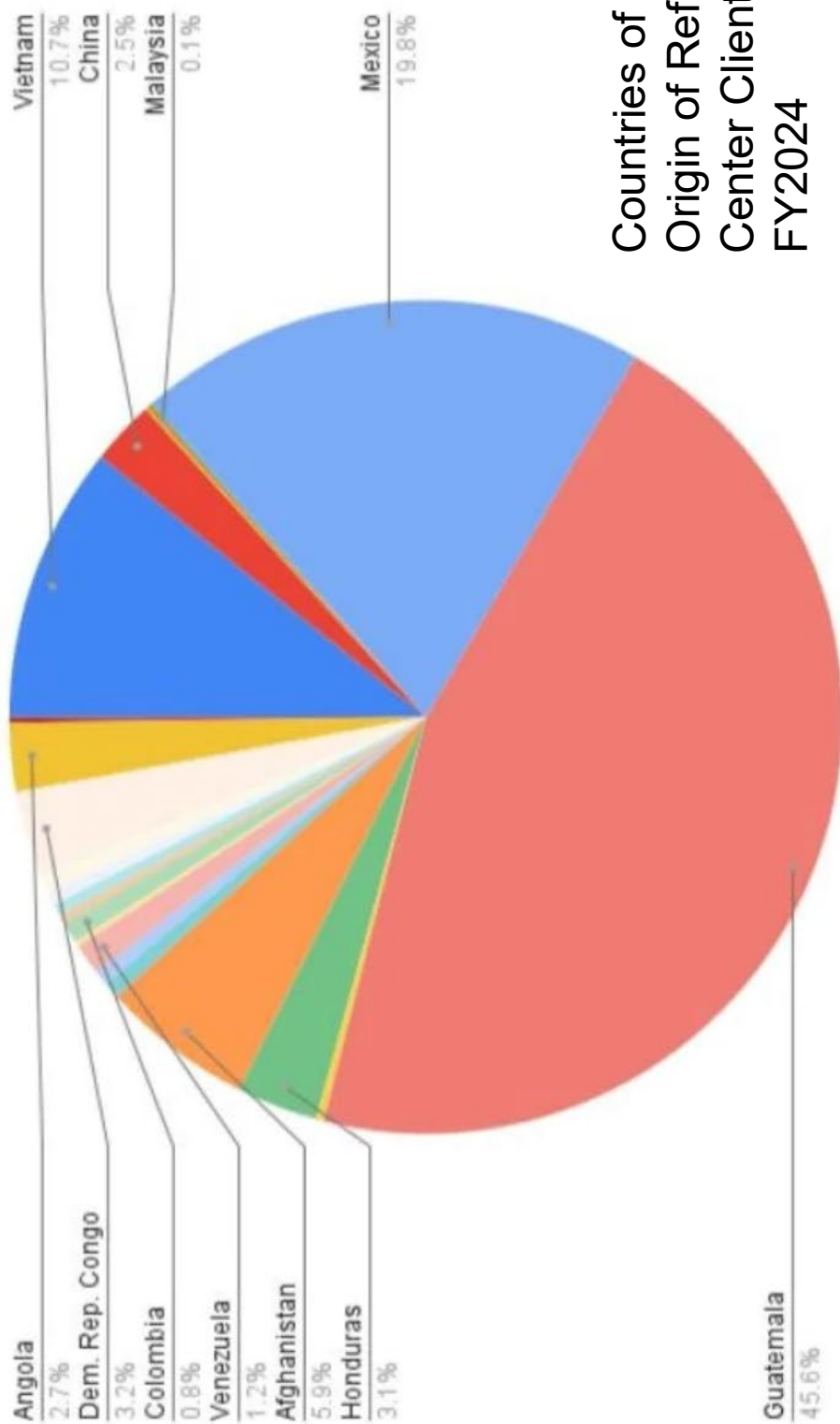
- Actively serving over 200 refugees we've resettled from Afghanistan and other countries
- Rental and utility assistance to refugees and other Office of Refugee Resettlement recognized populations
- Intensive employment and case management services for O.R.R. groups

Language Support

- Interpretation/accompaniment for job interviews, doctor visits, court hearings, school appointments, meeting with landlords, and more
- Assistance completing paperwork for permanent residency, citizenship, family reunification, and other immigration issues
- Ten languages spoken in-house, 300+ available on demand
- Certified document translation

Immigrant Social Services

- Wrap-around case management and social support services
- Referrals to health care, legal services, and other social services
- Public benefits, know your rights, and other educational workshops
- Assistance applying for public benefits like SNAP, WIC, and Medicaid



Countries of
Origin of Refugee
Center Clients for
FY2024

Immigration Statistics

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In Champaign County:

- Over 28,000 residents are foreign-born;
- Over 36,000 residents speak a language other than English in the home.
- *Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023*

Worldwide:

- There are 281 million international migrants globally in 2022
- There are an additional 89.4 million people living in displacement.
- Escalating conflict and violence, along with environmental disasters affected this number.
- *Source: International Office of Migration World Migration Report 2022*

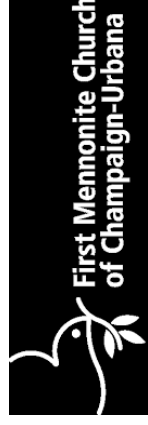
Advocacy

- ICIRR organized Advocacy Day to promote
 - Expanding the Earned Income Credit (SB 3774/ HB4920)
 - Healthcare for All (HB 4437/ SB 3989)
 - Legal Representation for All (SB 3144)
- Able to have our House Rep and Senator agree to vote yes on the bills



Faith Based Sponsors

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ILLINOIS COALITION FOR IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE RIGHTS



United Way of
Champaign County



JUNIOR LEAGUE OF
CHAMPAIGN-URBANA

...and other private grants and contributions

Additional Partners, Donors, and Sponsors

The Refugee Center
Champaign

201 West Kenyon Road
Suite 4D

Champaign, IL 61820

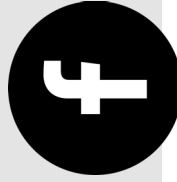
admin@ecirmac.org

217-344-8455

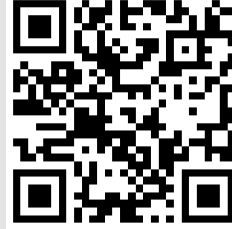
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therefugeecenter-cu.org/



facebook.com/TheRefugeeCenter



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Survey on Immigrant and Refugee Supports

With assistance from the Director of Immigrant Services of Champaign-Urbana, CCDDDB-CCMHB staff created and hosted a survey to improve our understanding of the experiences and needs of immigrant and refugees in Champaign County.

- 9 respondents completed the Spanish **language** version, 4 French, 4 English, and 0 Q'anjob'al, though 4 of the people completing the Spanish version mentioned speaking Q'anjob'al. The Spanish and French responses were translated into English, for this report, using Google translate, and our limited skills with those languages.
- 100% of respondents were **19 to 59** years of age.
- 14 (82%) were **women** and 3 **men**.

Countries of origin:

Africa (1)
Honduras (1)
India (1)
Philippines (1)
Mexico (3)
Democratic Republic of Congo (3)
Guatemala (7)

Years in the US:

4-6 years (1)
1-3 years (3)
More than 10 (6)
7-10 years (7)

Status:

Asylee (1)
Refugee (1)
Other (1)
Immigrant (14)

How did you first learn about the immigration process requirements?

Immigration consultant (1)
Online or social media (1)
Government website (2)
Other (2)
Friends or family (11)

What have your experiences in this country been like and were you expecting your experiences to be different?

- *Since I came so young (6 years old), I had no expectations.*

- *Struggle but worth it.*
- *My experiences haven't been what I expected, because moving from one country to another, from one culture to another, really changes the way you experience things.*
- *My experiences were first as a teenager in NYC in 2011 and they were positive. People were kind, not surprised by my physical appearance or language. Treated like another one. Then in 2018 I came with my husband to work and study in Cincinnati, OH. We had a different experience basically another planet that was not NYC. We regret it but we did finish the course. Last we came back in 2022 to keep ahead his studies, this time in Illinois and our experiences have been a little different but not dramatically different.*
- *I was hoping to finish high school, but I had to leave to work at Kraft at night, and I always fell asleep at school.*
- *You have to fight harder here. It's nice, but it's hard to pay for everything. It's hard to find work.*
- *It hasn't been easy, nor difficult either. Thank God my family and I are doing well.*
- *Different.*
- *It's different. Everything is very strange and not like my country.*
- *Living in a beautiful place.*
- *It's different. I imagined living in a big building and that life would be easy. It's not like that.*
- *The first few years were very difficult. Adapting and learning the language is very hard. After I got a permanent, secure job, everything started to get better.*
- *Good.*
- *At first, it was difficult for The Replacements. Exactly.*
- *My experience in this country was both educational and stimulating. I was able to apply my knowledge in an environment very different from my own, which helped me develop new skills. I expected to encounter more linguistic and cultural barriers, but integration went more smoothly than I imagined. In short, this experience exceeded my expectations.*

Have you faced discrimination as an immigrant (or refugee or asylee)?

- No answer (1)
- Maybe (3)
- Yes (5)
- No (8)

How has your cultural background influenced your life in the US?

- *The cultural shifts that I experienced inside and outside my home differed greatly, especially as the oldest child. I was a guinea pig for my parents in more ways than one.*
- *Very much people are interested in knowing about India*
- *A lot we still get our Honduran food and do the same meals our parents did for us. We are proud of the good things in our culture.*
- *I still speak Q'anjob'al and wear clothes from my country and use some natural things for health*
- *The food and the church remain the same.*
- *Very good.*
- *We speak Q'anjob'al and go to church.*
- *I still wear my clothes and carry my son on my back, trying to teach my culture to my children. We only speak Q'anjob'al.*
- *Dialect.*
- *Go to church and speak Q'anjob'al.*

- *A lot. I've always tried to keep my culture alive and teach my children to do the same, to recognize and respect their roots.*
- *A lot.*
- *Unnoticed difficult.*
- *In my community we are helped with information.*
- *My cultural background has greatly helped me maintain my values and identity while adapting to American life. It has taught me respect, solidarity, and perseverance, which has allowed me to better face the challenges of integration.*

Rate how well you feel integrated into your local community. (5 = Completely, 1 = Not at all.)

2 (2)

3 (4)

5 (4)

4 (7)

What do immigrants or refugees struggle with the most?

- *Acceptance of their existence in our community.*
- *Inclusion.*
- *Language barrier. Support system. Mental health resources.*
- *Some kind of white people.*
- *Find work and transportation (3 comments)*
- *But Spanish to English was difficult for me.*
- *With English and lack of good papers to work.*
- *Driving.*
- *English.*
- *Obtaining legal status, getting a secure and permanent job, learning the language, surviving on very little.*
- *With the jobs.*
- *The memories of foreigners.*
- *The language.*
- *The main challenges faced by immigrants and refugees are linguistic, economic, and social. Language barriers often limit their employment opportunities and participation in public life. In addition, many struggle to have their qualifications or professional experience recognized, leading to financial insecurity. Socially, they must overcome loneliness, uprootedness, and sometimes rejection or mistrust from the host society.*

What supports, services, or resources would most help you or others in your situation?

- *More cultural nights/events hosted by the City of Champaign (not just the cultural orgs), especially for holidays (like Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May, or Día de los Muertos on November 1st).*
- *CU Early.*
- *CU Early, A more welcoming America, learning the real history of the US and how this country has been made with immigrants of all sorts. Watch a lot of PBS Documentaries to learn how African Americans, Chinese, Central Americans, Mexicans, Africans, Asians, have made so much and have been used systematically by white people in power to make money in the United States.*
- *Help with paying bills.*
- *Class to get your license. Daycare to go to English classes.*

- *Supporting children with disabilities.*
- *At first I needed food, clothes, money, then I needed to find a job.*
- *English classes with daycare.*
- *WIC.*
- *Free lawyers and a group with a counselor for mental health support.*
- *Low-cost legal advice, more options for learning English, mayors who care about our needs and include us in their plans.*
- *Health.*
- *Learn the language, share my knowledge with others.*
- *Personalized support and practical training would greatly help me strengthen my skills and achieve my goals more quickly. Access to resources such as coaching or career guidance workshops would also be very useful.*

What suggestions do you have for improving the immigration process?

- *I'm not sure.*
- *More opportunities and inclusion.*
- *Share more information, with simple steps.*
- *Have a path to citizenship. Or to work legally.*
- *I need good papers to work without fear.*
- *More free lawyers.*
- *Make it easier for you to get work papers.*
- *That leave the community alone.*
- *There's an easier and cheaper way to become a citizen or have permission to be here. Now, you're almost never accepted, and you pay a lot for nothing.*
- *For the moment nothing.*
- *Respect the immigration process.*
- *I suggest making the process faster and more transparent, including improving communication between applicants and immigration services. Clearer deadlines and regular updates would help reduce stress and uncertainty.*

Have you ever avoided seeking mental health or substance use treatment or other behavioral health care due to fear of detention, deportation, or disclosing your status? If yes, please explain.

- *Yes (2)*
- *No (8)*
- *Yes, I'm afraid that will affect me get my citizenship.*
- *Yes, because at first I didn't have health insurance.*
- *Yes, because you can't trust them if they help you, they will share your information with immigration.*
- *Yes, because if they know where we are, they can get us out.*
- *I think it would be helpful to make the process more transparent and better communicated.*
- *For example, by simplifying online procedures, reducing processing times, and providing better support to applicants at every stage.*

Have you ever needed language assistance, such as a translator or translated materials, when seeking health care or behavioral health care? If yes, what was your experience?

- *Yes (2)*
- *No (6)*
- *I've done counseling in English, but sometimes it's hard to fully understand everything because I usually speak Spanish.*

- *It is difficult to understand the translators sometimes*
- *If it is very difficult to communicate*
- *If I always had a hard time with English*
- *Yes. English is very difficult.*
- *If sometimes there is no translator or I don't understand.*
- *Hospitals usually have trained staff to translate, but the telephone translation system is very poor in the healthcare setting.*
- *Yes, to speak with the counselor.*
- *Yes, I once needed a translator during a medical appointment because I wasn't fluent in English at the time. The translator was very helpful in helping me understand the doctor's explanations and asking questions. It was a positive experience because it allowed me to receive better care and feel more comfortable during the visit.*

Are you aware of changes to federal immigration policies or enforcement practices? If yes, what is your understanding of these, and how have they affected you or your family?

- *Yes (1)*
- *No (3)*
- *Kind of, but I get really scared and upset anytime I read the news regarding immigration policies under this current administration.*
- *No I am not aware of any.*
- *Yes, some stress and at the same time relief because we don't love to live here.*
- *We're very scared now. I need to go to Chicago for a doctor's appointment, but I'm afraid.*
- *I'm more afraid because they're deporting many people.*
- *There are many deportations and we are afraid to leave.*
- *I feel terrible that they're deporting my countrymen. Hopefully, one day they'll come for us at our jobs.*
- *We don't go out that much.*
- *The most recent changes, government threats, and fear-mongering strategies have had a profound effect on my family and friends. We live in fear and uncertainty.*
- *No, everything is changing very quickly.*
- *Yes, I am aware of some recent changes, including [example: updated processing times, new visa requirements, etc.]. These changes have had an impact on my family, as they have resulted in [example: longer waiting times / additional steps / a feeling of uncertainty]. This has pushed us to be more informed and adapt to the new regulations.*

If you have other information you would like to share with us, please use this space, and THANK YOU for your help!

- *Ok (1)*
- *No (2)*
- *Mental and physical well-being are two very important areas, but for immigrants, accessing services is incredibly difficult due to a lack of health insurance. People without health insurance live without such care for fear of seeking it and then being unable to afford the high costs.*
- *Thank you.*
- *I have no further information to add at this time. Thank you as well!*

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From: [Ricardo Diaz](#)
To: [Lynn Canfield](#)
Cc: [Sarah Mellor](#); [Maggie Kosterman](#)
Subject: Re: Have some info on immigrants for the document we discussed
Date: Friday, November 8, 2024 1:06:16 PM
Attachments: [TIP CASES.docx](#)

Hi Lynn, good to be in touch:

Here are materials from two different angles that might be helpful:

1. General

ARPA funds are supporting the development and accessibility of mental health and evaluation services for immigrants in Champaign County. The project brings together several immigrant-serving agencies in the community to streamline efforts and create cohesive responses: the Refugee Center, Immigration Services of Champaign Urbana, Pixan Konob, the Immigration Project and the New America Welcome Center. Structural barriers like language, insurance, and high costs, often limit access to mental health services for immigrants. ARPA funds have supported mental health evaluations, counseling services, and group therapy programming for immigrants of all ages who are undergoing severe mental and social stress and trauma; they have also subsidized need evaluations in their appeals for legal immigration relief. This may include in-person counseling, telehealth counseling, mental health evaluations, resources, and programming. Funds are building local capacity to conduct psychological evaluations in US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) proceedings (i.e., for victims of criminal activity, victims of trafficking, survivors of domestic violence and other crimes, and asylum).

At least 1029 individuals have been served across all agencies over three years (both programs)

Thousands of bilingual flyers shared (directly to clients, at outreach events, etc). In this campaign and in other ways we've worked to combat the (cultural) stigma around seeking mental health care.

Over 30 mental health workshops hosted by the collective agencies have provided clients the ability to come together to share personal experiences, receive referrals for more tailored support, and begin building communities of care in the US (for new arrivals specifically).

Through hundreds of mental health referrals, agencies had the ability to cover provider costs for clients. Finding bilingual providers was hard, but not impossible. We have made a list that we made at the start of the grant

Through the ARPA grant the immigration Project has been able to accomplish much and their summary follows; the other agencies have collaborated in developing the list and arranging client consults, especially the laborious letters for asylum applications:

The Immigration Project contracts a mental health service provider who invoices them with a discounted rate, based on an understanding of the program goals and their status as a nonprofit rate. TIP's provider is the only bilingual service provider that they have been able to contract on a regular basis for therapy. There are no in-person services available for hire in the Champaign area and there are very few bilingual telehealth providers with availability. TIP has also contracted the services of a mental health evaluator at their standard rate for non-profits, Interconnect. Interconnect was non-negotiable with the rate but were the cheapest of over 20 providers that TIP called. TIP did not use interconnect during this reporting period,

only Jackie Bertagni Counseling.

Specifics for TIP:

All of the support groups and counseling sessions were offered in Spanish.

Total number of clients receiving individual Mental Health Services under the grant at the immigration project : 52

Eight counselor facilitated support groups with a total of 81 participants. The themes of the support groups were sad seasonal disorder, domestic violence and abuse, self-care, tools to control negative thoughts.

The groups targeted the needs of immigrant women and immigrant survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking, and other types of trauma. These were also the primary participants in our counseling.

of letters written by mental health provider Jackie : 8

These letters can easily reach 50 written pages. It is not unusual for USCIS to ask for further documentation on the impact on the individual and thus the need for them to be admitted; without these letters, it is probable the person's application would be denied. Jackie often interviews and writes unremunerated reports.

Approximately 525 total individual therapy sessions have been recorded.

Two anecdotal stories are attached

2. Longer term prospects

It's hard to understand how mental health for traumatized immigrants will continue to be a need without bringing politics into the mix.

Regardless of what happens with politics, many of the new arrivals who came this year will still end up staying in our community. It's impossible to imagine that mass deportations would round up everyone. We will still be a community with a high number of immigrants, and immigrants are especially vulnerable domestic violence and exploitation. Not only have they suffered trauma in their homelands which was the reason for their migration. Many also suffered at the borders at the hands of criminals and border agents....causing further trauma,...and now upon being in the United States they suffer not only racism and stereotyping but also outright discrimination by sex traffickers, and other scam artists. If we don't confront the trauma, it can persist throughout generations and lead to further racial division among people. We need to support the mental health of immigrants in order to create a cohesive community where everyone is contributing to the greater good and not disrupted by past trauma.

We have great resources in the community, just not in other languages than English. Norms have changed and telehealth is normalized but the most effective sessions are still done in person; we also learn more from such settings.

We are cognizant of the good work of the board and hope to support the board's mission by bridging in the newly arrived.

On Thu, Nov 7, 2024, 5:01 PM Lynn Canfield <lynn@ccmhb.org> wrote:

When you have the completed summary, I will love to have it and reference it in our community needs assessment for the next cycle.

From: Ricardo Diaz <xpenn.diaz@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, November 7, 2024 1:44 PM

To: Lynn Canfield <lynn@ccmhb.org>

Subject: Have some info on immigrants for the document we discussed

Hi

I'll have the summary soon and can talk though it in case it's useful.

217.979.0255

CASE 1

Female client recently arrived from Colombia. Frustrated for leaving her country and unable to practice her profession as a Doctor.

Diagnosis: Anxiety disorder and sign of depression

Client very committed to regular therapy.

Therapy approach.

- Helped to reduce frustration by viewing adaptation as growth rather than permanent loss (Cognitive restructuring)
- Addressed the loss of professional status, language barriers and cultural identity struggles. Validating feelings of frustration and lack of belonging (Migratory Grief Work)
- Assisted in accepting difficult emotions and committing to actions that bring meaning despite non ideal jobs like house cleaning ,her first job here. (Acceptance and Commitment)
- Encourage joining immigrant and multicultural groups (Support networks)
- Help to build language learning plan and encourage client to focus in observing local culture.

Outcome: Our Client is now working in a comfortable setting for her , has found a social community with shared values, made language progress and overcame cultural barriers. Her mental Health has stabilized allowing her to build a new life here.

CASE 2

Female patient , immigrant from Venezuela , arrived in the country after a two month journey with her partner, her young son and 8 year old daughter. After settling in the country her partner began to physically abuse her, causing high emotional vulnerability and post traumatic stress which were intensified by her sense of displacement and the responsibility of caring for her children in an unfamiliar environment.

Client very committed to regular therapy.

Therapy approach.

- Guidance on domestic violence providing the client with tool to ensure her safety and access to support networks (Courage Connection was referred to the client)
- Trauma therapy to process the stress and the abuse experienced.
- Strengthening her self esteem and autonomy to enable her to make safe decisions for her and her children.
- Adaptation and stability plan , facilitating access to community resources, public benefits, and psychological support to her daughter at school .

Outcome: The client was able to remove her partner from home, initially moving to a shelter and then finding a new place where to live. The therapeutic support was essential in helping her feel supported and cared for. Today client lives in a more peaceful environment with her children, has a job and is emotionally stable.