

Topic: Employment
(Original plan developed by March 2009 U.S. Cultural Orientation Professional Development Workshop participants in San Diego, CA, and further developed by the Cultural Orientation Resource Center)

Activity: Acquiring Job Search Skills

Objectives

To enable participants to thoughtfully consider their job prospects.

Lesson Time

Four sessions of approximately one hour each

Materials

- Vocabulary list for specific jobs
- Resource list of job-search-related publications, websites, job search centers, and examples of places to apply

Discussion Questions

- What do you think American employers are looking for in an employee?
- What is the best job you have ever held? What was the worst job? Why?
- What is the best way to introduce yourself to a prospective employer?
- How do you maintain eye contact?
- What other things are important to remember when entering an interview with a prospective employer?

Practice

1. Session One: Classroom
 - a. Guide a discussion about the expectations of American employers.
 - b. Guide a discussion about the “best” and “worst” jobs participants have had in the past. Include “homemaker” as a job, to make it clear that these skills are transferable to paid employment.
 - c. Prepare the participants for a field trip to an employer who employs refugees. Go over vocabulary related to a job inquiry, and coach the participants through preparing questions about the workplace.
 - d. Coach clients about the proper way to introduce themselves. Practice things like handshakes, eye contact, etc.
2. Session Two: Field trip
 - a. Take participants to an employer who employs refugees in your community.
 - b. Give the participants an opportunity to observe the workplace, and to ask the employer questions about the positions refugees hold there.
3. Session Three: Classroom
 - a. Discuss the field trip with the class. What did they think about the workplace? What did they learn about the workplace environment, and about potential jobs?
 - b. Share more information with them about the job environment in your community.
4. Session Four: Classroom
 - a. Have a successful former refugee come to the class to speak about their resettlement and employment experience.

Cultural Notes

Keep in mind that some participants may have high expectations regarding their initial employment in the U.S. The discussion of “best” and “worst” jobs may allow the trainer to touch upon this, by showing that many elements (other than status or compensation) play a role in whether a job is “bad” or “good.” Let participants know that in many social circles in the United States, it is considered better to have ANY job than to have no job at all.

Others may feel that it is not appropriate for them, or for others, to work. This may warrant class discussion, or private case-by-case consideration of the family’s financial needs.

Variations

1. Following Session Two: Field Trip, take participants to an industrial complex. Chose a company and have one participant walk in and ask to speak with a person who does hiring. Have the participant ask questions about the job and skills required. This will assist participants in acquiring the necessary job search skills, but might be a harder experience.
2. In the place of (or in addition to) Session Four: Classroom, prepare some case studies about successful resettlement and employment experiences. Discuss with the group members how they can apply the principles or actions shown to their own efforts.