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Refugee Resettlement in Hartford

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Introduction

- A refugee is someone who has left his or her country and is unable to return because of war, persecution or natural disaster.
- Each year, a small percentage of refugees are resettled in western nations like the US with the help of resettlement agencies.
- According to the US government, 543 refugees were resettled in Hartford during 2014 and 547 in 2013. The largest countries represented are DR Congo, Burma, and Iraq.

Resettlement

- Duration: arrival - 6 months
- Refugees receive aid towards employment, housing and other needs from resettlement agencies

Post-Resettlement

- Duration: 6 months - onward
- Refugees are expected to provide for themselves

Abstract

Resettlement agencies in Hartford play a key role in refugee resettlement. These agencies assist with housing, employment and other services. After six months, these agencies no longer receive federal funding to continue services. This project examines the successes and challenges of connecting refugees to services for employment, housing and the challenges and stresses of refugees during the period of resettlement and post-resettlement. Interviews are the methodological focus of this project. The goal of the project is to outline the best practices, challenges and lessons learned from the resettlement process for refugees in Hartford with my community partner, AHNA.

**CLI Research Fellows
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Research Question

What are the successes and challenges of connecting refugees to services for employment, housing and the stress and pressure of being a refugee during the period of resettlement and post-resettlement?

Methodology

Qualitative research methods

- Semi-structured interviews with refugees and resettlement agencies
- Participation observation at a Welcome committee meeting

Conclusions

- Some needs are being met by refugee resettlement agencies, but other areas are lacking
- Refugees face challenges and stresses because of the pressures that arise during resettlement and the post-resettlement process
- Greater advocacy for refugees is needed to improve their quality of life

Future Work

- Analyze the issues associated with housing, employment and stresses and challenges for groups outside of the Asylum Hill Neighborhood
- Examine the resettlement process in different localities across CT
- Study the resettlement process within the US and its successes and challenges

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Housing

Sample Questions:

- Can you talk about your experience finding housing when you first arrived in Hartford?
- Have you changed housing since then?

Findings:

- Landlords who take advantage of tenants
- Sub-optimal housing
- Rent hikes
- Tenants' rights
- Security problems

Recommendations:

- Help refugees be aware of tenants' rights. Have this information translated for different groups
- Do research on affordable housing in Hartford and build relationship with these landlords

Employment

Sample Questions:

- Can you tell me about your experience with finding work in Hartford?
- Have you changed jobs since then? Talk to me about how that worked

Findings:

- Unskilled positions
- Insufficient wages
- English language challenges
- Limited upward mobility

Recommendations:

- Host networking events
- Help refugees find employment opportunities that match with their skills
- Communicate opportunities for learning English

Pressures

Sample Questions:

- Can you tell me about the pressures and stresses that come with being a refugee?
- What are some of the challenges about your situation?

Findings:

- Economic concerns/challenges in Hartford
- Social integration
- Contending with new cultural norms

Recommendations:

- Satisfy problems of housing and employment
- Help refugees create social capital