Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

Building a Healthcare Navigation Program with the Bhutanese Refugees of Philadelphia

Statement of Problem

There are approximately 2,000 Bhutanese refugees in Philadelphia, many of whom experience disparities in health that are outside of their control. After arriving in the United States, refugees must quickly learn to navigate a host of complex U.S. systems, such as health care, with minimal support.

Description

The Health Focal Points program is a partnership between the Bhutanese American Organization-Philadelphia and PolicyLab. Using lessons learned from existing social service organizations serving immigrant and refugee communities, we worked with experts from the Penn Center for Community Health Workers and the Center for Public Health Initiatives to adapt a community health worker program aimed at teaching Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugees how to navigate the U.S. health care system.

This community-based program helps clients solve pressing problems accessing health care, such as language and cultural barriers. It uses a combined approach of direct assistance and education to help clients gain knowledge, skills and confidence. The ultimate goals are self-reliance of the clients, empowerment of the Health Focal Point, and dissemination of an efficient and effective model that new immigrant communities can use to help their members learn to have successful interactions with the U.S. health system.

Next Steps

With funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, the Bhutanese American Organization-Philadelphia will continue to expand and improve the Health Focal Points program. We plan to strengthen community outreach efforts as well as include more outreach to engage parents of children under the age of 18. Lastly, we aim to conduct a rigorous outcomes evaluation to document program effectiveness.

Additional Information:

Bhutanese Refugee Community:
Bhutan Refugees Renew Farming in US, YouTube
"Bhutan is No Shangri-La", *The New York Times*
Bhutan News Service

NRB: The Voice of Non Resident Bhutanese

Community Health Worker Programs:
Penn Center for Community Health Workers
Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
Colorado Patient Navigator Training Collaborative
"Understanding Why Patients of Low Socioeconomic Status Prefer Hospitals Over Ambulatory Care", *Health Affairs*
"Role Development of Community Health Workers: An Examination of Selection and Training Processes in the Intervention Literature", *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*

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Related Tools & Publications

COVID-19 and Immigrant Essential Workers: Bhutanese and Burmese Refugees in the United States
Article
Nov 2020

Factors Associated with Refugee Acute Healthcare Utilization in Southern Connecticut
Article
Apr 2018

Help-Seeking Behavior and Health Care Navigation by Bhutanese Refugees
Article
Dec 2015

High Prevalence of Chronic Non-Communicable Conditions Among Adult Refugees
Article
2012

Interest in Collaborative, Practice-Based Research Networks in Pediatric Refugee Health Care
Article
Oct 2016

Refugee Health Care in the United States
Webinars
Apr 2018

The Case for Research-informed Immigrant Health Policies Within Health Care Systems
Article
Apr 2020