

# *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