

Topic: Employment

Activity: Socializing at Work: A Critical Incident for Refugees

Objective

- ✓ Participants will be able to identify some of the employment-related challenges they might encounter in the U.S. workplace
- ✓ Participants will be able to identify some ways to prevent or address challenges in the U.S. workplace

Lesson Time

25 minutes

Materials

- ☐ Copies of “Socializing at Work: A Critical Incident,” 1 per participant (included)
- ☐ Flipchart paper
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Tape

Introduction

Some aspects of the workplace in the United States may be very different from what you were accustomed to prior to your arrival in the United States. It is important to be aware of some of these differences and consider ways to work well with employers, colleagues, and others.

Practice

1. Put participants into small groups of 3-4. Ask each group to choose someone to report back later to the larger group.
2. Distribute copies of “Socializing at Work” to each participant. Ask participants to read the critical incident to themselves or have someone in their group read it quietly to the group. If the facilitator senses that most participants are unable to read, s/he should read the critical incident aloud to the large group.
3. Instruct the groups to develop solutions or tactics they might use to deal with this situation. Some ideas might include the following: Spending time with his coworkers and supervisors during breaks; talking to his colleagues on a one-on-one basis so that he’s less overwhelmed; improving his English so he feels more comfortable socializing with his colleagues; practicing by spending time with neighbors outside of his ethnic group; etc.
4. Bring the large group together and ask group reporters to summarize the main points of their small-group discussions. Record these on flipchart paper and discuss as necessary.
5. Lead a discussion addressing any of the following Reflection Questions that you feel may not have been adequately addressed during the previous discussion:

Reflection Questions

- What happened in this critical incident?
- What could Nuru have done differently?
- Might social behavior like this be expected at the workplace in your home country or country of asylum? (*Note to Trainer: this is not expected in all U.S. workplaces.*)
- How could Nuru respond now?
- What are some possible consequences of Nuru’s choices?
- How would you handle this situation?
- Who can Nuru talk with about this? What resources are available?

Socializing at Work: A Critical Incident

Nuru* was hired at a company and started receiving positive feedback his second week on the job. His direct supervisor felt he was doing well and working hard. Most of Nuru's colleagues were young and socialized outside of work together, including Nuru's supervisor. Nuru, who felt very shy and uncomfortable at work, preferred socializing after work hours with people from his ethnic group. Thus, he was not making friends at the workplace.

After some time, Nuru learned of a new position at his workplace which would be a promotion for him. He expressed his interest in the position to his supervisor. Nuru's supervisor told him that he felt Nuru was not interested in working as a part of a team since he had not established friendly relationships with colleagues. Since the new position would require Nuru to lead many of those same other colleagues, his supervisor was reluctant to promote him.

Our thanks to RefugeeWorks and its Employment Training Institute participants for the information on which this critical incident is based.