



AN ORIENTATION RESOURCE TO SUPPORT YOUTH WITH SCHOOL AND CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Purpose: To orientate students to the U.S. school system and support their cultural adjustment.

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I. BASIC SCHOOL INFORMATION

Objective

To explore norms, rules and behavior expectations students will encounter at U.S. schools, to discuss school personnel, their roles and communication norms and to introduce afterschool possibilities.

Resources

- ▣ [**Cultural Orientation Resource Center \(COR\) Activities – Helping Children \(grade 6-12\) adjust to school**](#)
 - Basic classroom protocol, adjusting to class schedules and understanding rules

- ▣ [**Cultural Orientation for Children with Refugee Backgrounds**](#)

Unit 2: School Rules & Skills

 - Lesson 2A) Life Skills at Schools - school environment, acceptable behavior in bus, school and playground setting, model age-appropriate school behaviors
 - Lesson 2B) Learning at School - school personnel and their roles, difference between unacceptable and acceptable behavior in classroom settings
 - Lesson 2C) Communicating with Adults – tips to help refugee youth communicate with school personnel, including strategies for clarifying questions, giving and receiving feedback, asking for assistance and expressing concerns or feelings

- ▣ [**On Their Way: An Orientation Curriculum for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors**](#)

Chapter 4: Education

 - Lesson 2) Education: Case Study - educational challenges faced by older youth
 - Lesson 3) A Day at School – typical high school day
 - Lesson 4) Educational and Cultural Differences – prepare for changes
 - Lesson 5) Inside a Backpack – backpacks, school supplies and uses
 - Lesson 7) School Roles – roles of adults, different titles used for adults and who to go to for help or support

- ▣ [**USCRI Classroom Simulation – Somali Bantu Manual**](#)
 - U.S. classroom academic practices

- ▣ [**Cultural Orientation Resource Center \(COR\) Activities – Afterschool Activities**](#)
 - Afterschool possibilities, time management and self-motivation

II. LAW AND SAFETY

Objective

To introduce U.S. laws and safety norms, to explain role of police, consequences of breaking the law, the danger of drugs, internet safety, child safety laws and the role of Child Protective Services (CPS).

Resources

▣ [Cultural Orientation for Children with Refugee Backgrounds](#)

Unit 1: Laws and Safety

- Lesson 1A) Laws – role of police, consequences of violating curfew, truancy, fighting, underage smoking and drinking, and driving without license
- Lesson 1B) Gateway Drugs – dangers and consequences of using drugs
- Lesson 1C) Child Safety – define role of CPS, when to call 911, and suitable discipline methods in America

▣ [Collection of Lesson Plans and Resources for the Refugee Student Service Program of Catholic Charities of New Mexico](#)

- Internet safety guidelines for adults and children

▣ [On Their Way: An Orientation Curriculum for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors](#)

Unit 7: Rights and Laws

- Lesson 4) The Law – role of law enforcement and consequences of breaking laws in the U.S.

III. HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Objective

To explain U.S. expectations and norms around health and hygiene, to explore cultural adjustment and impact on emotions and feelings, identify stressors and develop positive coping mechanisms and importance of asking for help.

Resources

▣ [Cultural Orientation Resource Center \(COR\) Activities – Staying Healthy](#)

- Identification and value of hygiene norms in U.S.

▣ [On Their Way: An Orientation Curriculum for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors](#)

Chapter 5: Cultural Adjustment

- Lesson 1) Cultural Adjustment: The Basics – being bicultural, need for flexibility and U.S. hygiene concepts
- Lesson 3) Health: New Foods – different foods, trying things, and food pyramid

▣ [Cultural Orientation for Children with Refugee Backgrounds](#)

Unit 5: Emotional Health

- Lesson 5A) Getting to Know Each Other – share and build foundation for trust
- Lesson 5B) Sharing – build group cohesion and articulate future goals and wishes
- Lesson 5C) Emotions – identify feelings and appropriate coping behaviors
- Lesson 5D) Asking for Help – understand new stressors and coping mechanisms and identify solutions for common problems

▣ [Healthwise – Health Literacy Teaching Resource for Refugee and Other ESL Students](#)

- Unit 1) What is Health? – awareness of physical, emotional and social health
 - Unit 2) Changing Cultures – identify assets left behind, feelings of loss, and positive changes
 - Unit 3) Feelings and Emotions – recognize and name emotions, causes and impacts and coping strategies
 - Unit 4) Making Friends and Connections – value and process of making friends
 - Unit 5) How Can I Change the Way I Feel? – causes and impact of stress, positive coping mechanisms and negative/harmful strategies
 - Unit 6) I Have a Problem – early intervention, relation between health and learning, and getting help
 - Unit 7) Health Professionals – differences between general practitioners and specialists
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IV. [STUDY SKILLS/SOFT SKILLS](#)

Objective

To explore study skills, to address importance of time-management, planning and educational goal-setting, and to equip youth for situations where they may need to help parents navigate and manage money.

Resources

- ▣ [**Cultural Orientation Resource Center \(COR\) Activities – Setting Educational Goals**](#)
 - Importance of setting goals
 - Goal-setting, both short-term and long-term
 - Identify steps in achieving goals

 - ▣ [**Collection of Lesson Plans and Resources for the Refugee Student Service Program of Catholic Charities of New Mexico**](#)

Study Skills Curriculum

 - A Good Study Place – identify the best place to study
 - Taking Notes – strategies for before, during and after class
 - Learning Styles – explore auditory, tactile, and visual learning styles
 - Active Listening – listening vs. hearing and tips for active listening
 - Taking Tests – strategies for preparing

 - ▣ [**On Their Way: An Orientation Curriculum for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors**](#)

Unit 5: Cultural Adjustment

 - Section 7) Time and Planning – U.S. concepts of time, the importance of being on time, and strategies to ensure timeliness

 - ▣ [**Cultural Orientation Resource Center \(COR\) Activities – Money Management**](#)
 - U.S. currency and basic adding skills

 - ▣ [**Cultural Orientation for Children with Refugee Backgrounds**](#)
 - Unit 4: Money and Numbers – identifying and naming U.S. currency
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V. SOCIAL SKILLS

Objective

To explore communication social norms, to discuss and introduce norms and laws around romantic relationships.

Resources

- ▣ [**Cultural Orientation for Children with Refugee Backgrounds**](#)

Unit 3: Social Skills

 - Lesson 3A) Non-Verbal Behavior
 - Lesson 3B) Giving and Receiving Feedback
 - Lesson 3C) Acceptable vs. Unacceptable Social Behaviors

- [On Their Way: An Orientation Curriculum for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors](#)
 Unit 6: Social Interactions
 - Lesson 1) Social Interactions: The Basics – basic overview, including feeling isolated, making friends and developing friendships
 - Lesson 4) Communicating a Positive Environment – practice positive communication skills and discuss how a positive attitude helps adjustment
 - Lesson 5) Listening Skills – the importance of and tips for developing listening skills
 - Lesson 6) Nonverbal Communication – define and explore nonverbal communications

 - [Cultural Orientation Resource Center \(COR\) Activities – Romantic Relationships](#)
 - Compare customs and explore sexual relationships and legal lines
 - Boys and girls being friends
 - ‘No’ means ‘no’ and legalities of marriage

 - [Family Wellness: Survival Skills for Healthy Families – Adapted Curriculum](#)
 - Section 4) Getting Along with Friends – working as a team, communicating

 - [Healthwise – Health Literacy Teaching Resource for Refugee and Other ESL Students](#)
 - Unit 4) Making Friends and Connections – value and process of making friends
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VI. FAMILY DYNAMICS

Objective

To explore changing family dynamics and roles of different family members and to equip youth with strategies for conflict resolution and identifying family assets.

Resources

- [Cultural Orientation for Children with Refugee Backgrounds](#)
 Unit 7: Family Roles
 - Lesson 7A) Managing Conflict in the Family – causes of conflict, strategies to resolve conflict, signs and feelings of anger
 - Lesson 7B) Family Roles – identify roles, changes caused by resettlement, importance of family and appropriate helping behaviors
 - Lesson 7C) My Family Values – identify important family values and brainstorm and plan family activities

- ▣ [Family Wellness: Survival Skills for Healthy Families – Adapted Curriculum](#)
 - Section 2) Making (and Following) Rules – cultural comparison, importance of rules, making and negotiating rules and family meetings
 - Section 3) What is My Job? – being yourself and belonging to family
 - Section 4) Getting Along with Friends – working as a team, communicating
 - Section 5) Changes – understanding and managing change and recognizing family strengths
 - Section 6) Problem Solving – working together
 - Section 7) Values – identify and articulate/acknowledge family and individual values
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VII. HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND COLLEGE PREPARATION

Objective

To explain high school graduation requirements, the importance of goal-setting and post-secondary options, including applying and paying for college

Resources

- ▣ [Cultural Orientation Resource Center \(COR\) Activities – Setting Educational Goals](#)
 - Importance of goal-setting
 - Short-term and long-term goals
 - Steps to achieve goals

- ▣ [It's My Life: Postsecondary Education and Training – A Guide for Transition Services from Casey Family Programs](#)
 - Recommendations and strategies for navigating the complex planning process
 - #1) Foster High Academic Aspirations
 - #2) Encourage Long-Term Planning for Postsecondary Education
 - #3) Stress Rigorous Academic Preparation
 - #4) Support Students in Taking Standardized Tests
 - #5) Support Students in Choosing, Applying for, and Enrolling in Postsecondary Education
 - #6) Help Students Apply for and Get Adequate Financial Aid Recommendation
 - #7) Engage Young Adults Who Have Missed out on Postsecondary Preparation
 - #8) Help Students Adjust to and Complete their College or Training Program

- ▣ [OSPI Graduation Toolkit](#)
 - WA State graduation requirements

 - ▣ [College Board Website](#)
 - Resource to help students prepare for SAT, find colleges, learn about financial aid and plan for college
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VIII. CULTURAL AFFIRMATION AND PRESERVATION

Objective

To support youth by providing opportunities for cultural affirmation and preservation, recognizing pressures to assimilate and supporting development of healthy bicultural identity.

Resources

- ▣ [Cultural Orientation for Children with Refugee Backgrounds](#)
 - Unit 6: Claiming your Culture
 - Lesson 6A) A Typical Day for Me before I Came to the U.S. – share activities from home culture, possibilities to continue activities in U.S., and comparisons to activities in the U.S.
 - Lesson 6B) A Game I Play – students identify and teach games from home culture
 - Lesson 6C) Sharing My Culture – sharing and increasing cultural knowledge between students
 - Lesson 6D) Culture & Media – cultural media consumption, cultural myths and facts
 - Lesson 6E) Multicultural Awareness – cultural assumptions and stereotypes, and skills for developing cross-cultural relationships build awareness

- ▣ [On Their Way: An Orientation Curriculum for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors](#)
 - Unit 5: Cultural Adjustment
 - Lesson 1) Cultural Adjustment – bicultural identity, need for flexibility
 - Lesson 4) Dealing with Culture Shock – understanding culture shock and strategies for reducing culture shock

IX. PRIMARY RESOURCES

- ▣ [Collection of Lesson Plans and Resources for the Refugee Student Service Program of Catholic Charities of New Mexico](#)
 - Overview of study skills curriculum for middle and high school youth: a good study place, taking notes, different kinds of learners, active listening, test taking, leadership skills, coping with culture shock, and internet safety tips.

- ▣ [Cultural Orientation for Children with Refugee Backgrounds:](#)
 - Comprehensive curriculum for recently resettled children aged 8-14, including strength based guidelines. Topics: Law and Safety, School Rules and Skills, Social Skills, Money and Numbers, Emotional and Mental Health, Claiming your Culture, and Family Roles.

- ▣ [Cultural Orientation Resource Center \(COR\) All Lesson Plans - Youth](#)
 - Youth orientation activities for initial resettlement around education and cultural adjustment. Topics: Education: Helping Children (grade 6-12) adjust to school, After School Activities, Staying Healthy, Setting Educational Goals, Romantic Relationships, and Money Management.

- ▣ [Family Wellness: Survival Skills for Healthy Families – Adapted Curriculum](#)
 - Resource adapted to help teenagers build strong and healthy relationships with families and peers. Topics include: Making (and following) rules, Teenager’s role within the family, Getting along with friends, Changes, Problem solving, and Values. Listening, speaking, and negotiating skills are integrated throughout curriculum.

- ▣ [Healthwise – Health Literacy Teaching Resource for Refugee and Other ESL Students](#)
 - Comprehensive middle school aged health literacy curriculum from Australia to teach refugee and other ELL students. Units: What is Health, Changing Cultures, Feelings and Emotions, Making Friends and Connections, How Can I Change the Way I Feel, I Have a Problem, and Health Professionals.

- ▣ [It's My Life: Postsecondary Education and Training – A Guide for Transition Services from Casey Family Programs](#)
 - Adaptable to refugee youth, includes recommendations with strategies to help youth navigate the complex post-secondary planning process.

- ▣ [On Their Way: An Orientation Curriculum for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors](#)
 - Cultural orientation manual for unaccompanied refugee minor program, relevant to all refugee youth. Units: Education, Cultural Adjustment, and Social Interactions.

- ▣ [USCRI Classroom Simulation – Somali Bantu Manual](#)
 - This resource provides a simulation of the American classroom for initial resettlement.

X. SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- ▣ [Blessed with a Difficult Task: Refugee Youth and the Transition to Adulthood – BRYCS Spotlight](#)
 - Looks at the challenging transition time of adolescence, including additional challenges many refugee youth face. Highlights resources to help youth transition from being supported by family to helping support family.

- ▣ [Growing up in a New Country: A Positive Youth Development Toolkit for Working with Refugees and Immigrants](#)
 - Toolkit to support service providers in their efforts to develop quality programming for newcomer youth.

- ▣ [Helping Refugee Youth Find the Right Path – BRYCS Spotlight](#)
 - Looks at how Positive Youth Development (PYD) is well suited to serve refugee youth drawing on protective factors and social assets spanning their native and new culture. Looks at positive youth activities (arts, sports, etc.) as a prevention strategy. Also highlights use of PYD in gang prevention model. Finishes with tips for program managers.

- ▣ [Leveling the Playing Field through Summer Learning Programs – BRYCS Spotlight](#)
 - Highlights key features of high quality programs and promising practices in summer programming for refugee youth.

- ▣ [Promising Practices in After-School Programming for Refugee Youth and Children – BRYCS Spotlight](#)
 - Looks at promising practices for After-School Programming (ASP) serving refugee youth and children including challenges and recommendations with resources around program planning, programming, staffing, funding, and evaluation.

- ▣ [Welcoming and Orienting Newcomer Students to U.S. Schools – BRYCS Spotlight](#)
 - Offers overview of school adjustment process and importance of successful school adjustment for newcomer youth. Reviews orientation areas and different structures for implementation as well as strategies for social integration of newcomer students in U.S. Schools and responding to negative encounters and reactions.

- ▣ [Youth Voice: Listening To Refugee and Immigrant Youth – BRYCS Spotlight](#)
 - Highlights newcomer art and voice and the importance of cultivating creativity of newcomer youth by offering challenge and inspiration, in order to support healthy identity formation, positive youth development, a positive peer community and an environment of tolerance.

XI. YOUTH MENTORING RESOURCES

- ❖ Mentoring is one strategy that can be used to support youth in their transition to American school and culture. There are many different approaches to mentoring. The following resources focus on approaches that have been effective for mentoring refugee youth.

Resources:

- ▣ [**Mentoring Refugee Youth – BRYCS Spotlight**](#)
 - Provides information on the value of mentoring refugee youth, and highlights resources for starting programs, matching mentors and mentees, recruiting, training and supporting mentors, and evaluating mentoring programs.
- ▣ [**New Directions in Mentoring Refugee Youth – BRYCS Spotlight**](#)
 - Discusses different mentoring frameworks (setting, structure, goals) and highlights new directions for mentoring refugee youth. Contains links to manuals on mentoring as a family strengthening strategy, group mentoring, cross-age peer mentoring and intergenerational mentoring.
- ▣ [**Mentoring Refugee and Immigrant Youth Toolkit: A Toolkit for Program Coordinators**](#)
 - Tools to implement a mentoring program for refugee and immigrant youth from start to finish
- ▣ [**Training New Mentors: Effective Strategies for Providing Quality Youth Mentoring in Schools and Communities**](#)
 - Comprehensive training on attitudes, skills, and activities that mentors need in order to mentor a young person effectively. Includes ready-to-use training modules and integrates positive youth development throughout.
- ▣ [**Recruiting Mentors: A Guide to Finding Volunteers to Work with Youth**](#)
 - This resource offers a wealth of information for recruiting volunteer mentors with special considerations for recruiting college students and older adults and worksheets for development of successful recruitment strategies.

XII. RESOURCE LINKS

Primary Resources

- ▣ **Collection of Lesson Plans and Resources for the Refugee Student Services Program of Catholic Charities of New Mexico**
<http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/RSSNM.pdf>
- ▣ **Cultural Orientation for Children with Refugee Backgrounds**
<http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/UtahCo.pdf>
- ▣ **Cultural Orientation Resource Center (COR) Activities**
<http://www.culturalorientation.net/library/all-lesson-plans/youth>
- ▣ **Family Wellness: Survival Skills for Healthy Families – Adapted Curriculum**
<http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/familywellness2.pdf>
- ▣ **Healthwise – Health Literacy Teaching Resource for Refugee and Other ESL Students**
http://www.foundationhouse.org.au/resources/publications_and_resources.htm
- ▣ **It's My Life: Postsecondary Education and Training – A Guide for Transition Services from Casey Family Programs**
http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/pdf/ItsMyLife_PostsecondaryEducation.pdf
- ▣ **On Their Way: An Orientation Curriculum for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors**
<http://www.culturalorientation.net/library/all-lesson-plans/youth>
- ▣ **USCRI – Somali Bantu manual – Classroom Simulation**
http://www.uscrirefugees.org/2010Website/5_Resources/5_1_For_Refugees_Immigrants/5_1_4_Cultural_Orientation/5_1_4_2_Somali_Bantu_Community_Orientation/ClassRoomSimulation.pdf

Supporting Resources

- ▣ **Blessed with a Difficult Task: Refugee Youth and the Transition to Adulthood**
http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/brycs_spotapr2006.pdf
- ▣ **Growing up in a New Country: A Positive Youth Development Toolkit for Working with Refugees and Immigrants**
<http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/GrowingUpInANewCountry-Web.pdf>
- ▣ **Helping Refugee Youth Find the Right Path**
http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/brycs_spotsummer2007.pdf
- ▣ **Leveling the Playing Field through Summer Learning Programs**
http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/brycs_briefsummer-2011.pdf
- ▣ **Promising Practices in After-School Programming for Refugee Youth and Children**
http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/brycs_spotjuly2005.pdf
- ▣ **Welcoming and Orienting Newcomer Students to U.S. Schools**
http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/brycs_spotspring2008-2.pdf
- ▣ **Youth Voice: Listening To Refugee and Immigrant Youth**
http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/brycs_spotsummer2008.pdf