Worcester Refugee Assistance Project: Community Conversations on Health

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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

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 un rushed.

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