

Issues Impacting Newcomers in Portage County

Section 1: Introduction

Portage County has an increasing number of newcomers (immigrants and refugees), in part due to the establishment of a new refugee resettlement office (ECDC) in Central Wisconsin. CAP Services (CAP) created this community-based research project to learn about the issues impacting newcomers in our community. Community-based research is an approach we can use to involve these community members directly in identifying community priorities.

CAP will use the input to ensure newcomers have access to existing services and develop new services. In addition, CAP will look for opportunities to support leadership development and civic engagement within the local immigrant and refugee community. CAP staff believe we can strengthen our relationship and build trust with newcomers in the area. CAP is a local nonprofit established in 1966. CAP's primary service area includes Outagamie, Marquette, Portage, Waupaca, and Waushara counties. CAP's mission is to transform people and communities to advance social and economic justice. Our vision is that individuals and families have the capacity to achieve their goals and thrive in resilient, equitable communities. CAP provides services for housing and transportation, job skills, business coaching and lending, child and family development, multicultural services, and more.

CAP seeks input from community members with lower incomes through surveys and focus groups during CAP's triennial community needs assessment and also as part of new program development and ongoing program planning and evaluation. This project builds upon those efforts to understand issues impacting newcomers in Portage County in particular who have been in the United States for less than 3 years. Immigrants and refugees have some issues that are distinct, and others that are in common.

To guide the project, CAP created a RISE Research Committee including Phong Vang, Assistant Director of Multicultural Engagement; Kabangu Patrick Mukuna, Refugee Support Coordinator; Norys Pina, Community Resource Coordinator; and Kristy SeBlonka, Planning & Impact Director from CAP Services; and Ismaela Odogba, PhD, Professor of Geography/Geology from the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point. The goals of the project are as follows:

1. Create a process for direct input from immigrants and refugees.
2. Determine the challenges faced by refugees/immigrants in Portage County.
3. Identify the solutions to the challenges faced by refugees/immigrants.
4. Evaluate how well existing services meet the challenges and the need for new services.
5. Empower refugees and immigrants by building on their existing skills and qualifications.

Section 2: Background

In Portage County, 4% of residents are foreign born, and 6.1% of people over age 5 speak a language other than English at home (US Census 2016-2020). In the City of Stevens Point, 5.3% of residents are foreign born, and 7.1% speak a language other than English at home. Most immigrants in Wisconsin are from Latin America, and Mexico in particular. (See characteristics in the Applied Population Lab at this [link](#).)

In addition, a new refugee resettlement office (ECDC) was established in Wausau in late 2021. ECDC will settle at least 130 new refugees in Central Wisconsin in their current fiscal year

(October 2023-September 2024), of which approximately 60-80% will be in the Wausau area and 20-40% will be in the Stevens Point area. In 2022 (their first year), ECDC settled 44 arrivals in Stevens Point, including Afghan, Congolese, Syrian, and Sudanese families. From October 2022 – September 2023 (their second year), ECDC settled 46 individuals in Stevens Point, including households from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Afghanistan. In addition, other newer refugees arrived in the Stevens Point area through secondary migration (i.e., voluntary move from the original communities where they arrived). These families come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and include Congolese, Afghan, Cuban, Guatemalan, Nicaraguan and Venezuelan households.

For the purposes of this study, CAP uses the term “newcomer” to refer to immigrants and refugees who are in their first three years within the United States. CAP uses the term “refugee” to refer to an individual with official refugee status designation from the US government, which includes a person “outside his or her country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution based on the person’s race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.” CAP uses the term “immigrant” to refer to a person who is not a US national or citizen, does not have refugee status, and does not meet the definition of nonimmigrant as outlined by USCIS.

Section 3: Methodology

CAP’s community-based research project targeted newcomers. CAP included Portage County residents who were 18 years and older, had been in the United States for at least 9 months but no longer than three years, and had status as a refugee or immigrant. ECDC provided CAP with a list of contact information for refugees who met these criteria. CAP also reached out to community members and partners to identify immigrants who met these criteria. CAP offered each participant a \$50 Kwik Trip gift card for their participation in the study.

Two team members reached out to prospective participants to solicit participation. In total, ten refugees participated in the interviews between August 2023 to October 2023. CAP was unable to identify immigrants who were willing to participate in the study. Interviews were multilingual and conducted with the assistance of a paid or volunteer interpreter when needed. Participants signed a consent form.

A Thematic Content Approach (TCA) was the basis for the qualitative analysis of the interview data. The TCA has numerous advantages including it permits the researchers to 1) deeply explore and become familiar with the interview data thus enabling them to weed out biases, 2) identify common themes and patterns within the data, and 3) ensure that the themes are derived from the data. The overall goal of a TCA is to find common patterns across the dataset from all the interviews (Creswell, 2014; Braun et al, 2006). The steps of the TCA utilized in the study were:

1. Dataset Exploration – The team members listened to the recorded interviews and read the transcribed text or interview notes at least a couple of times.
2. Theme Identification – Team members then identified themes within the dataset. Most of the team identified patterns by listening to the recording/reading the interview notes whilst one team member annotated the transcripts.
3. Theme Review – Team members then met to review the identified themes to ensure that there were clear distinctions between the themes, the themes fit the dataset, and reach a consensus on the identified themes.

4. Phrasing Themes – Team members rehashed and developed appropriate descriptive phrases for the identified themes.

Four categories of questions were posed to each respondent (see Appendix A). The first category of questions is aimed at determining challenges, the second on solutions, the third on evaluating services, and the last on empowerment.

Section 4: Findings

As noted above, the RISE Research Committee interviewed 10 people. Some participants chose to participate individually and some with another family member. All in all, CAP completed 7 interviews with one or two participants at a time.

The committee observed the following themes and patterns across the interviews:

1. Determine the challenges faced by refugees/immigrants in Portage County. The committee made the following observations when reviewing participant input:
 - A. Communication & Social Interaction
 - Some do not speak English or need to improve their English
 - Some do not pronounce English the same as native speakers
 - Some do not have regular social interaction, which can cause loneliness
 - Some do not have social supports in the US that they had in their home countries (e.g. to watch kids, start a business, connection with resources)
 - Some do not have access to religious community and education (e.g., Muslims)
 - B. Mental Health & Societal Adjustment
 - Some struggle with the impact of being separated from their families and friends who are not in the US
 - Some lack a sense of purpose in the US that they had in their home country
 - Some experience high levels of stress in the US
 - Some have experienced lack of understanding of refugee experience, cultural differences, and racism
 - C. Basic Needs: Food, Clothing, and Transportation
 - Some do not have access to culturally appropriate food (affordable and nearby)
 - Some do not have access to culturally appropriate clothing (affordable and nearby, also appropriate for winter)
 - Some lack independence/freedom of movement (e.g., ability to drive or travel where they want to go for work, shopping, education, religious activities, etc. in all seasons, including winter)
 - D. Education and Employment
 - Some do not have access to formal education in the US (funding and support)
 - Some do not have employment that fits their skills or needs (e.g., childcare and living wage for housing and other needs)
 - Some must work long hours which impacts their ability to participate in educational activities or social activities in the US

- Lack of access to education (e.g. recredentialing or new skill development) impacts the type of employment that newcomers can access
 - Some want to start a business but lack resources or knowledge, even if they ran a similar business in their home country
2. Identify the solutions to the challenges faced by refugees/immigrants. The committee made the following observations when reviewing participant input:
- A. Communication & Social Interaction
- Need English language and pronunciation support, with access that accommodates their work schedules
 - Want spaces for refugees to meet and support each other
 - Want to be able to join groups and make friends
 - Want more people and resources to offer religious community and education locally (particularly for Muslims)
- B. Mental Health & Societal Adjustment
- Want to be able to lower stress and concentrate so they can address needs
 - Want to be able to communicate with and support family and friends in their home countries
 - Want access to an organization and resources specifically for refugees
 - Want cultural events so the community learns about and understands refugees and engages and builds trust with each other
- C. Basic Needs: Food, Clothing, Transportation, and Housing
- Need more guidance on the basics of society (schooling, financial opportunities, DMV process, and so forth)
 - Want food and clothing that is culturally appropriate
 - Need to have own vehicles (funds and drivers licenses)
 - Want car to access culturally appropriate clothing, food, and religious activities that are located outside of the community
 - Interested in home ownership
- D. Education and Employment
- Provide financial assistance and support
 - Need funds and guidance for accessing and completing adult education
 - Need living wage jobs so they can meet their needs (housing, repayment of International Organization for Migration travel loan for flight to the US, etc.)
 - Need to match refugee skills with appropriate employment
 - Women want employment that is culturally appropriate and does not conflict with their care for their children
 - Want support and resources to start their own businesses
 - Want work-life balance (time for social activities outside of work)
3. Evaluate how well existing services meet the challenges and the need for new services. The committee made the following observations when reviewing participant input:
- A. Refugees identified several services as most helpful since arriving in the US
- Public benefits (Badgercare, food stamps, and FSET)

- ECDC (staff and volunteers)
 - Mid-State Technical College and the public library
 - Churches, though sometimes different faith than refugees'
 - Others, such as Catholic Charities, employers, and individuals
- B. Refugees were hesitant to judge services, but some existing services need improvement
- Mixed experience with ECDC and partners involved in initial meetings (for example, the level of knowledge and assistance from volunteers, quality of interpreting during initial meetings, and assistance with finding employment)
 - Mixed experience with CAP (for example, awareness of CAP's programs and understanding of rules/criteria for eligibility)
 - Importance of being respectful to refugees when offering services
 - Need more information about community services specific to refugees
- C. Refugees suggested new services
- Develop more assistance for completing education
 - Create a cooperative and/or fund where refugees can help each other
 - Offer immigration services locally, for example, to help refugees apply for permanent residency
 - Provide assistance with studying for and passing driver's test
 - Support the creation of a mosque in the Stevens Point area
 - Engage more community organizations, such as the YMCA and University
- D. The work group made further observations
- Appears to be mismatch between existing skills and types of initial job opportunities they get when they arrive
 - Appears to be opportunity for community trainings or events to increase respect and reduce racism/discrimination
4. Empower refugees and immigrants by building on their existing skills and qualifications.
The committee made the following observations when reviewing participant input:
- Goals for next 5 years often include improving English, learning to express oneself, finishing education, being self-employed, and/or getting a job with better pay or in a better field, buying a house and become a homeowner, and communicating and/or reuniting with family members outside of the US
 - Refugees focused on survival presently (for themselves and in some cases for family members outside of the US) and have difficulty thinking that far in the future
 - Taking steps to achieve these goals is interconnected with other issues such as transportation/independence of movement
 - Education level and skills varied significantly across the interview pool, from no formal education to advanced education in their country of origin

Section 5: Existing Services

The following organizations have worked with local refugee resettlement:

ECDC: The ECDC Multicultural Community Center (MCC Wisconsin) in Wausau was established in late 2021 as a branch office of the Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc., headquartered in Arlington, VA. MCC Wisconsin employs caseworkers and other staff to work with families (primarily during the first 3-9 months of arrival). Per CAP's MOU with ECDC, MCC Wisconsin "is accountable to ECDC and the federal government for providing and documenting specific required services to its refugee resettlement clients. To assist staff members in the delivery of these services, MCC Wisconsin recruits and trains co-sponsorship teams and other volunteers, and matches them with appropriate clients. Some responsibilities may be delegated to co-sponsorship teams or other volunteers, but MCC Wisconsin remains accountable for the delivery and quality of services provided to refugees." In 2022 and 2023, ECDC formed volunteer cosponsorship teams that were assigned to some of the new arrivals. ECDC plans to form additional volunteer cosponsorship teams in 2024 for select families.

Employment Programs: The Foodshare Employment and Training (FSET) Program serves newcomers who are 16 years old or older who receive Food Stamps. FSET can provide assistance with job searches and transportation for the first 90 days of employment. FSET works with ECDC and other employment partners.

English Language Education: Mid-State Technical College (MSTC) and the Portage County Literacy Council (PCLC) provide classes, small groups, and one-on-one tutors for adults learning English. Youth access English Language support within the Stevens Point Area School District.

Family Health La Clinica: Family Health La Clinica is a community health center. The clinic offers medical, behavioral, and dental services in Stevens Point and is in the process of building a new site in Stevens Point. La Clinica provides the mandatory health assessments for new refugee arrivals in partnership with ECDC.

CAP Services: CAP is a community action agency formed in 1966 to create opportunities for people experiencing poverty. CAP provides services for child and family development, housing and transportation, job skills, business coaching and lending, multicultural services, mental health, domestic violence and sexual assault, and more. In addition, CAP has a history of working with refugees. As a result of Hmong resettlement, CAP started a Refugee Advocacy Program in Portage County in 1989. In 2022, this programming transitioned into Hmong UPLIFT, Civic Engagement, and Hmong Family Strengthening. In 2023, CAP began the Refugee & Immigrant Support & Empowerment (RISE) Program in Portage County. Kabangu Patrick Mukuna is the primary staff person for the program and engages volunteers to conduct program activities. The purpose of the RISE program is to foster a sense of belonging among immigrants and refugee families by providing programming and resources that support their social, education, and economic success so they can thrive in Portage County.

Local Churches and Community Groups: Local churches and community groups have assisted with refugee resettlement, including St. Paul United Methodist Church, Woodlands, and others.

CAP reviewed existing services to see how well existing services addressed issues that the refugees raised in their interviews and summarized that below:

- A. Communication & Social Interaction
 - Learning English and Pronunciation: MSTC and PCLC teach English to adults and cover some aspects of pronunciation to varying degrees. Newcomers need

assistance overcoming barriers to attendance such as transportation, childcare, and long work schedules. UWSP's Speech, Language, and Hearing Clinic also provides a service they call Foreign Accent Reduction. Community members may need to get more exposure to and be more accommodating of different accents. CAP has experience providing a family literacy program, Hmong UPLIFT, which serves Hmong community members. This type of program may be of interest to other populations in the future.

- Space for Refugees: There is no formal community space specifically set up as a gathering place for refugees themselves to meet and support each other.
- Muslim Community and Mosque: There is no mosque in the Stevens Point area. There are two options that are between 30 minutes and an hour away for residents with access to transportation. There is one mosque in Marshfield, Masjid Al-Noor, which offers Jumma prayers, five daily prayers, Eid prayers, and other gatherings. There is another mosque in Wausau, Wausau Masjid, which offers Jumma prayers, five daily prayers, some Eid prayers, and Sunday school. The Muslim Community at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point offers Jumma prayers occasionally in the Students Services Center. Previously there was a Moslem Student Association on campus, but it no longer exists.

B. Mental Health and Societal Adjustment

- Mental Health: CAP provides Mental Health Navigation (MHN) in Portage County to help connect community members with mental health and community resources. The program is open to everyone including newcomers. The program offers services in English and Hmong and accesses interpreters for clients who speak other languages. Staff are trauma-informed and refer clients to resources as appropriate. For example, the State of Wisconsin offers an Afghan behavioral health support and wellness helpline in English, Dari, and Pashto at 1-800-615-6514 for newcomers who are experiencing sadness, anger, anxiety, fear, depression, difficulty sleeping, or any other distress and also provide domestic violence and sexual abuse support for women and youth.
- Societal Adjustment: Newcomers may access activities to understand social norms, to lower stress, and/or to feel a sense of purpose in the community. At this time, these opportunities appear to be mostly informal through personal relationships.

C. Basic Needs

- Food: The Stevens Point area has several grocery stores, including Festival Foods, Metro Market, Aldi, the Asian American Market, Point Market and Vietnamese Restaurant, La Poblana Mexican Grocery Store, and La Jefe Mexicana Market within Mi Pueblo Mexican Restaurant. For folks who need more support, the Stevens Point area has more than 10 food pantries, though they may not have international food options. Organizations working with food access include Central Rivers Farmshed and Hunger and Poverty Prevention Partnership (HPPP). Central Rivers Farmshed has experience providing a Sib Pab program and meals for the Hmong community. There may be other opportunities to provide for unique dietary needs of newcomers.
- Clothing: In addition to retail stores, community members in the Stevens Point area can buy used clothing at lower prices at two Goodwills and one Community Thrift Shop. The Kids' Closet offers gently used children's clothing for free. In addition, there are some agencies, like CAP, that can provide Goodwill cards to

families in need to help them cover the costs. St. Paul United Methodist Church also gathers some clothing and household items for distribution to refugee families. Most clothing is standard American styles and does not accommodate cultural needs. Newcomers looking for culturally appropriate clothing often have to obtain fabric and sew their own if they have access to a sewing machine.

- Transportation: At the December 2023 quarterly meeting, ECDC said transportation continues to be their #1 challenge for newcomers. Most newcomers arrive with limited resources and need time to obtain a driver's license and personal vehicle. Newcomers often use the bus system, rides from friends or volunteers, or bicycles. Central Transportation (CT) operates the fixed bus routes in Stevens Point, Whiting, and the Crossroads Commons area of Plover. CT also offers paratransit services within that area for individuals who have a disability. There are two taxi services: Courtesy Cab and Plover Taxi. Uber and Lyft are available on a limited basis. For people who are trying to obtain a personal vehicle, CAP's Work-n-Wheels Program offers 0% interest auto loans to people at or below 150% of Federal Poverty Level who are working at least 20 hours/week. In addition, CAP has an Affordable Auto Loan Program at 10% interest to households up to 80% County Median Income. These types of loans can help newcomers meet their goals and also build credit in the United States.
- Housing: While interviewees did not discuss housing at length, CAP is aware that housing is a significant issue for newcomers over time. Currently ECDC works with landlords to obtain housing for new refugee arrivals before they arrive. In addition, a local corporation has provided several housing units for temporary use by families. ECDC continues to have a high need for affordable units. For both refugees and immigrants, housing is often one of the most expensive items in their household budget, and the location of housing also impacts the household's access to transportation, work, and community resources. Newcomers who need assistance changing their housing can contact CAP's Housing Counseling Program and talk with a Housing Counselor about the wide array of resources available to secure and maintain stable housing. Staff conduct a needs assessment, help clients complete appropriate applications (such as for rental housing or public benefits), and make referrals to other CAP and community programs. If desired, CAP can also provide education on renting in the US, maintaining a home, how to become a homeowner, and so forth. Staff can provide assistance in English or request an interpreter for other languages. CAP does not currently offer financial assistance but can refer clients to Operation Bootstrap, One Big Tent, or the City of Stevens Point Rent Ready program, which have limited financial assistance for community members with low incomes.

D. Education and Employment

- Education: The Stevens Point area has several educational institutions for adults. Mid-State Technical College and the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point are located in central Stevens Point. North Central Technical College and Fox Valley Technical College are outside of Portage County but within driving distance for adults with transportation seeking other programs. Newcomers with an adequate level of English could access these opportunities with funding and support. There are several programs that provide funding and support for adults. CAP's Skills Enhancement Program provides tuition, books, supplies and training-related support to households at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level who are working a minimum of 20 hours per week and are pursuing training or a degree.

Forward Service Corporation (FSC) offers a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity (WIOA) program with financial assistance for clients pursuing training or a degree. Community members can co-enroll in Skills and FSC's WIOA Programs as long as they meet the criteria of each program. Newcomers with lower levels of English language skills are not able to access these programs and are referred to MSTC and PCLC to build these skills.

- Employment: Newcomers receive FoodShare upon arrival, and they also enroll in the FoodShare Employment & Training Program (FSET), which is explained above on page 6. In addition, ECDC reported at the December 2023 Quarterly meeting that they are hiring three new staff focused on employment. Mid-State can collaborate with employers upon request to provide basic workforce skills.

A gap in service that can impact some of the above areas is access to legal immigration services. Legal immigration services are limited in Central Wisconsin. Currently Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse provides legal immigration services to clients in the Stevens Point area, including adjustment status (green cards), application for victims of crimes (U Visa and VAWA), Petition for Alien Relatives, and so forth. Immigrants and refugees can contact Catholic Charities' immigration staff directly to set up an appointment over Zoom or in person at their office in La Crosse. Catholic Charities can provide interpreters for Spanish speakers. Per their website, "the Catholic Charities Immigration Program is recognized by the United States Department of Justice (DOJ). DOJ Accredited Representatives are authorized to provide legal counsel to immigrants on their eligibility for immigration benefits under current immigration law. Representatives provide legal assistance to individuals who are eligible to apply for immigration benefits. The focus of the program is family and/or humanitarian-based immigration services. Our services include personal consultation, application assistance and legal representation for clients." Learn more at this [link](#). ECDC may also apply for funding to provide legal immigration services at some point in the future.

Section 6: Next Steps/Recommendations

The committee and CAP leadership recommend the following next steps for CAP Services:

1. CAP's RISE Program will continue to provide volunteer recruitment, training, and support and meet regularly with ECDC to develop each partner's role in supporting newcomers. CAP will also provide a storage space for large furniture items needed for setting up newcomers' households and offer ECDC office space at CAP's Program Office in Stevens Point at below-market rent rates to increase local services and collaboration.
2. CAP will launch the RISE Advisory Committee, which will meet quarterly.
3. CAP's RISE Program will develop opportunities for refugees to gather among themselves to build friendships, offer mentorship, share resources, learn about their rights, and build leadership. Among other activities, women will be invited to meet to discuss and support ways to support women's empowerment projects, such as sewing.
4. CAP will develop and provide at least 3 presentations to community members, service providers, and schools (in partnership with ECDC and others) to improve awareness of newcomers and their cultural practices and traditions (e.g. Congolese, Afghan, etc.).
5. CAP will lead a community committee to provide a World Refugee Day event to educate, celebrate and raise awareness and trust.
6. CAP's Community Resource Team will provide newcomers with an overview of CAP's services in their preferred language and connect them with programs that meet their needs.

7. CAP staff, including bilingual and bicultural Latinx staff, will meet to discuss ways CAP can increase access and improve outreach agencywide to immigrants who are Latinx.
8. CAP's Skills Enhancement Program will connect eligible newcomers with support and financial resources for higher education. Skills Enhancement serves clients that have an advanced level of English language skills and are ready to enroll in school. Staff will refer clients who do not qualify to appropriate resources to build their skills, including MSTC and Forward Community Service.
9. CAP's Lending Department will continue to work to increase access to lending for immigrants and refugees so they can build credit and achieve goals (e.g., purchase car, start a business, and access education). CAP provides consumer, auto, and business loans. In addition, CAP obtained dedicated funding to provide credit builder loans to immigrants and refugees in particular over the next 3 years. CAP will form a Lending to Immigrants and Refugees Work Group to help lending staff connect with CAP staff in other program areas that work with immigrant and refugee populations.
10. CAP's Mental Health Navigation will work to connect newcomers to culturally appropriate resources. Staff will complete training and/or identify resources to address the unique traumatic experiences of newcomers, including Afghan and Congolese families.
11. CAP's Housing Counseling Program will work to increase access and services to newcomers, including language access and appropriate topics for securing and maintaining safe and affordable housing.
12. CAP's Financial Empowerment & Education (FEE) Program staff will review potential curriculum for use with newcomers.

The committee recommends the following next steps for the broader community, which are beyond CAP's current efforts:

1. Assist families in accessing immigration services in Stevens Point.
2. Assist families in preparing for and applying for US citizenship. Ensure newcomers have access to education for English and civics as required for citizenship test.
3. Increase access to language and pronunciation support by creating a drop-in flexible Conversation Hour for newcomers similar to those the Fox Valley Literacy Council offers in Appleton.
4. Provide workforce readiness training that supports newcomers in learning basic employment expectations such as attendance, communication, teamwork, computer skills, and so forth.
5. Provide information to help newcomers find and apply for scholarships or financial aid.
6. Start a scholarship fund for higher education for newcomers similar to the Sib Pab Sib Qhia fund that CAP helped start at the Community Foundation for Central Wisconsin.
7. Provide presentations to employers and housing providers in Portage County to increase understanding and access for refugees.
8. Develop a multifaith center or work with existing religious centers to increase access to services in the Stevens Point area.
9. Partner with Central Rivers Farmshed to talk with local producers and grocers about ways to increase access to international foods locally and at affordable prices. Provide newcomers with a list of stores carrying international foods. Connect newcomers who want to grow their own food with local community gardens and farmland if needed.
10. Provide more support to newcomers to explain how K-12 educational system works.
11. Explore ways local groups can link to Wisconsin or national groups that advocate for refugees to address issues beyond local control.
12. Support newly developing Hispanic/Latinx Coalition in Central Wisconsin to increase input and support for immigrants in Portage County.

Section 7: Conclusion

CAP's Board of Directors approved the addendum on January 31, 2024.

Attachment A: Consent Form



*Transforming People
and Communities*

Corporate Headquarters 2900 Hoover Road, Suite A | Stevens Point, WI | 54481

capservices.org

Participant Name: _____ Date: _____

Overview: CAP Services (CAP) is a nonprofit formed in 1966 to create opportunities for people experiencing poverty in Central Wisconsin. We serve over 9,000 people annually. CAP believes in the inherent value of all people and works to create interconnected solutions to poverty. Our mission is “to transform people and communities to advance social and economic justice.”

Purpose: We are interested in learning more about the needs of individuals and families in Portage County who are immigrants and refugees. We are inviting up to 30 people to participate in either a face-to-face interview or focus group. The purpose of the project is to identify the issues immigrants and refugees face within the community, determine ways to address these issues, and seek opportunities to enhance leadership development and civic engagement. We will ask you about your needs. There are no right or wrong answers. You are invited because you have firsthand experience. Your input will help us make decisions about CAP's programs and services.

Time commitment: It will take approximately 2 hours to complete an interview or a focus group session.

Location: We will meet in person in a public location. If you cannot meet in public, you can request that we come to your home.

Participants: We are inviting immigrants and refugees in Portage County who are at least 18 years old that have lived in the United States for at least 9 months but less than 3 years. We will make an effort to include people who are low income.

Risks and Benefits: There are no risks to participating in this study. CAP will share a summary of the interviews and focus groups and select quotations (without names or identifying information) in the report. You will receive a \$50 gift card to Kwik Trip for your time.

Confidentiality: We will record audio of the sessions to help us remember what you shared. We will not share the recording, your name, or identifying information outside of CAP. CAP will share a summary and select quotations from the discussion in the final report. Participants will not be individually identified by statement.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in this interview or focus group is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any negative consequences to you. If you choose to participate and then wish to withdraw, you may ask to leave at that time without negative consequences.

Contact Information: Please contact Kristy SeBlonka at 715-318-8784 or kseblonka@capmail.org to get more information or request a copy of the final report. When needed, CAP will provide an interpreter.

Statement of Consent: By signing this consent form I agree to participate in the interview or focus group.

Signature: _____ Phone Number: _____ Verbal consent?

Please list the name of the interpreter below if applicable:

Interpreter Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Attachment B: Interview Questions

Introduction

Note: The interviewer asked the first three questions under each topic. If there was time, they asked the extra questions.

1. **Determine the challenges faced by refugees/immigrants in Portage County.**
 - a. *What are some things you would like to do in the community but have not been able to do?*
 - b. *Are you able to communicate in English when carrying out your daily activities?*
 - c. *What do you miss the most from your place of origin? (Provide examples)*
 - d. *Do you feel comfortable when using English to communicate?*
 - e. *Are there any aspects of the local culture that you do not understand?*
2. **Identify the solutions to the challenges faced by refugees/immigrants.**
 - a. *You talked about ____ (summary of challenges discussed in a), which are the three most important ones to you?*
 - b. *Why are you unable to do them?*
 - c. *What do you need to be able to do them?*
3. **Evaluate how well existing services meet the challenges and the need for new services.**
 - a. *What has been most helpful to you since arriving in this community?*
 - b. *Which services/support systems have not met your needs? Why not?*
 - c. *Is there a new opportunity that you would like to see established in the community? Tell us more about it.*
 - d. *There are community services in the community (such as ECDC, CAP, churches, food pantries, and schools). Which services/support systems have been helpful to you? Note: ECDC only works with new refugee arrivals and not with immigrants.*
4. **Empower refugees and immigrants by building on their existing skills and qualifications.**
 - a. *What do you hope to achieve within the next 5 years? What would you like to do for a living in this community?*
 - b. *What did you do for a living prior to coming to the US? Have you been able to do the same (work) in the community? If not, why?*
 - c. *What is your highest level of education, including certifications?*
 - d. *Did you have any dreams/goals prior to coming to the US about what your life would be like after coming to the US?*
 - e. *What other skills do you have? Have you been able to use these skills in the community? If not, why?*

Closing