



Survival Topic #7: Health Care

Questions to Ask:

What is healthcare like in your country? What, if any, kind of traditional healers did you have? What kind of healthcare did you receive in your country? How would you treat a headache or a cold?

Topics to Share:

Discuss your own experiences in a hospital or with a condition that you needed medical attention for (as long as you feel comfortable doing so). How do you feel about going to the doctor?

English Language Learner Tips:

Teach vocabulary to express aches and pains. This involves teaching names of body parts and terms for simple ailments such as headache and sore throat. Use simple sentence structures to practice this vocabulary.

Recognize that using the U.S. healthcare system is difficult for many of people who grew up in the United States, let alone a refugee. Using a telephone to organize healthcare may be challenging for many refugees. You can help them role-play making a doctor's appointment on a pretend or a real phone.

Teach them how and when to call and use 911 (without actually calling, of course). Try to help them state their name, address, and an emergency clearly.

Other Notes:

Many of the refugees have very different beliefs about healthcare. Many believe in traditional healers and their abilities, and are reluctant to follow American health practices. Those who

are wary of Western practices sometimes become less intimidated when they know more about our systems and beliefs. Others are eager to receive as much medical care as possible.

In some areas, doctors are used to working with refugees and may have even adopted their approach. In other areas, where doctors are unfamiliar with cross-cultural situations, a mentor can act as a cultural interpreter.

When refugees first arrive in the U.S., they need to go for medical screenings, usually at public health facilities. Most of the refugees have Medicaid for coverage. Unfortunately, finding dentists who provide services for people on Medicaid is sometimes challenging, so the family might need your help in calling various dentists to check out their Medicaid policy.

Some refugees, particularly those from Asia, have a high incidence of Hepatitis B. They are specifically encouraged to have their children vaccinated and tested. Immunizations for babies are routine here, but are uncommon in other countries. Consider helping your mentees navigate these needs by attending one or more of their doctor's appointments.

Mental health is an important concern for many refugees. Many refugees experience severe culture shock and readjustment problems. Mentors can help alleviate some of the shock and ease in the transition process. Many suffered at the hands of oppressive governments or in refugee camps. These traumatic experiences can lead to emotional distress. Some experience Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). If you notice that a member of the family who may benefit from mental healthcare, consult us as soon as possible.