

Mental Health Internship

International Rescue Committee – Baltimore

SCOPE OF WORK:

Founded in 1933, the International Rescue Committee is a leading, non-sectarian, non-profit organization providing emergency relief, protection, rehabilitation assistance, resettlement services, and advocacy for refugees and victims of oppression or violent conflict. Domestically, our 23 offices across the country ensure newly resettled refugees and asylees arrivals have food, shelter, and clothing, and work with refugees to help them gain self-sufficiency through English language classes, job training and placement services, and community participation activities.

IRC Maryland welcomes over 1,500 refugees and asylees each year. Most refugees have experienced harsh conditions in their homeland, receiving little or no medical care for several years prior to resettlement. Often, they have experienced traumatic situations and substandard camp living situations. Consequently, many refugees arrive with significant health problems and health risk factors, such as: malnutrition, tuberculosis, parasitic infections, HIV/AIDS, disabilities, cancers, war-related injuries, trauma, and mental illness. **The IRC Baltimore Public Health Program** is committed to ensuring that refugee and asylee clients get the care, dignity and empowerment that they deserve. In collaboration with our partner agencies, **we aim to maximize public health awareness, access, and advocacy for all of our clients.**

PURPOSE:

Health is a basic right for all refugees and health care is an essential component in the resettlement process in the United States. Mental wellness in particular has foundational impact on work, school, acculturation and family life. The Mental Health Intern will play the vital role of supporting refugee and asylee families by assisting with the creating and coordination of a comprehensive and culturally-appropriate mental health program.

Due to the unstable and often violent conditions of their home countries, and years spent in inadequate and impoverished refugee camps, many refugees have experienced trauma yet received little or no treatment for it. Upon arrival, refugees are eligible for 8-months of Medical Assistance, which should enable them to finally access much needed mental health services. However, the reality is that there are few mental health providers who are willing to serve non-English speakers because of the difficulty in providing treatment through an interpreter. There are also cultural barriers that affect both practitioners and patients. Refugees may be reluctant to seek treatment due to varied cultural perceptions of mental illness, and/or unfamiliarity with US methods of treatment. Likewise, mental health practitioners may not be familiar with the cultural and religious influences that refugees bring with them to treatment.

The IRC Baltimore Public Health Program would like to **design a program plan** to increase the level of mental wellness in refugee communities through a bilateral approach. First, the program plan would detail the development of empowering, community-based educational interventions provided by IRC staff. Secondly, the program plan would identify additional mental health resources available in the Baltimore metro area, and conduct outreach with local providers and hospital systems to increase refugee access to culturally responsive care.

ESSENTIAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Formulate assessment of community needs and barriers to optimum mental wellness
- Conduct literature review on community-based mental health programs within refugee and/or immigrant populations
- Develop a contact list of potential partners with mental health providers and agencies in the Baltimore metro area.
- Initiate program plan for the development of community-based mental health interventions.

- Assist with research and outreach to develop partnerships with medical providers and community organizations.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- To gain an understanding of the refugee resettlement process and health disparities experienced by newly arrived refugees within the US healthcare system
- To become familiar with the most prevalent mental health issues facing refugees and asylees, and how symptoms manifest differently across gender and age groups
- To become adept at assisting vulnerable groups in navigating the mental health referral process
- To learn how to create/adapt/identify culturally appropriate mental health educational resources and services for clients.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Experience in public health, mental health, health education, behavioral or social sciences, or related field
- High level of cultural sensitivity and interest in working in a multicultural setting
- Organized with great attention to detail and great flexibility
- Able to work independently and effectively as a team member in a fast-paced environment
- Reliable and responsible for attending all appointments and meetings scheduled
- Strong communication and writing skills
- Strong computer skills
- Proficiency in a foreign language, including Arabic, Amharic, Burmese, Chin, Nepali, Swahili or Tigrinya is beneficial but not required.

TIME COMMITMENT:

Minimum of 15 hours per week, during business hours, Mondays through Fridays, between 9:00am-5:00pm.

TO APPLY:

Please forward resume, cover letter, 3 references, and information regarding the following:

- Availability: Start/End date, Weekly Availability
- Driver's license and access to a car
- Any academic requirements the internship may need to fulfill (i.e. specified number of hours, any academic output such as a paper or presentation, etc)

Contacts:

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