

Cultural Orientation:

Program Description

~Houston, Texas~

*CO collaboratively provided by
YMCA International Services,
Interfaith Ministries,
and Bilingual Education Institute*

funded by

*Texas Health & Human Services Commission
Office of Immigration and Refugee Affairs*

prepared by Shawn Webb, YMCA International Services





Primary Goals of the Cultural Orientation Program

- ◆ To promote and facilitate self-sufficiency among refugees and asylees
- ◆ To assist each client in her or his efforts to fulfill personal goals and dreams through cultural orientation education
- ◆ Empowerment through information



The Cultural Orientation Program Structure

- ◆ The program consists of two components:
 - **General Orientation** (about 10 hours)
(composed of Phases I, II, and III;
generally conducted in small groups of 8-10)
 - **Intensive Orientation** (additional 10 hours)
(generally individualized one-on-one services)

General Orientation, Phase I

◆ Phase I: Introduction and Overview (6 - 8 hours)

Welcome to Houston (city orientation)

- *City of extreme Cultural, Religious, Ethnic & Racial Diversity
- *Huge city (4th largest in U.S.)
- *Refugees have been resettled in Houston for over 20 years
- *Public Transportation
- *The Arts, Sports, and Entertainment

Dominant Values in the United States

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Equality | Freedom of Expression |
| Work Ethic | Time/Punctuality |
| Self-Sufficiency | Cleanliness (Personal & Home) |

Stages of the Cultural Adaptation Process

Excitement > Irritability/Disappointment > Gradual Adjustments > Adaptation



General Orientation, Phase I

◆ Phase I (cont.)

- covers three different informational topics, which are chosen by the group based on a needs assessment survey conducted in class
- total of 12 topics from which to choose:

Employment

Housing

Health Care

Education

Finance

Workplace

Transportation

Community Organization

Crime Prevention

Consumer Issues

Citizenship

Government Agencies





General Orientation, Phase II

◆ Phase II: Field Trip (3 – 4 hours)

- consists of a field trip through the city and other hands-on activities
- typical sites visited include:
 - discount grocery stores and ethnic grocery stores
 - discount department and clothing thrift stores
 - post office
 - Houston Community College (vocational training)
 - library
 - Metro bus terminal and system
 - medical clinic and/or hospital



General Orientation, Phase III

◆ Phase III: Referrals and Follow-up

- Clients are referred to social service agencies for special needs.
- Clients are referred to Intensive Orientation for one-on-one individualized services and assistance.
- Follow-up is recorded in client files to ensure that all referrals lead to efficient and useful services that address the client's needs.



Intensive Orientation

- ◆ Additional specialized services (10 hours) provided for those clients with individualized needs, such as health conditions, educational needs, and familial needs. (Usually conducted over a period of one to three months.)
- ◆ Typical activities include:
 - Referral and assistance in accessing government social services
 - Assistance with enrollment in educational courses; educational advisement
 - Shopping for household or personal items
 - Learning to use public transportation
 - Transportation to medical appointments
 - Assistance with mailing items at the post office
 - Referrals to social service programs at other resettlement agencies