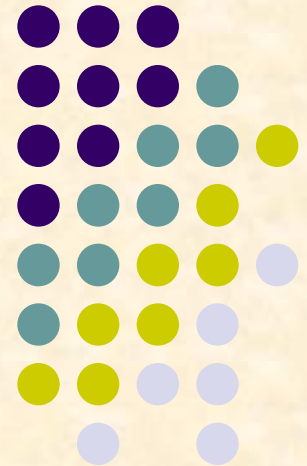




Providing Orientation and Services to Seniors



IRCO's
Experience





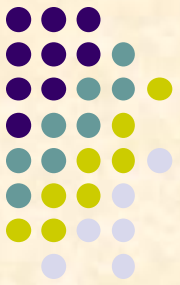
Why did IRCO begin serving seniors?



- Concerns about isolation
- Growing # of seniors in our area
- Growing # of minority seniors in our area
- Immigrant seniors often felt neglected by their families in the US
- Self-esteem, Depression
- Interest in advocating for their needs



How did IRCO begin serving seniors?



- In 1996, Multnomah County contracted with IRCO. IRCO did outreach to SE Asian elder using lunches to share information about Aging & Disability services
- We incorporated Slavic seniors into the same meal site, helping with citizenship preparation

Strides since 1996



- We still use meal sites as a main way to connect I&R seniors to many mainstream services, including our expanded programs
- Since then, Multnomah County has added many Enhanced Ethnic Outreach contracts with many orgs that serve specific minority pops
- IRCO Senior Services has added more programs, locations, and staff. We are also now the provider for mainstream elders in the area



Among other activities, our program services include:



- Case management
- Social activities; health and wellness activities
- ESL classes and citizenship classes
- Transportation
- Information and referrals
- Nutrition services
- Advocacy



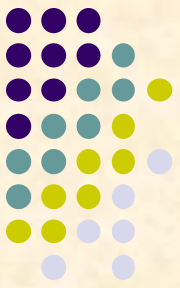


Diversity of IRCO Seniors



- Many nationalities (nine currently)
- Many kinds of families (with varying levels of financial and emotional support)
- Huge age range
- Various interests (grandchildren, travel, pets, group activities, advocacy...)
- Varying strengths and challenges
- Self-esteem, depression

How do IRCO activities meet seniors' orientation & adjustment needs?



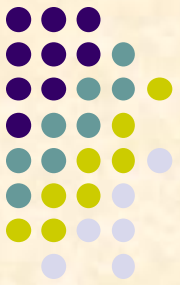
“...when seniors lose their sense of ability to do things for themselves, it can be devastating to their sense of purpose.” (IRCO case manager)

- Social activities and interaction help seniors regain sense of ability to do things; improve mental and physical health
- Practice new skills with people in the same situation
- Create clear connections to mainstream services, improve the services for all immigrants, refugees, and seniors





It is important to remember...



- “...that behind those wrinkles hides a long ***life***, a sharp ***mind***, and unique ***character***.”
- “It is important to be ***honest*** with seniors...because even though they are older, they still know what is going on.”
- “I wish I had known...to be more mentally prepared for personalities and outcomes, good or bad.”



I can see that seniors benefit from orientation when (or by, or because....)



They come by bus using bus fare provided in our program

They fill out surveys, give feedback, and otherwise advocate for their needs

They see themselves as a powerful group that should attend local meetings, speak with politicians, make their issues more public



Lessons learned from IRCO's experience

- Starting with services for 1, and then 2 communities of elders worked well for us
- Starting with meals and using a location that is neutral (not government) was very effective
- Many elders want their whole family involved when seeking services
- Funding can change quickly, so our goal is always to show how seniors can advocate for themselves in this culture