

Topic: Cultural Adjustment
(Original plan developed by March 2009 U.S. Cultural Orientation Professional Development Workshop participants in San Diego, CA, and further developed by the Cultural Orientation Resource Center)

Activity: Addressing Unrealistic Expectations

Objectives	To give participants an accurate picture of their first year in the U.S.
Lesson Time	Throughout the clients' resettlement process
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Welcome to the United States</i> video• Photos or video footage of housing, entry-level jobs, and public transportation• Definition of <i>self-sufficiency</i> (autonomy, personal independence)
Discussion Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grades and report cards• School calendar and attendance• School or community resources (tutors, homework clubs, counselors, etc.)• Similarities and differences between parent-teacher interaction in participants' home country and in the U.S.• Role of teachers and parents regarding discipline
Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. During initial intake:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Take a few minutes to acknowledge the clients' status prior to their flight.b. Decisively discuss the clients' expectations. Then move on to the reality of resettlement, services available, and American life.2. During orientation:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Show the <i>Welcome</i> video and visuals of life in the U.S.b. Explain self-sufficiency, and address that there are different definitions and standards of "success." Emphasize to participants that self-sufficiency in the U.S. <u>is</u> being successful.c. Address the concepts of status and equality. Explain to clients that equality is an important value in American society, and that Americans may not be aware of or attentive to a person's prior status.d. Lead a brief session to assist in the elimination of stigmas participants may battle. Have participants brainstorm a list of stereotypes or issues which make them uncomfortable regarding housing, entry-level jobs and public transportation. Go through the potentially uncomfortable situations and ask participants to identify ways in which to deal with these in a healthy manner. Point out that many uncomfortable situations for participants resettling are not necessarily seen as issues in the United States. For instance, people in the U.S. often take pride in getting things (clothing, furniture, etc.) cheaply, and often brag about it. Additionally, many successful people in the U.S. often use public transportation so they do not have to worry about parking and because U.S. society is beginning to focus upon the conservation of energy and natural resources.

**Cultural
Notes**

3. Throughout resettlement:

- a. Address concerns as they arise, but again keep conversation firmly planted in the reality of life in the U.S. and services available.

A number of incoming refugees are highly-educated professionals, who are dismayed that their previous status overseas does not translate into equivalent status in the U.S. It is important to acknowledge respect for the participants' experience, education, and background. In order to move forward, however, it is then critical to move on to productive conversations regarding their current life in the U.S. and how they can improve their resettlement process and its results.