

Advanced Techniques in Mental Health Care for Newcomers

Part 1: Engaging and Building Trust

A Companion Resource Sheet

[Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma](https://hpert-cambridge.org/about) (<https://hpert-cambridge.org/about>)

The Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma (HPRT), originally founded at the Harvard School of Public Health, is a multidisciplinary program that has been pioneering the health and mental health care of traumatized refugees and civilians in areas of conflict, post-conflict, and natural disasters for over two decades. Its clinical program serves as a global model that has been replicated worldwide. HPRT designed and implemented the first curriculum for the mental health training of primary care practitioners in settings of human conflict, post-conflict, and natural disasters.

HPRT Harvard trauma questionnaire

The Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ) is a checklist written by HPRT, similar in design to the HSCL-25. It asks about a variety of trauma events, as well as the emotional symptoms considered to be uniquely associated with trauma.

[The HTQ-5: revision of the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire for measuring torture, trauma and DSM-5 PTSD symptoms in refugee populations](https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cky256)
(<https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cky256>)

[Improving Well-Being for Refugees in Primary Care: A Toolkit for Providers](https://cssmv.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2019_healing-hearts-toolkit-pcp-providers.pdf)

(https://cssmv.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2019_healing-hearts-toolkit-pcp-providers.pdf)

This toolkit will address problems, solutions, challenges, and strengths when refugee patients and U.S. health care providers collaborate and bridge cultural divides to offer quality health care

[Veterans Affairs: National Center for PTSD](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/about/work/mission.asp) (<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/about/work/mission.asp>)

The mission of the National Center for PTSD is to advance the clinical care and social welfare of America's Veterans and others who have experienced trauma, or who suffer from PTSD, through research, education, and training in the science, diagnosis, and treatment of PTSD and stress-related disorders. The Center is organized to facilitate rapid translation of science into practice, ensuring that the latest research findings inform clinical care. The site offers access to publications, adult and child screening tools, apps, videos, and referral resources.

Refugee Health Screener – 15 (RHS-15) (<https://warsurvivors.org/other-resources/>)

The Refugee Health Screener-15 (RHS-15) was designed to be short (15 questions) with neutral language that does not directly address violence, torture, or trauma. The RHS-15 was empirically developed to be a valid, efficient, and effective screener for common mental disorders in refugees. The RHS-15 has been integrated into standard physical health screenings for newly arrived refugees in many states across the United States and has been used internationally to support asylum seekers.

Refugee Health Screener – 15 (RHS-15) (https://www.refugeehealthta.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/RHS15_Packet_PathwaysToWellness-1.pdf)

MDH: Mental Health Screening

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/rih/guide/10mentalhealth.html#tool>)

This resource page from the MN Center for Excellence includes recommendations for screening for mental health needs with newly arrived refugees. The page includes access to the Minnesota Wellbeing and Emotions Check (WE-Check) Screening tool, a culturally derived screener that includes common expressions of mental health distress among newcomer communities. The tool was developed through a collaborative study that included 13 focus groups with 111 refugees from Burma, Bhutan, Somali, and Ethiopia. The WE-Check is available in 16 different languages at the link below.

Assessing Newcomer Health and Coordinating Care in Primary Care Settings

(https://drive.google.com/file/d/1p3d_x4WN-UqZkFkX3DJPlwKa4NBUibZf/view)

The 2023 Presentation to Extension Community Health Outcomes (ECHO) includes recommendations for initial screening and effective care coordination in primary care settings. The information is tailored towards providers who are not mental health professionals and focuses on identifying newcomers in need of a mental health referral and successfully getting that individual into care.

APA: Cultural Formulation Interview

(https://www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/Psychiatrists/Practice/DSM/APA_DSM5_Cultural-Formulation-Interview.pdf)

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) and the DSM-5 Cross-Cultural Issues Subgroup (DCCIS) collaborated to develop and disseminate the Cultural Formulation Interview (CFI). This evidence-based tool is composed of a series of questionnaires that assist clinicians in making person-centered cultural assessments to inform diagnosis and treatment planning.

Cultural Formulation Interview Supplementary Module 11

(<https://www.psychiatry.org/getmedia/aca8f5a2-9b1b-456c-a3b7-f7f852edcf7c/APA-DSM5TR-CulturalFormulationInterviewSupplementaryModules.pdf>)

These modules supplement the core Cultural Formulation Interview and can help clinicians conduct a more comprehensive cultural assessment. The first eight supplementary modules explore the domains of the core CFI in greater depth. The next three modules focus on populations with specific needs, such as children and adolescents, older adults, and immigrants and refugees. The last module examines the experiences and perspectives of individuals who perform caregiving functions, aiming to clarify the nature and cultural context of caregiving and its impact on social support within the immediate environment of the individual receiving care. In addition to these supplementary modules, an Informant version of the core CFI collects collateral information on the CFI domains from family members or caregivers.

Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center

(<https://www.traumainformedcare.chcs.org/>)

This site curates resources from experts in the field of trauma-informed care nationwide and also draws largely from the experiences of healthcare organizations that participated in Advancing Trauma-Informed Care. On this website you will find:

- Foundational knowledge regarding the impact of trauma on health and trauma-informed care.
 - In-the-field examples illustrating how trauma-informed care can be integrated into health care settings; and
 - Practical strategies and tools for implementing trauma-informed approaches to care.
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McLean: Refugee Mental Health (<https://www.mcleanhospital.org/essential/refugee-mental-health>)

For nearly 200 years, McLean Hospital—a Harvard Medical School teaching hospital—has been providing the finest professional education and resources for a wide range of mental health care professionals. McLean Hospital’s free online resources for professionals working with refugees and other newcomers explore strategies for navigating stigma and promoting mental wellbeing.

UNICEF: Migration and Displacement Country Profiles

(<https://data.unicef.org/resources/migration-and-displacement-country-profiles-mdcp>)

The Migration and Displacement Country Profiles serve as a centralized resource, compiling the most up-to-date and crucial data concerning “children on the move.” These profiles include statistics on international migrant children, refugee children, and internally displaced children, with insights into educational backgrounds and primary migration pathways. Furthermore, they provide pertinent national-level data spanning demographics, education, labor markets, and economics, offering valuable context regarding the circumstances faced by children. The profiles allow experts, practitioners and policymakers to gain a comprehensive overview of the present conditions, trends and projections across all countries.

Research

We recommend reviewing the following research articles for a more in-depth review of mental health needs and considerations.

- [Refugees' perspectives on barriers to communication about trauma histories in primary care](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3487607/pdf/MHFM-09-047.pdf) (<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3487607/pdf/MHFM-09-047.pdf>)
 - [Mental health of refugees and asylum seekers: Assessment and intervention](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0706743717746665) (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0706743717746665>)
 - [Assessing trauma in a transcultural context: Challenges in mental health care with immigrants and refugees](https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1186/s40985-018-0102-y.pdf) (<https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1186/s40985-018-0102-y.pdf>)
 - [Refugee mental health: Culturally relevant considerations](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2352250X22001506) (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2352250X22001506>)
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