

Community Services and Public Assistance

The Basics: Community Services and Public Assistance

Introduction for the Trainer

Key Content

In this session, participants will learn about the different services, resources, goods, and forms of assistance available to them in their new communities. They will also learn that some assistance is available for low-income families.

Main Messages

Different places in a community offer different services. Some places, such as laundromats and grocery stores, are businesses that sell their goods and services. Other places, such as libraries and recreation centers, are run by the local government and provide their services to anyone in the community free of charge or at a small cost. In addition, most communities have government agencies that provide food, financial, and medical assistance to eligible individuals with special needs, such as low-income families. Although this government support is limited, it is usually very important to newly arrived refugees. Participants should discuss their eligibility for government assistance with their case worker/manager or someone else who knows about these programs.



25 minutes

Objectives

Participants will be able to do the following:

- ▶ Describe a variety of community services
- ▶ State that assistance is available in the United States for eligible low-income families

Key English Vocabulary

- ▶ *hospital*
- ▶ *pharmacy (drugstore)*
- ▶ *store*
- ▶ *Where is the _____ [hospital; laundromat]?*

Materials

- Meeting Regular Needs Cards (included)
- Tape

Session Preparation

Review the Meeting Regular Needs Cards to ensure that they reflect the local community services available. Add, remove, or edit cards as necessary. The trainer should become familiar with the local community services. S/he will need to know what services are available, what they offer, whether there is a charge for a service, and how much such a charge will cost.

Print the necessary Meeting Regular Needs Cards. When working with a larger group, make duplicate cards.

Find out about the following:

- ▶ The person participants should talk to about their eligibility for government benefits (such as a case worker/ manager or Department of Social Services staff member). Be prepared to provide this information. Fill in this information in Trainer's Introduction of Session to Participants below.
- ▶ The name of the place participants should go to get a learner's permit or driver's license, or to register a car. In many communities, this is called the Department of Motor Vehicles (or DMV), but it may be known by another name, such as the Department of Transportation or the Motor Vehicle Administration. Fill in this information where it is needed in the Meeting Regular Needs Cards.

Trainer's Introduction of Session to Participants

Your new community has many different services available. Many will be helpful to you.

During this session, we will talk about the community services, resources, and assistance available to you in your new community.

In addition to the services and resources available to all residents of your new community, there is also government assistance (sometimes called *public assistance*) for low-income families who are eligible for the assistance. You should discuss your eligibility for public assistance with _____. [Complete this information based on what you found during the session preparation.]

Introductory Exercise

Briefly review the key English vocabulary for this plan by saying the first word aloud in English. Participants say the word to a partner, and then all together as a group. Continue in the same way with the rest of the words and the question. Throughout the session, emphasize the words as they come up and use the question whenever there is an opportunity. If there is time (8 to 10 minutes), use the unit vocabulary found at the end of this unit to help participants better understand key English vocabulary words.

Activity

Divide participants into groups of three to four. Ask the groups to each choose a spokesperson who will share the highlights of their discussion. Divide the Meeting Regular Needs Cards evenly among groups.

Small groups spend 5 to 10 minutes reviewing their Meeting Regular Needs Cards and determine what services are provided at the places shown on the cards.

Bring the full group together. Spokespeople from the small groups tape their Meeting Regular Needs Cards to the wall and describe what services are offered and how the services could meet their needs. The trainer should answer any questions and be sure that participants understand how their needs can be met by the different community services.

Debrief the session using the questions below.

Debriefing Questions

- ▶ What does your family need on a regular basis? Which of the services discussed during this session would help meet these needs?
- ▶ If your family needs extra financial assistance to afford basic living expenses, who should you talk to about your family's eligibility?
- ▶ What are some of the community services you learned about during this session? How do you anticipate making use of these services?

Working With Individuals or Very Small Groups

When working with a group of one to three participants, choose fewer Meeting Regular Needs Cards, selecting those that show the community services that participants need the most or are most interested in. The participants and the trainer should discuss the cards one by one, taping them to the wall after participants show that they understand the services.

Variations and Considerations

If possible, group participants by language background during the activity so that they can communicate in a common language.

If needed, use translated versions of the Meeting Regular Needs Cards.

If time and resources allow, replace the pictures shown on the Meeting Regular Needs Cards with pictures of actual places in your local community.

Meeting Regular Needs Cards



Bank



Big box store



Community center



Convenience store



[Complete this information based on what you found out during the session preparation]



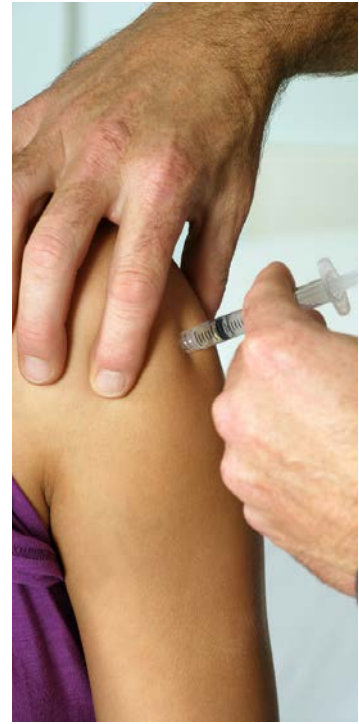
Emergency services and 9-1-1



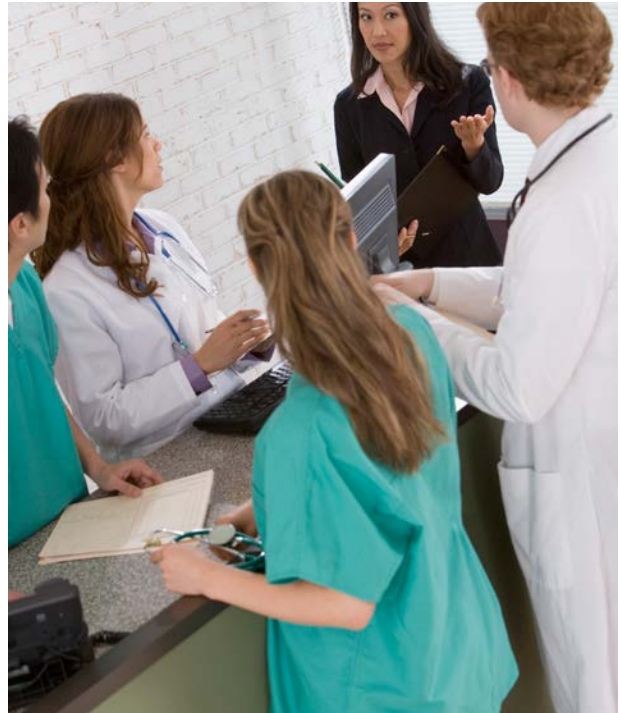
Government assistance office



Grocery store



Health clinic or doctor's office



Hospital



Laundromat



Library



Park



Pharmacy (drugstore)



Police



Post office



School