

How Do We Measure Social Integration? Qualitative Data from a National Service Perspective

Cambio de Colores Annual Conference

June 25, 2014

Dawnya Underwood, Jessica Ranweiler,

Lauren Wichterman & Fabio Lomelino



Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service

Objectives

- Intro to LIRS and Family Reunification program
- Ideas of integration for various populations
- Theories and Concepts
- Convening process and outcomes
- Two case examples
- Possible metrics for evaluation

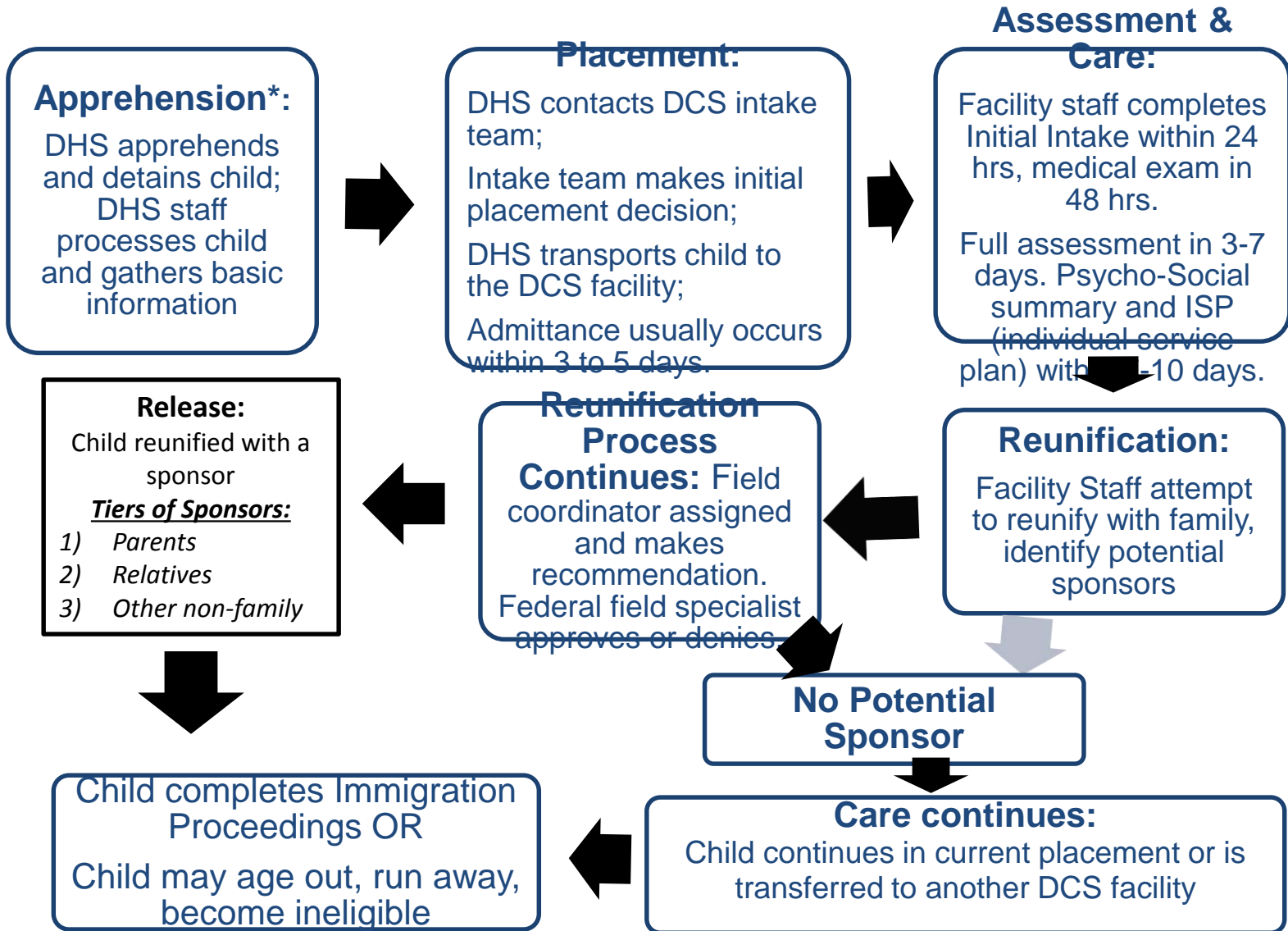


Who is LIRS?

- LIRS has helped migrants and refugees build brighter tomorrows since 1939
- We're the second largest refugee resettlement agency in the US
- Our service networks include providers of immigration services, detained torture survivors legal support, community support and visitation for migrants impacted by detention, refugee foster care, and services for unaccompanied migrant and refugee children
- LIRS has been a prominent voice in legislative and administrative advocacy for systemic change
- And, LIRS is a national leader in migrant and refugee children's issues

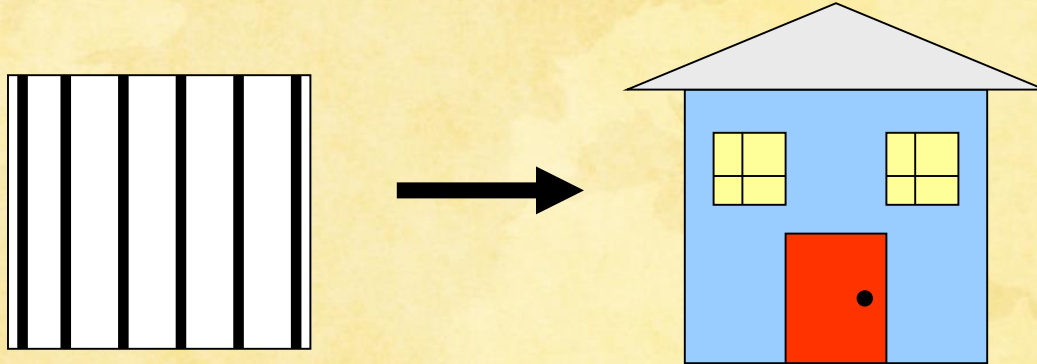


Movement of Unaccompanied Alien Children Through Federal Custody



* Apprehension may be through CBP, other DHS agents, or through state law enforcement

Transfer of care



- After being detained, unaccompanied children are transferred from the care of immigration authorities into the care of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).
- Children can be released from federal custody during their immigration hearings if they have a qualified sponsor willing to take care of them.
- Family Reunification Services are required when releases involve significant risks to the child's health and well being.



Reunification Options

Home Study

- Referred if serious minor/sponsor risks identified
- Home study completed; ORR responsible for final placement decision
- If released to sponsor, automatic referral for post-release services

Post Release Services

- Referred if some risks identified but believe they can be mitigated with services in the community

Straight Release

- Vast majority of UAC released directly to sponsor with no follow up services in place



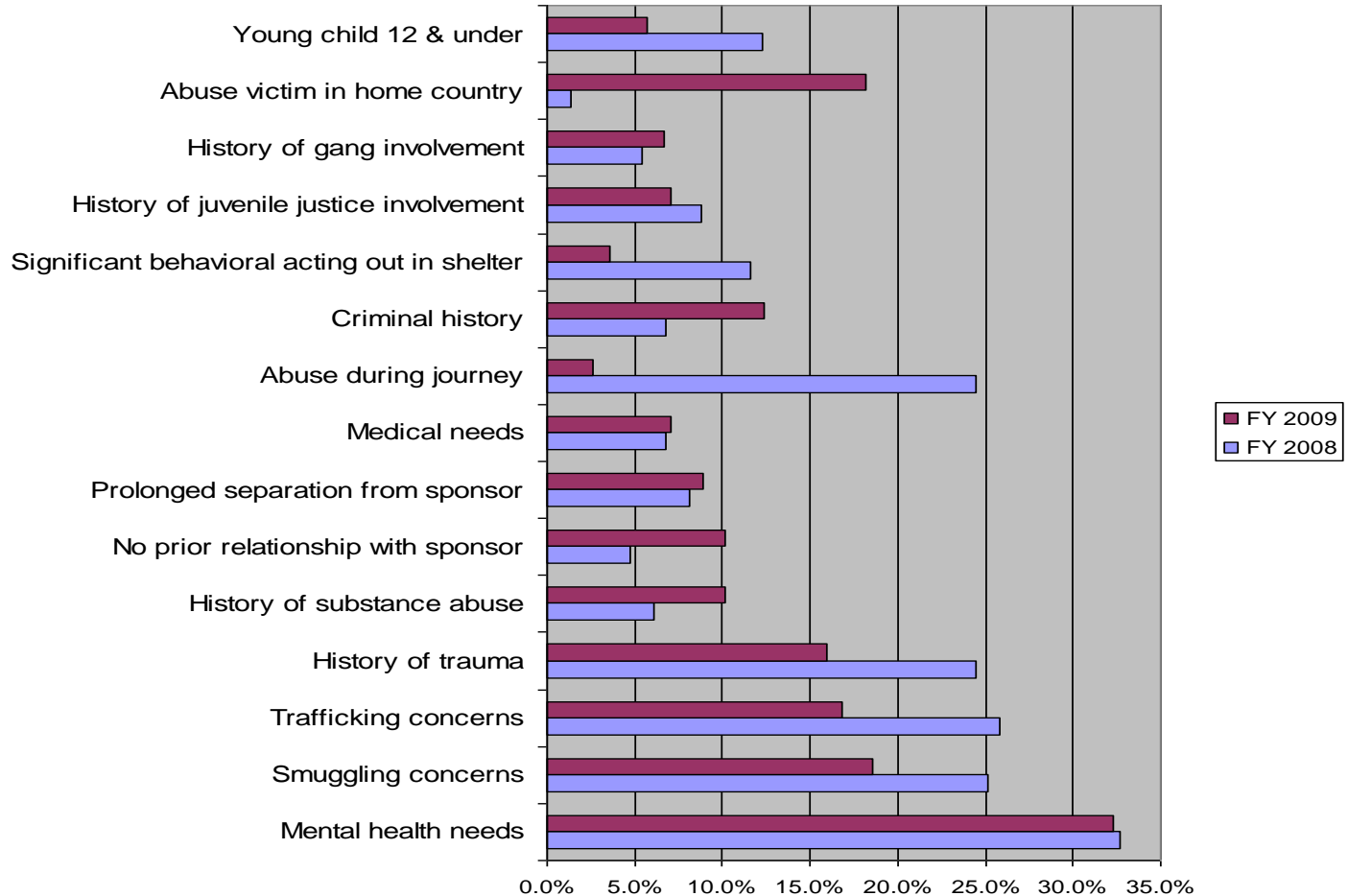
Reasons for referral for services

- Any **special issues related to the child** (smuggling/trafficking, mental or physical health, trauma, expressed fear of sponsor, etc.)
- and/or **issues related to the sponsor** (criminal/substance abuse history, questionable relationship to child, questionable motive for sponsoring, etc.)



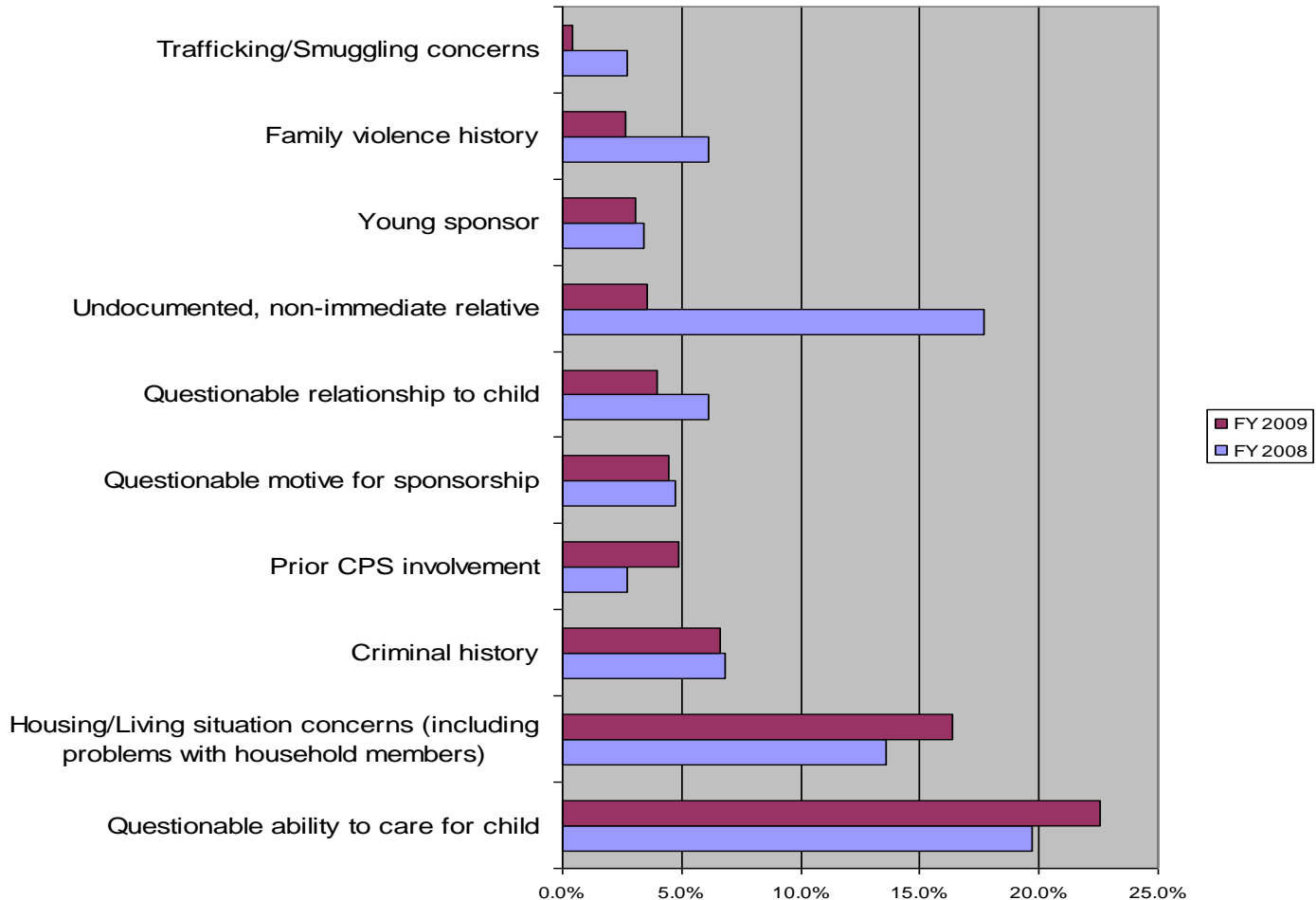
Most Frequent Child Risk Factors

LIRS Home Study Clients FY 08 & 09



Most Frequent Sponsor Risk Factors

LIRS Home Study Clients FY 08 & 09



STRAIGHT RELEASE RESEARCH



Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service

Straight Release Research Demographics

- Beginning July 2013, carried out telephone interviews with 100 sponsors of UAC released without follow-up services
- Calls made at 14 days, 3, 6, 9, and 12 months
- Have completed 6 month calls
- Asked about family situation, and access/ utilization of community services including education, legal, health, mental health, social support



Straight Release Research Demographics

Country of Origin	44% Honduras 35% El Salvador 18% Guatemala 3% Mexico
Gender	58% Male 42% Female
Age	86% Under 14 (“Tender Age”) 14% 14 and Older
Sponsor Location (By State)	26% TX; 17% CA; 12% NY; 10% MD; 7% VA; 6% GA; 6% NJ; 2% AR; 2% CO; 2% FL; 2% LA; 2% TN; 1% MA; 1%MS; 1% 1% NC; 1% PA; 1% OR; 1% WA



Straight Release Research: Preliminary Findings

	14 Days (N=100)	3 Months (N=89)	6 Months (N=71)
With Intended Sponsor	100%	100%	100%
Enrolled in School	71%	97%	98%
Safety Problems	1%	0%	0%
Accessed EOIR Hotline	45%	83%	93%
Had a Court Date	2%	17%	38%
Had Legal Aid	4%	15%	28%
Identified MH Concerns	19%	18%	14%
Accessed MH Care	6%	.04%	.04%
Identified Physical Health Concerns	13%	10%	10%
Accessed Medical Care	26%	47%	61%
Attended Church	66%	75%	76%



Straight Release Research: Preliminary Findings

- Families are accessing and utilizing community-based services independently, and are stable members of their communities.
- However, sponsors were unable to resolve certain problems on their own, the most common of which was understanding legal processes and accessing legal assistance.
- The research process served as an unintended intervention by identifying the lack of awareness of available services and service utilization among sponsors.
- Thus, while families could initiate the process of integration, follow-up services were still useful.
- Findings underscore the importance of locally-based service interventions and outreach to enhance the existing capacities of UAC sponsors



SOCIAL INTEGRATION: CONCEPTS AND THEORIES



Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service

Social Integration

Overview in the U.S.

- Civic engagement seems to decrease in communities of high diversity
 - particularly through immigration and resettlement
- In the United States, residents in highly-diverse communities are less likely to trust their neighbors (regardless of cultural groups)
- Reported...
 - lower socio-political control and lower confidence in political leaders
 - decreased instances of registering to vote, volunteering and charitable giving
 - constricted social networks
 - weak confidence in personal and collective efficacy in influencing community outcomes

(Putnam 2007)



Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service

Social Integration

The negatives

- Exclusion from community social life prevents individuals from having full access to community resources
 - E.g., education, employment or housing
- Elevated levels of unemployment
- Social unrest
- Weakening of social values in the community as a whole

Bhandari, Hovarth & To 2006; Schellenberg & Maheux 2007

- Social isolation of individuals
 - Negative consequences for physical and psychological well-being
 - Increases in morbidity and mortality (after controlling for other variables)

House, Landis & Umberson 1988



Social Integration

The benefits

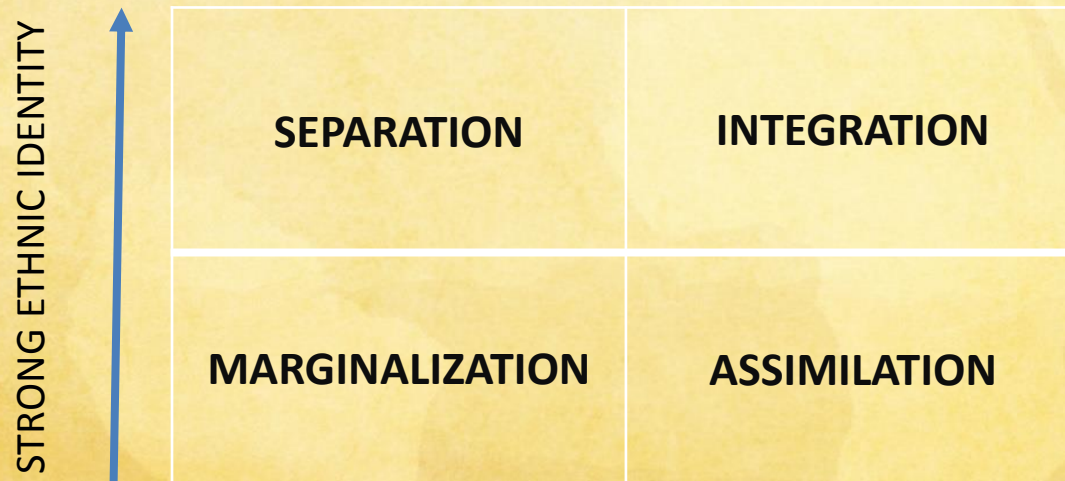
- Engagement benefits the community by contributing to **social capital**
- Social capital is observed in healthy communities with
 - high levels of leadership
 - skills, networks
 - psychological attachment to the community
 - understanding of community history
 - and critical reflection (*Goodman et al. 1998*).
- Social capital enables communities to maximize their potential
 - progress from individual to collective action
 - achieve social and political change that more effectively influences well-being of community members (*Butterfoss 2006*).



Four Acculturative Strategies

Phinney et al, year

Is it considered to be of value to maintain one's cultural heritage? Is it considered to be of value to develop relationships with the larger society?



IDENTIFICATION WITH NEW SOCIETY



Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service

CASE EXAMPLES:
**Experiences in Post Release
Services**



**Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service**

Case Study: Roberto

- 16 year old Guatemalan male
- Reunified with “family friend”, who works six days a week as a delivery man in Manhattan
- Minor had 1-2 years of schooling in Guatemala
- Minor was abandoned by his parents: mother has significant mental health issues, and minor never met his dad
- Minor’s sister committed suicide when he was 8-years old
- Minor started working from a young age



Initial Stages of the Case

- Minor reported that he came to this country to work and send money home
- Sponsor very paranoid about services
 - Very slow to enroll minor in school
- Sponsor and minor kept asking if minor could work, enroll in school part-time, yet denied that minor was working
 - Explained NY state laws, and sponsor's responsibilities



Case challenges

- LW assisted sponsor in finally enrolling minor in school 3 months later
 - Went for a week and then stopped going
- School meeting held, where minor revealed that he was working in a “dangerous job”
- CPS report made based on insufficient guardianship, and minor not attending school



Minor's concerns/CPS response

- Couldn't work and go to school
 - Was responsible for caring for his mom and brother in Guatemala
- CPS threatened to deport sponsor, asked about his status, demanded meeting with family
 - Home check was done, and minor was encouraged to attend school
 - Minor went to school for a month, then stopped attending



Aftermath of CPS involvement

- Sponsor believed that minor should return to home country
 - reported that he no longer wanted to help minor or with his legal case
- LW was not able to reach minor for two months
- CPS contacted again, nothing came of investigation
- Minor resurfaced, called LW, and reported that he wanted to move forward with his legal case
- Met with minor and attorney, discussed options: 1) finding another guardian, 2) entering foster care
- Minor decided foster care was the best option



End result of our efforts

- LW and minor worked together, and minor dropped in to an ACS Center in NYC
 - Was placed in foster care within 24 hours
- Minor is living with a foster care family, now attending school, and working part-time
- His legal case is going well and is on track to receive a Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS visa)
- Minor reports feeling much better now that he has the support of his foster care mom and does not need to work all the time



Lessons Learned

- Roles of institutions in advancing social integration
- There can be many barriers to integrating successfully, including being part of a vulnerable population, having little support in this country, and having obligations in home country
- Social integration “is a long individual process, which depends on levels of education, preparedness to integrate, cultural background, age and family situation of the refugee.” *(Dwyer, 2010)*



Case Study: Maria

- Travelled to U.S. with her younger sister to avoid threats from gang members
- Father left home country before she was born and her mother when she was only 3
- History of physical, verbal, emotional abuse in home country from caregivers
- History of suicidal ideation and self-harm/suicide attempt
- History of problematic behaviors and difficulties with caregivers



Initial Stages of Case

- Reunified with father but had trouble adjusting
 - Difficulties in family dynamic (father as parent, new step-mother, etc)
 - Happy to be reunified but still residual resentment
- Left to live with her mother but issues continued
 - Alleged sexual abuse by mother's partner
- Moved between their homes whenever issues arose in the family
- CPS called 8 times over a two year period



Challenges & Resolution

- After serious assault from mother on Maria and her siblings, placed in domestic foster care
- LW followed up to ensure that she received adequate support
- Local DSS resistant to assisting Maria with immigration case
 - Several appointments made by LW which Maria & DSS missed
 - DSS indicated that they would not pursue Maria's immigration case until her CPS case was resolved
 - Minor was 17



Resolution

- LIRS and the local partner became very involved to assist in securing legal services
- Immigration judge continued case until DSS found appropriate legal services
- Minor was quickly approved for SIJS



Lessons Learned

- Family structure was not intact, therefore integration was almost impossible
- “long individual process, which depends on levels of education, preparedness to integrate, cultural background, age and family situation of the refugee” *(Dwyer, 2010)*
- Community institution was a road block to adequate integration
- “The process of integration includes adaptation of both refugees and host communities.” *(Dwyer, 2010)*



METRICS FOR SOCIAL INTEGRATION



Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service

Themes in Field Workers' Perspectives

Dwyer, year

The process of integration includes adaptation of both refugees and host communities.

- It is a long individual process, which depends on levels of education, preparedness to integrate, cultural background, age and family situation of the refugees.
- Feeling of satisfaction and capacity to become a full member of the society.
- Achieving a balance between preserving your own culture and contributing to the new culture.
- Language and ability to communicate.
- Functionality within the community.
- Expanded employment and economic opportunities.
- Positive attitudes, behaviors, and respect for diversity and cultural differences.
- Community participation and involvement.

Working definition of successful refugee integration:

- **Integration is a long-term process, through which refugees and host communities communicate effectively, function together and enrich each other, expand employment options and create economic opportunities, and have mutual respect and understanding among people of different cultures.**



Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service

Themes in Field Workers' Perspectives

Dwyer, year

The IWG also established eight indicators and some relevant best practices of successful integration. The eight indicators of integration include:

- health/well being
- language
- economic opportunity
- civic values/participation/engagement
- education
- housing
- social connections
- belonging/safety



Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service

Community Support

- Local and national government systems are NOT main support
 - “churches and local congregational co-sponsors bring more resources to support refugees”

Dwyer, year

- Policies are frequently updated but difficult to enforce
 - Particularly on a national level
- Programs are more important
 - Allow for initial social interaction
 - Additionally provides a service
 - Must be able to develop individual’s skills in order to become self-sufficient
 - BEST if local community support/service centers are able to specialize for immigrant/refugee populations instead of having separate agencies

Ager & Strang, year



Community Support

- Refugees wanted to share their culture and stories
 - Not simply have their isolation mitigated by a new friendship

Ager & Strang, year

Vermont Refugee Integration Project found that ethnic social ties helped...

- As social relief from acculturative and post-traumatic stressors
- For dissemination of problem-solving information regarding integration concerns
- To preserve attachments to the homeland (both real and imagined)
- To strategize for family reunification

Dwyer, year



**Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service**