

Refugee Health

In a Community Health Center

PHC 2019

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Disclosure

Some information and slides are from our PHC Leader Dr. Valdman

Family Health Center Worcester

- Started in 1972
- Moved to current location (Queen Street) in 1991 taking over the Worcester City Hospital
- FHCW is a community health center open to all residents of Worcester and surrounding communities
- Services: Primary Care, MCH, Behavioral Health, Vision, Dental, Pharmacy, Labs & Radiology, HIV/ HCV clinic, nutritional counseling, Refugee Health clinic
- Nobody is denied care: uninsured patients pay on a sliding scale



FHC Demographics

- **Income:** 95% of patients <200% poverty, 77% below 100% poverty line
- **Self-Reported Patient Race/Ethnicity:** 45% ethnic Hispanic/Latino; 9% Asian/Pacific Islander; 17% African American/African-born;
- 53% White (Hispanic & Non-Hispanic); 20% Multiracial
- **Language:** 47% of patients are best served in a language other than English



Who are Refugees?

- The 1951 **Refugee Convention** (UNHCR) states that a refugee is someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (Refugee Legal Aid, n.d.)
- Refugees admitted (US):

- 2015: 140,000
- 2016: 85,000
- 2017: 100,000
- 2018: 50,000
- 2019: 33,000
- 2020: 18,000

U.S. trailed rest of world in refugee resettlement in 2017 and 2018 after leading it for decades

Number of refugee admissions, in thousands, by calendar year



Note: Figures rounded to the nearest thousand.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees data, accessed June 12, 2019.

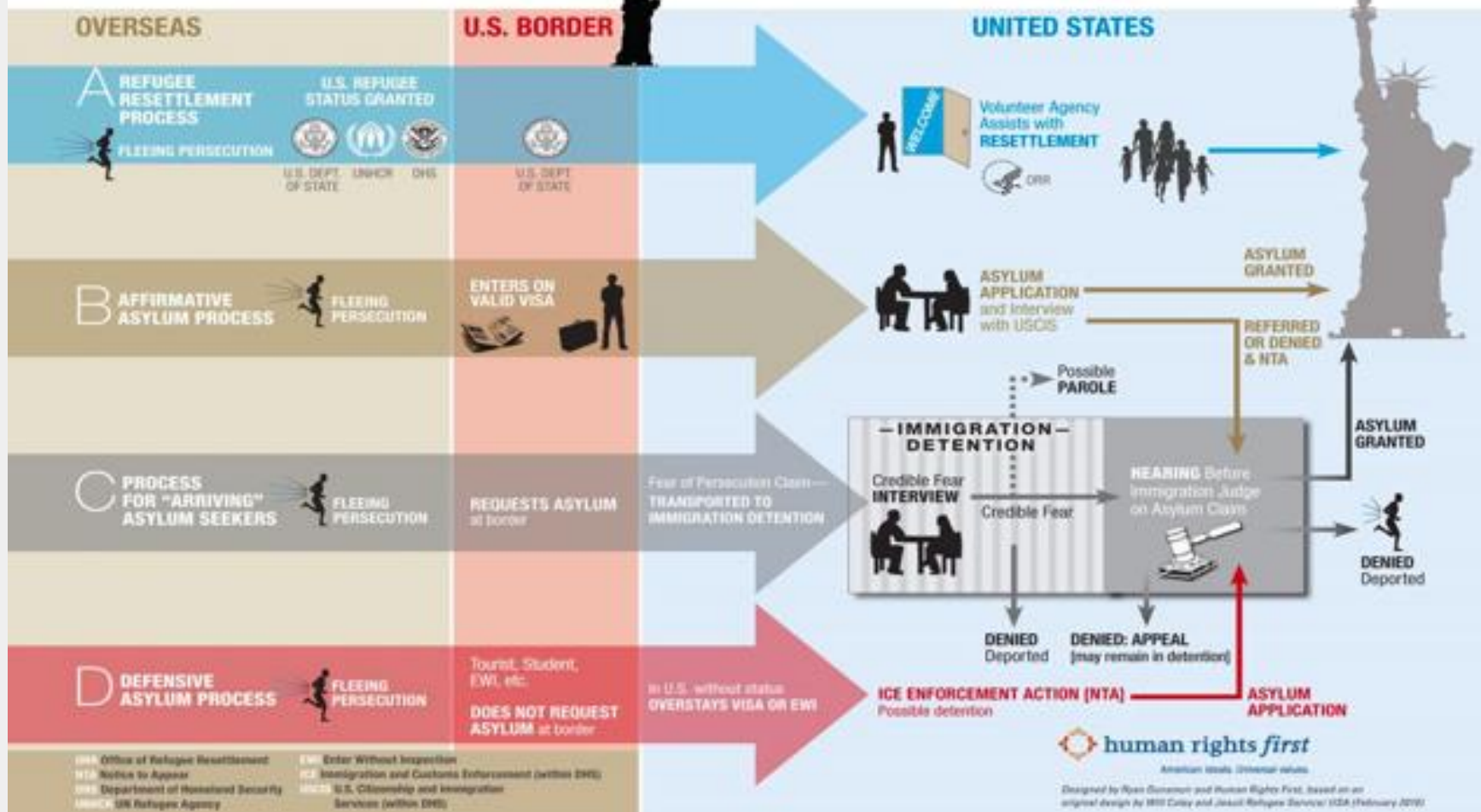
Major Refugee Groups in MA 2016

Africa	759	Somalia, DRC, Ethiopia
Southeast Asia	34	Burma
Near East and South Asia	958	Iraq, Bhutan



<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/id/public-health-cdc-refugee-arrivals.html>

How Refugees Get to the U.S.



FHC Refugee Clinic: Overview

- One of 2 sites in Worcester receiving federal funding for RH1 and RH2 visits
- Refugee health visits
 - a. Overseen by the CDC and DPH or county health
 - b. Each refugee must pass rigorous screenings before gaining refugee status and again before arriving in the US at 3 and 6 months prior to travel
 - c. RH1: Initial intake, infectious disease screening, triage to other medical providers, labs and screening tests are done, mental health screening, update vaccinations
 - d. RH2: Follow up with bloodwork, check in regarding transition to life in the US, provide winter coats, shoes & hats,
 - e. Follow up visits: At FHC, patients continue with the provider who did their initial intake until they are able to manage the system on their own. Most referrals are within the building



Major goals: identify and treat infectious diseases, identify mental health conditions, get patients into the US health system, work collaboratively with community programs to help refugees navigate health/social systems

FHC Refugee Clinic: common diagnoses

- Tuberculosis
- Syphilis
- Gonorrhea
- Chlamydia
- HIV
- Hepatitis B and C
- Other STIs
- Malaria
- PTSD
- Depression
- Chronic Pain
- Hypertension



FHC Refugee Clinic: Global Distribution

- Albania
- **Democratic Republic of Congo**
- Sudan
- Somalia
- **Uganda**
- Jamaica
- Tanzania
- Burundi
- Rwanda
- Puerto Rico (internally displaced)
- Vietnam
- Syria
- Nepal



Barriers to care

- Language, lack of in-person interpretation and various dialects
- Transportation after initial 2 visits
- Child care
- History of trauma
- Lack of trust in medical system
- Mental health
- Cultural/ familial dynamics
- Low literacy/ illiteracy
- Lack of government funding and resources

Systems of Support

- ACE
- WRAP
- RIAC
- Religious organizations
- Ascentria



The interdisciplinary team at FHC Refugee Clinic

- MDs, RNs, NPs, Social Workers, Community Health Workers (CHWs), Medical Assistants (MAs), Interpreters, Administrators, Integrative Behavioral Health, OB Advocates, Insurance support

January 31, 2017



Olga Valdman, MD, treats a child at the refugee health clinic at the Family Health Center of Worcester in Massachusetts. Photo: Family Health Center of Worcester

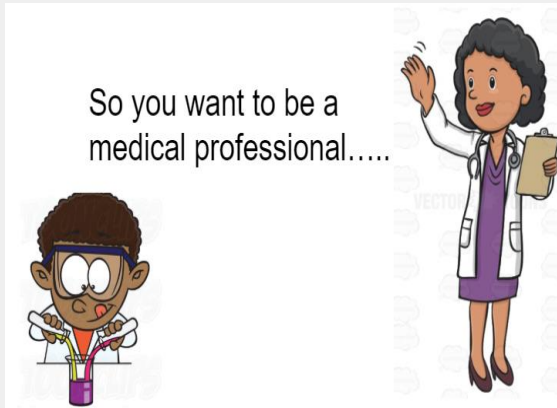
Volunteering and Experiential Learning

- Shadowed and assisted in the refugee health clinic, working with MDs, MAs and nursing staff
- Were able to provide interpretation help in other languages we speak
- Attended home visits for follow up care and signing patients up for services
- Visited various local organizations working to improve refugees' well being and experience acclimating to the US (RIAC, WRAP, WIC)



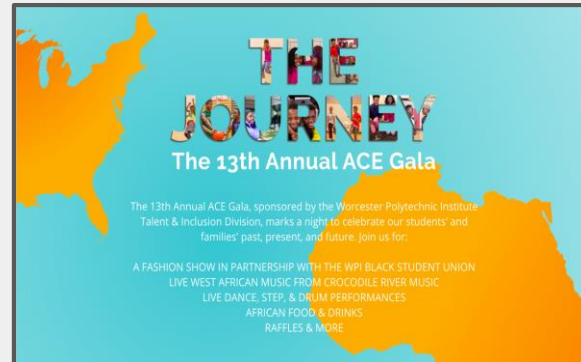
Volunteering and Experiential Learning

- Volunteered at the African Community Education (ACE) afterschool homework help program
- Ran a panel on health professionals and other career paths post high school



Advocacy: How can you help?

- Volunteer with local organizations!
- Join the Refugee Family Partnership, Global Health OEE, PHR OEE
- Donate to organizations
 - Worcester Refugee Assistance Program (WRAP) for Burmese refugees relies **solely** on donations
- Stay **informed!** Visit Refugee Resettlement numbers in your state:
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/refugee-arrival-data>
- Attend the ACE Gala on Nov 7 at Mechanics Hall



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- African Community Education (ACE) Program
- Refugee & Immigration Assistance Center (RIAC)
- Worcester Refugee Assistance Project (WRAP)



Thank you!

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