**NYS Newcomer Briefs:**

**BURMA**
Significant linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity.
- Major ethnic groups in NYS include Karen, Burman, Chin, and Karenni.
- Value family, expect respect for elders, favor cooperation over individualism.
- Important social cues to consider:
  - Direct eye contact is viewed as a challenge.
  - It is impolite to show anger.
  - Use both hands when giving to or receiving from someone more senior.
- Some parenting and medical practices (especially Chin) have origins in animistic religious beliefs and may cause alarm among Westerners.
  - Cupping
  - Finger Prick
  - Coining

**IRAQ**
- Many Iraqis have strong educational backgrounds and knowledge of English.
- Vast majority Muslim.
  - Patriarchal society = different expectations for girls and boys.
  - Protection of women to demonstrate that they are loved and valued, though Westerners might perceive it as oppressive.
  - Muslim women might be more comfortable working with female social service workers or medical professionals.
- Discipline might include physical punishment, though parents are familiar with laws against corporal punishment.
  - Provide alternatives.

As these diverse communities encounter Social Service Agencies, tensions can arise.

- Newcomers typically come from countries in which state involvement in parenting and family life is unheard of.
- Families might be weary, unsure what agency involvement entails or why it’s necessary.
- The majority of interactions between newcomers and CPS workers are the result of reports of either neglect or excessive physical punishment.

**NEGLECT**
- Sibling Caretaking is a common practice in many newcomer communities, leading to reports of inadequate supervision.
  - Older children may benefit from the sense of self-efficacy, responsibility, and familial importance connected to sibling caregiving.
  - Different kids = different levels of responsibility.
- However, over-burdening older children can lead to parentalization.

* Help connect families with culturally appropriate childcare.
  - Many families prefer to leave young children in the care of people who share their ethnic or religious background.

**EXCESSIVE PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT**
- Acknowledge changing perceptions of corporal punishment (CP) in the U.S.
  - The majority of parents do not intend to abuse children.
- Following cultural norms or doing what their parents did = acknowledge that their parents did their best with the information they had at the time.
- Make parents aware of the research regarding how CP impacts child development and school performance = use parents’ hopes for their children’s success as a tool in changing attitudes about using CP.
- Explain that CP has the potential to escalate into a pattern of abuse.
- Newcomer parents view Western parenting as too permissive.
  - Provide viable alternatives to corporal punishment.

Approximately 4.2 million immigrants live in New York State.
- Approximately 20% of people living in New York State are foreign-born.
- Approximately 30% of people live in a household where a language other than English (LOTE) is spoken.
- In 2014, over 4,000 refugees from a variety of countries were settled across NYS.
- 8.6% of children who are brought to the attention of the child welfare system are the children of immigrants.
SOCIAL SERVICES AND NEWCOMER FAMILIES IN NYS
BRIDGING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

NYS Newcomer Briefs:

SOMALIA
• 85% of people are ethnic Somalis and practicing Muslims
  • Next largest ethnic group = Somali Bantu.
• Both groups value family, follow a patriarchal structure, have strong tradition of extended family and kinship in childrearing.
  • Displacement might have disrupted this network, leading to family tension.
  • It is not typical to converse with children about daily life or emotions = parents might be unaware of issues with peers or at school.
• Somali Bantu parents might engage in traditional healing, including cupping or fire-burning.
  • Discipline might include corporal punishment, but parents are eager for alternatives to use in an effort to avoid agency intervention.
• The written Somali language was not formalized until the 1970s, so older Somalis may lack literacy skills
  • Seek alternatives for communication = face to face is preferred.

LATINO COMMUNITIES
• Many different Latino communities are represented in NYS. Most identify with their national origin and should not be lumped together.
  • Puerto Ricans are American citizens = different experiences than newcomers from Mexico or the Dominican Republic despite linguistic similarities
• Families are close-knit, value roles of parents and children, have high expectations for children’s behavior
  • Familism = family is a source of pride and strength.
  • Service workers should embrace and build on the strong family structures as an asset when working with families.

FAMILY CONFLICT

♦ Significant resettlement stressors can compound and lead to conflict that results in agency intervention
  • Separation
  • Trauma
  • Renegotiation of family roles
  • Different rates of acculturation for children and parents can cause tension
  • Barriers to employment, quality housing, transportation
♦ Workers should attempt to connect families with preventative services before tensions escalate.
  • Quality After-school and childcare
  • Job Training
  • Mental health services in cases of trauma

EXTENSION OF SERVICES

♦ Newcomers often have significant barriers to overcome to participate in services or programs
  • Feelings of isolation or social rejection
  • Transportation and/or childcare
  • Inflexible employment
  • Immigration status affecting eligibility
♦ Provide materials in parent’s home languages or work with interpreters to ease communication
  • NEVER assume that because a person lacks knowledge of English, he or she lacks intelligence

ASSET-BASED ORIENTATION

♦ Workers’ attitudes are closely tied to the clients’ willingness to engage/participate.
  • Case workers with a deficit orientation had less success
  • Lack of knowledge of English does not imply a lack of intelligence
♦ Collaborate with parents to identify specific plans for each family
  • There is no one-size-fits-all approach that can work with newcomer communities
    ♦ Be flexible
    ♦ Embrace families’ cultural backgrounds as assets

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