

Elder Refugee Program

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The Area III Agency on Aging connects elderly refugees with community services, builds partnerships with resettlement agencies and ethnic communities, and advocates for change within the aging network.

Please contact: Ketti Turcato at (208) 322-7033 ext. 249 for details about Idaho's Elder Refugee Program.



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Sage Community Resources
provides community and economic development services, through partnerships, to create healthy communities in the ten counties of southwest Idaho.

Senior Refugees Attend Fit and Fall Proof Classes



Older refugees join other seniors to enhance their stability and socialize during a Fit and Fall Proof class at Heritage Assisted Living facility

We are pleased to announce that 13 senior refugees now attend weekly Fit and Fall Proof classes at Heritage Assisted Living and Memory Care.

According to research from the Central District Health Department:

- every 18 seconds an older adult is treated in an emergency department for a fall
- every 35 minutes one of those people dies as a result from their injuries

Fit and Fall Proof classes are held for seniors to prevent such life threatening injuries.

Basic arm, leg, and hip movements have shown to increase strength, balance, and endurance. The use of balloons, chairs, and rubber bands are often used during the classes.

These classes are called "Body Movement Classes" by refugee seniors that attend. The class improves the physical strength of refugee seniors, and perhaps just as importantly it boosts their emotional health.

Refugee seniors are provided the opportunity to socialize and connect with other senior English speakers. They also gain exposure to staff and aging resources at

the senior living facility.

The Heritage facility provides transportation to and from the classes for refugees on a bi-weekly basis. The Idaho Office for Refugees compensates the facility for gas.

Jesse Peters is the Activities Director at Heritage. In addition to teaching the class, she also dedicates her time each week to driving refugee seniors to and from the facility.

Jesse understands how transportation and cultural isolation are huge barriers for senior refugees to access mainstream aging services. By providing transportation, the facility ensures that refugees have access to their programs.

Heritage believes the refugees have been an asset to the classes and have enriched their facility.

Jesse explains, "What I admire most about the refugees is how happy they always are. I think the class is great for them not only to meet new people, but also for people to get to know them and a little bit more about their background. We love having the refugees come in for our Fit and Fall Proof class. They make each class so fun!"

Are You Serving Seniors with Limited English? Title VI: The Law When Language is a Barrier

Idaho is in a unique position to receive hundreds of refugees every year, providing them the opportunity to live freely without fear and oppression.

There are four resettlement agencies in Boise and Twin Falls where refugees come to settle permanently. Refugees contribute to our society in meaningful ways and add richness of culture and diversity to our state.

Currently, there are 180 senior refugees living in Idaho that have many of the same needs as other elderly citizens.

Like many seniors, older refugees struggle with finding transportation, understanding SSI and Medicaid, healthcare, housing, navigating social services, and caring for their grandchildren.

The difference is that their concerns are often compounded by language and cultural barriers.

Seniors First Mentality

As aging network providers, we have the responsibility to care for these individuals with a "senior's first" mentality.

We need to recognize that limited English proficiency (LEP) elders require similar aging services as US-born seniors, with the additional need for interpreters and cultural sensitivity.

What is the Law?

If you work in an agency that receives any federal funding assistance through Medicaid, Medicare, the Older Americans Act, or other federal programs, and don't have a plan in place to serve LEP seniors, you may be unintentionally discriminating against refugees.

According to the US Department of Justice, Title VI states:

"No person in the



United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

The Federal government directly and indirectly funds many state and local public agencies, private non-profit agencies, and for-profit organizations.

This could include health care, social services, transportation, employment, housing and community development, agriculture and nutrition.

Federal money also doesn't have to be the sole contributor of funds to the organization.

For example, if a Home Health Care agency receives Medicaid funding to provide services for client A, and client B needs interpretation services, the agency must take reasonable steps to ensure client B is provided with services.

What Is Reasonable?

Four factors determine what steps are reasonable to ensure meaningful access to information and service:

- Number or proportion of LEP individuals
 - Frequency of contact with the program
 - Nature/Importance of the program; and
 - Resources available
- Greater action must be taken when the implications for not providing adequate language services may result in dire consequences.

For example, it would be more crucial for a federally assisted long-term care facility to provide service to an individual than perhaps a federally assisted theatre or zoo.

Similarly, a large hospital that serves several LEP seniors every day might find it more necessary to hire bilingual staff, for example, than a small, private practice clinic that cares for one LEP patient annually.

However, even organizations that serve a few LEP persons on an infrequent basis should have a plan on how to serve clients should they seek service.

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If you work in an agency that receives any federal funding (Medicaid, Medicare, Older Americans Act, etc.) and you don't have a plan in place to serve clients with Limited-English Proficiency, you may be unintentionally discriminating against senior refugees.

Friends in Action Student Volunteers Invest Over 275 Hours with Older Refugees



Friends in Action volunteer Lisa Barrett spent over 150 hours volunteering with senior refugees

Friends in Action (FIA) is a local non-profit agency dedicated to preserving the dignity and independence of Boise seniors.

They do this through collaborative efforts with a

wide array of partners and volunteers, including BSU.

For the past year and a half they have partnered with the Elder Refugee Program to ensure refugee

seniors have equal access to volunteers.

FIA volunteers have spent over 275 hours with refugee seniors through this partnership. Five senior refugees are

currently involved with a FIA volunteer.

BSU student Stacey White has been an incredible asset in decreasing isolation for senior refugees this semester. She has spent time investing in seniors through activities such as visiting libraries and local site-seeing. Senior refugees are also given immense English-language exposure.

Although each senior Stacey meets is incredibly diverse, in one way they are all alike: "There is a warmth and genuineness to their spirit that is beautiful."

Community Highlight: Afghan Culture

Idaho is home to over 443 refugees from Afghanistan, a country located in the southern region of Asia, sandwiched between Pakistan and Iran.

Rich in tradition and culture, Afghanistan is too often swallowed in political and ethnic turmoil. Still, positive aspects of Afghan life resonate in Boise.

Afghani individuals may speak Pashtu, Farsi, Dari or Afghan Persian. They value honor and protection and are known as being one of the most hospitable cultures to visit.

When greeted, Afghani people may shake your hands or may even place their hands over their hearts, nodding slightly while saying "Salam, Chetor ast e?" which means 'Hello, how are you?' in Dari. You will most

likely be offered tea and will certainly be the first to eat before the person who prepared the meal.

Afghan people live as a collective society – they join together for many celebrations such as weddings, birthdays, and religious holidays. Even eating can be a communal activity as they share from the same dish.

After dinner, many Afghans may indulge in Mushaeras (poetry competitions), rowdy games of Buzkashi (a form of polo), hound racing, or kite flying.

Afghanistan is also home to many celebrations that are more familiar to life in America.

Nazer is a religious

custom much like Thanksgiving where a big meal is prepared and shared with family and friends. Unlike Thanksgiving, the main dish prepared for Nazer is lamb. The meal is also often prepared for the poor and it can be celebrated any time of year.

Afghan children also play a game near religious celebrations such as Eid or Nauroz, in which brightly-colored eggs

are knocked together. The person whose egg cracks first is the loser.

We are fortunate to have 13 senior Afghan refugees living in Idaho who have brought their rich cultures and traditions to our state.

(Reference: Afghan Network: www.afghan-network.net)



Over 3.6 million Afghan refugees have returned home to Afghanistan since 2002 with help from the United Nations, making it the largest assisted return in history.

Mission Statement:
The Southwest Idaho Area Agency on Aging strives to provide essential services to enhance the quality of life for vulnerable and aging adults. We meet this challenge through advocacy, partnerships, and promoting public awareness, guided by integrity, vision, and sustained commitment..

Meet Michelle, Our New Elder Refugee Program Intern



Michelle Larsen comes from the BSU Social Work department for a year-long internship to assist the Elder Refugee Program and the Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force.

She is learning how Idaho's

programs and policies affect seniors and how to make services more accessible to refugees.

Michelle has various experiences with diverse populations including a semester abroad in West Africa.

Locally, she has spent time volunteering with the Agency for New Americans and with teen refugees attending Booth Memorial High School.

Michelle's interest in diverse cultures has inspired a new strengths-based approach project which will involve collecting oral histories from senior refugees.

Michelle says, "This project is to promote positive

reminiscing and to create a safe environment where refugee seniors can feel respected and empowered through the power of listening."

By focusing on seniors' strengths rather than barriers, she hopes to give a voice to the refugee elders in the Boise area.

Michelle started her internship in the beginning of September and will be with us until May 2010, when she will graduate with a Bachelor in Social Work from Boise State University.

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Using Interpreters for Seniors with Limited English

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As explained, all federally funded programs should have a plan on how to serve LEP individuals.

This plan could be as basic as having a list of interpreters on hand to call or the number for a telephone interpretation service.

All information in this article can be referenced at: www.lep.gov/resources/resources.htm

Are You Adequately Serving Seniors with Limited English?

Does your agency have an updated plan for assisting LEP seniors? Would you like training or guidelines on how to serve refugee seniors better?

For questions, please contact the Elder Refugee Program at the Area III Agency on Aging:

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The Idaho Office for Refugees' website: www.idahorefugees.org has a link on the left-hand side entitled **Interpretation**. Visit this site for commonly asked questions about using an interpreter, a link to a database of local Boise interpreters and more resources. See a sample of the information provided below:

“ Why Hire an Interpreter? ”

Being bilingual is not enough. Although someone may be able to communicate in multiple languages, interpreters often have the skills that go far beyond basic communication.

Language is not just words. Interpreters may also serve the role of a cultural broker and will also interpret nuances, facial expressions and body language.

Using family and friends for interpreting may compromise the confidentiality of the client and/or you may not get accurate information about what the client wants to say.

Content may be traumatic, so it is not advised to ask children or other family members to act as interpreters.

Hiring professional interpreters decreases the risk of miscommunication.

Source: www.idahorefugees.org/Home/Interpretation ”