



Worcester Refugee Assistance Project: Community Conversations on Health

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UMMS Class of 2017



Worcester Refugee Assistance Project (WRAP)

The Worcester Refugee Assistance Project serves Burmese refugees displaced by the civil war in their home country. We aim to help refugees develop self-reliance through the following programs.

- English Language Learning and Literacy
- Family Mentoring
- 1-1 Teen Mentoring
- Youth Group



Project Aims

- To explore individual and cultural beliefs surrounding mental health.
- To explore the experience of Burmese refugees in the U.S. healthcare system.
- To find ways we can support the community in improving mental health and health care access

Future Directions

- Conversation with the adults on 8/9
- Preparing educational materials on medical terminology.
- Educational sessions on U.S. mental health practices and proactive measures to improve patient/provider communication

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Common Pathways

Common Pathways is a MA Department of Public Health initiative to network individuals and organizations working to improve community health in Central Massachusetts.

Common Pathways facilitates a Community Conversation series every summer. **This year, Common Pathways came to WRAP to talk about health and health care.**



The Youth Perspective (Age 12-19)

Recovery from Mental Illness

- Belief in the ability of medication and change in lifestyle to aid recovery.
- Suspicious of counseling, in part due to concerns about confidentiality.

Cultural Idioms of Mental Illness

- "Thinking too much" refers to obsessive worrying about past and future, which can lead to insomnia and is often associated with grief.
- Mental and emotional problems are often described as "heart problems."

Experiences with Healthcare Providers

- Unfamiliar with vocabulary, including anatomy and medical tests.
- Felt that providers often spoke too fast and seemed reluctant to repeat information.
- Felt more comfortable with providers who smiled, spoke slowly, and appeared unrushed.



For more information about WRAP, go to worcesterrefugees.org or check us out on Facebook!