



Annual Western New York Refugee Health Summit

A Summary and Recommendations
April 20, 2018



University at Buffalo
Global Health Equity
Community of Excellence



University at Buffalo
Office of Global Health Initiatives
School of Public Health and Health Professions

MAKING UB-COMMUNITY

Connections

TO IMPROVE REFUGEE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The 5th Annual Western New York (WNY) Refugee Health Summit Report was co-authored by Jessica Scates, administrative coordinator for the Community for Global Health Equity and Paige Iovine and Chelsea Recor, MPH/MD dual degree students at the University at Buffalo. Graphic design was done by Nicole Little, graduate assistant for the Community for Global Health Equity and dual degree graduate student in Architecture and Planning at the University at Buffalo.

The Annual WNY Refugee Health Summit is co-sponsored by the University at Buffalo's Community of Excellence in Global Health Equity and School of Public Health and Health Professions' Office of Global Health Initiatives.



Rising

Leaders: A Look Toward the Future

Refugees, especially children, are vulnerable to mental health issues stemming from trauma, torture, and adjustment to culture within the United States. Diverse, informed, and well-trained professionals are better able to appropriately care for these populations. Several local initiatives work to improve future care provider training so that future health care needs can be met.

Presenter:

Kim Griswold, Professor, Family Medicine, University at Buffalo¹

Panelists:

Sakina (Beri) Alothman, Care Coordinator, BestSelf Behavioral Health²

Grace Karambizi, Care Coordinator, Catholic Charities²

Pemba Sherpa, Co-Creator, United Youth, University at Buffalo²

Win Thant, Education Coordinator, Community Academic Center, Buffalo State²

Rising Leaders: A Look Toward the Future

Townhall Discussion

Training Future Providers

The [Human Rights Initiative](#),³ a student-run human rights clinic in the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at UB, provides medical and psychological forensic evaluations for survivors of torture and political violence who are seeking asylum in the U.S. Forensic examiners receive referrals through [Physicians for Human Rights](#),⁴ a University at Buffalo forum that brings together medical students interested in advocating for human rights, the [Western New York Center for Survivors of Torture](#),⁵ an organization providing care coordination for survivors of extreme physical and emotional trauma and torture, or directly from attorneys. Medical students coordinate logistics, transcribe interviews, take photographs, and draft affidavits for court. If student volunteers learn about the connections between the legal, health, social and justice systems, they are more likely to provide culturally appropriate care to diverse populations facing extreme barriers to good health and wellbeing.

[Dr. Kim Griswold](#),⁶ professor of family medicine at UB leads the [Standardized Patient Project](#),⁷ employing new Americans as standardized patients (patient “actors”) to train future health care providers in the appropriate use of trained interpreters. The project introduces students to working with interpreters by conducting an interview with a new American who has limited English proficiency. One of the goals of the project is for students to understand how culture affects patient care.



Rising Leaders: A Look Toward the Future

Townhall Discussion

Community-led Resources

Refugee youth seek educational opportunities that allow them to give back to their communities. Young women like Grace Karambizi,² care coordinator for [Catholic Charities](#),⁸ Sakina Alothman,² care coordinator for [BestSelf Behavioral Health](#),⁹ Pemba Sherpa,² [University at Buffalo student](#),¹⁰ and Win Thant,² education coordinator for [Community Academic Center](#),¹¹ at Buffalo State work to empower the next generation of leaders. An example – University at Buffalo students competed in a [Global Innovation Challenge](#) to improve health and wellbeing for refugee populations in Buffalo, NY. The winning team, United Youth,¹⁰ included two former refugees. Their idea – to develop a refugee mentoring program in local schools to help young, newly arrived refugees adjust to the new systems, language, and traditions in the United States – is underway with assistance from community partners and Buffalo Public Schools. Additionally, the Community Academic Center has launched a program that utilizes storytelling to help youth with English language learning, and adjustment to Buffalo Public Schools and a U.S. urban environment.

These young women note that Buffalo has come a long way; refugee communities are being embraced and growing. Eager to share with others the opportunities they have received, they call for Buffalo to prioritize equitable education opportunities. Educated and empowered youth, when working together, can positively shape the community. Their efforts lead to efficient, holistic programs that meet important and relevant community needs.



Rising Leaders: A Look Toward the Future

Recommendations

1

Training Future Providers



In many ways, Buffalo is taking strides towards a more inclusive community for all. These efforts start from the ground up. Educators that incorporate cultural sensitivity training into higher education curriculum are preparing future health care professionals to serve in the diverse communities they will work.

2



The community must uphold and train the many rising leaders who represent diverse backgrounds and have a passion to advocate for their communities.

1

Community-led Resources



Institutional level changes that prioritize culturally appropriate care are essential. This includes within the hospital system, public health departments, and for insurance providers. To bridge this gap, agencies need to hire members of refugee communities who can provide the knowledge, culture, and language expertise to ensure appropriate change. Refugee youth can take advantage of internships and volunteer positions available through the [Erie County Public Health Department](#).¹²

2



Many refugees struggle to adapt to complex systems in the United States. Resource portals like the [Immigrant and Refugee Resource Guide](#)¹³ hosted by the University at Buffalo School of Social Work, includes contact information for providers, leaders, and services for refugees.



Rising Leaders: A Look Toward the Future

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