

# Implications for Child Welfare Training of our Research on Refugee Homelessness

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NOTE: The survey data from Phase II of our research are still being collected and analyzed, so the items shown below are still only suggestive of the content that will go into our construction of online training modules for child welfare students and child welfare workers.

\*The preliminary results below are from the Phase I study of refugees who had been referred to the Supportive Housing Network program.

- It is important to recognize some factors that frequently contribute to housing instability among refugees:
  - Refugees often have a lack of rental history, credit history, and employment history. This often makes landlords reluctant to rent to them or results in higher rents than would otherwise be charged.
  - Some refugee families are very large and do not fit into lower-cost apartments.
  - Refugees often have a lack of knowledge of tenant rights and responsibilities.

- Refugees sometimes experience discrimination from landlords and neighbors.
- Often refugee children are living doubled-up with other families and in sub-standard housing due to lack of income or other available housing.
- Parents and guardians sometimes split children into multiple households to reduce the rental burden, resulting in parents /guardians and children living separately, or siblings living separately from family and family support.
- Unstable housing can cause mental anguish in parents and guardians or exacerbate previously diagnosed mental issues. This distress can greatly impact relationships between children and parents/guardian.
- Frequent moves impact the social relationships at school of children and youth. Impacts include difficulties integrating into a new school and the loss of relationships with previous teachers and friends.

\*\* The preliminary results below are from Phase II and are mostly from Hmong (n=13) and Karen (n=26) respondents. Data from Somali and Liberian refugees are still being collected.

- Refugees may come from a culture with a different view of the boundaries of family: The numbers of children and people who are considered to be family members may be larger and the scope of “family” may be expanded among refugee populations. (Hmong and Karen people in our survey tended to report more children than the other ethnic groups.)
- The amount of time that has elapsed since resettlement is important: For example, in terms of the resettlement time, most of the Hmong in Minnesota came to the U.S. in the last 1970’s and early 1980’s, well before the arrival beginning in 2004 of most of the Karen and also well before most Somalis and Liberians. The time since immigration has important consequences for the formation of social networks and the abilities of families to navigate the child welfare system. In terms of the impact of changing schools or kindergartens on children, the Hmong and Somali people tend to report little impact on children of moving. This may reflect more stable housing compared to the Karen, who reported more negative impacts of moving on their children.
- Different immigrant communities may tend to have different issues in child well-being and child welfare, e.g. No Karen reported that transportation is an issue for

children's school attendance, while many refugees from other communities said there is some trouble in securing regular transportation to school.

- Lack of systematic support or information on parenting: More Karen people than other refugees have reported that they cannot help with their children's homework. It is not yet clear if this relates to language barriers, limited social support, cultural differences, or some combination of the above.
- Providing culturally competent and sensitive service is critical: Most refugee parents did not report that their children are faced with such problems as discrimination, mental health, substance abuse, and so on. This might reflect a correct perception. Or, it could be because of their hesitance to share negative stories about family with the third parties.
- Refugee children are faced with double-challenging issues from the refuge experience and migration itself as well as in social and cultural adjustment to a new environment.