



SPECIAL FEATURE FOR SEPTEMBER 2005:

Promising Practices for Refugee-Serving Programs

In this third installment of our Sidebar Series on "Promising Practices," BRYCS highlights the National Child Traumatic Stress Network's work identifying and developing interventions that are effective for addressing trauma in refugee children, youth, and their families.

With 54 agencies located across the United States currently in its network, the NCTSN first determined the data required in order to know more about the children it serves. Network agencies are now collecting basic demographic and trauma-related information on all children, youth, and families served through their NCTSN programs.

In addition to gathering these core data, the NCTSN has categorized Network interventions according to the "treatment classification criteria" used by the Office for Victims of Crime of the Department of Justice – one well-developed system for identifying "promising" or "best practices".

These "[Guidelines for the Psychosocial Treatment of Intrafamilial Child Physical and Sexual Abuse](#)" describe the following categories:

1. Well-supported, efficacious treatment
2. Supported and probably efficacious treatment
3. Supported and acceptable treatment
4. Promising and acceptable treatment
5. Novel and experimental treatment
6. Concerning treatment

Each program is placed on this continuum based on the degree to which its intervention can show:

- a theoretical basis
- anecdotal support
- appropriateness for abused children
- no evidence of risk of substantial harm, compared to likely benefits, for recipients
- existence of a manual that details the intervention
- higher quality, number, and positive results of outcome evaluations

The NCTSN classifies 29 interventions with various levels of evidence in its chart of "[Empirically Supported Treatments and Promising Practices](#)", including their specific outcomes.

Please note that several of these programs serve refugee children and that, while the NCTSN does not endorse particular interventions, it does seek to help make information about these interventions available - through manuals, other documentation or dissemination of contact information - to any interested agency. See the list of [NCTSN refugee-serving agencies](#).

This month BRYCS features one such program, [International Family, Adolescent, and Children's Services \(IFACES\)](#) – run by Heartland Health Outreach, the health care partner of Heartland Alliance

for Human Needs and Human Rights of Chicago, Illinois. The overall goal of International FACES is to enhance the quality of life for refugee children, adults and families by providing culturally and linguistically appropriate, comprehensive mental health services for those children, adults, and families suffering from trauma-related distress or serious emotional disorders exacerbated by their refugee experience.

To do so, International FACES provides comprehensive, cross-cultural, linguistically appropriate community-based mental health services to refugee children and families. Outreach is seen as the cornerstone of the program and occurs throughout the treatment process. Outreach includes identifying refugee children who can benefit from services, engaging the children and their families in services, providing services in a community setting, and supporting them as necessary after the active treatment phase has ended. The model incorporates components of the Assertive Community Treatment model (ACT), an evidence-based practice model of service, as well as components designed specifically to meet the needs of refugee families.

For evaluation, this program is using several instruments to monitor the functioning of children immediately before, after, and 3, 6, and 9 months following their participation in this program. Preliminary findings suggest that children receiving services show statistically significant and steady improvement over the course of treatment, and that the more service contacts the children have, the greater improvement they demonstrate. These are exciting findings and are important to building knowledge concerning “promising practices” for those refugee children who can benefit from trauma-informed services.

Read more about [International Family, Adolescent, and Children’s Services \(IFACES\)](#).