

Working With Immigrant Populations

Practitioner Takeaways

SUMMARY

The following information includes specific strategies for working with immigrant families such as finding supportive and accessible networks and resources, intergenerational relationships in mixed-status families, immigrant adolescent mental health, and family functioning. Implications for practitioners working with and supporting immigrant populations, increasing knowledge of parent-child and intergenerational relationships amongst mixed-status families, identifying and utilizing culturally relevant resources, addressing family conflict and trauma are important when working with immigrant populations.



CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND SENSITIVITY

Incorporate Family-centered Approaches:

- Consider unique challenges faced by immigrant parents and tailor services to meet their needs
- Appoint translators
- Provide access and information to economic resources such as job trainings, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), navigating banks systems, home ownership, and child care
- Partner and collaborate with community-based immigrant serving organizations and staff to streamline a pathway of care for families
- Recognize the roles of mothers and extended family members in immigrant communities and involve them in planning and delivery of services
- Equip immigrant families with language to have a healthy dialogue about ambivalent emotions, ambiguous loss, and grief
- Allow youth to share their experiences and feelings
- Encourage families to participate in racial-ethnic socialization strategies using developmentally appropriate resources (e.g. videos, games, story books)
- Gauge the experiences of caregivers and the extent they can/will engage their children in racial-ethnic socialization conversations
- Implement racial-ethnic socialization strategies into individual and family therapy, parenting education programs, and parent support groups

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- Facilitate structured discussions on social justice
- Practice interpersonal communication and emotional regulation using tools such as Culturally Informed and Flexible Family Based Treatment for Adolescents (CIFFTA)
- Provide families with developmentally appropriate resources when talking about potential deportation (e.g., videos, games, story books)
- Incorporate trauma-informed approaches into parenting education
- Employ discussion-based learning for individuals from oral tradition backgrounds
- Highlight cultural strengths in classes
- Support family strengths by developing programs to assist families impacted by immigration enforcement

Implement Trainings to Enhance Practitioner Awareness and Understanding of Immigrant and Multi-Status Families such as:

- The multifaceted forms of losses: ambiguous loss, anticipatory loss, disenfranchised grief, complicated grief, and intergenerational loss, and transnational loss in relation to immigration policy;
- Complex experiences of immigrant and refugee families; and
- Cross-cultural identity that impact individual and family experiences.



Recognize the Patterns of Relationship Upheaval and Family Violence by:

- Giving opportunities for female clients to speak privately with staff;
- Using screening tools during resettlement interviews;
- Assessing comfort levels when asking if support is needed;
- Educating families and couples about stress and relationship adjustment;
- Normalizing that conflict can happen and emphasizing that relationship violence is not acceptable;
- Providing evidence-based approaches such as Bounce Back in schools with students who have had exposure to family, school, or community-based violence.

You can access the complete research collection on Immigration and Families at: ncfr.org/immigration-resources