

Topic: Education/Employment

Activity: Studying Versus Working: A Critical Incident for Staff Training

Objective

- ✓ Staff members will be able to identify some of the decisions refugees may face regarding education and employment opportunities.
- ✓ Staff members will identify ways to assist their clients in choosing between employment and education.

Lesson Time

35 minutes

Materials

- ☐ Copies of “Studying Versus Working: A Critical Incident,” 1 per participant (included)
- ☐ Flipchart paper, markers, and tape

Introduction

Having to decide between working and getting an education is a difficult choice that many newly resettled refugees in the United States face. It is sometimes helpful for these newcomers to understand that this is a decision that many people in the United States--not only refugees—regularly face. Finding ways to help your clients make the best decision for them and their families is very important in helping them become self-sufficient.

Practice

1. Put staff members into small groups of 3-4. Ask each group to choose someone to report back later to the larger group.
2. Distribute copies of “Studying Versus Working” to each participant. Ask staff members to read the critical incident to themselves or have someone in their group read it quietly to the group.
3. Instruct the groups to develop solutions or tactics they might use to work with a client in Kiran’s situation. Some ideas might include the following:
 - Encourage the client to work part-time and study part-time.
 - Help the client fully understand the pros and cons of each choice, for both him and his family members.
 - Encourage the client to find someone at the auto body shop who could help him improve his English (which in turn would assist him with his GED test) at the same time he is working.
 - Encourage the client to brainstorm decisions with family members (who might be affected by the decision) and other trusted adults or create support groups to discuss important matters such as these.
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 are Kiran’s options?
- Do you know anything about Kiran’s values that may impact his choices?
- How would you handle this situation? How would you advise Kiran?
- What resources are available to Kiran and you?
- How could you use this critical incident to coach clients?

Studying Versus Working: A Critical Incident

Kiran* was 18 when he arrived in the United States with his mother and three younger siblings. He was very excited about the educational opportunities available to him, and immediately enrolled in an English class for adults at the local community college. His mother was able to get a job at a local grocery store, and his three younger siblings enrolled at the local public elementary school. Kiran helped the family by taking responsibility for some household duties and walking his younger siblings to and from school each day.

One of Kiran's neighbors was a very friendly and helpful man who owned an auto body shop nearby. Knowing that Kiran was hard-working and responsible, he offered Kiran training and a job. Kiran was reluctant to take the offer because he was hoping to get his General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and attend college as a full-time student.

For this same critical incident in a lesson plan designed for use with refugees, see <http://www.cal.org/co.domestic/toolkit/employment/index.html>.

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