

# Strategies to Combat Client Misinformation

*This resource is for USCCB/MRS affiliate staff to use to develop strategies addressing client misinformation and expectation management. The resource lists out common pieces of client misinformation and potential solutions (non-exhaustive list).*

*Thank you to the February 2024 New Directors' Orientation attendees for contributing their solutions and strategies to this resource!*

## Overarching Client Misinformation

U.S. ties, friends, and family share information with clients before arrival, so clients believe their resettlement experience will be the same. After arrival, clients become upset if their resettlement experience does not align with what they heard from sources they trust.

### Potential Solutions

Educate clients domestically (i.e. Cultural Orientation) that no individual experience in the U.S. is universal. U.S. ties, family and friends can only talk about **their** experiences, but those may not apply to everyone. It will depend on the state and local region someone lives in, resources available etc. Everything is on a case-by-case basis. This is not to confuse people and it's not corruption, but it's to best serve each individual and family. A case scenario might be helpful to explain this to clients (see below).

### Case Scenario

A single client and a family with six children arrive in the U.S. at the same time. Both the single client and family receive the same financial assistance and services. Do you think this is fair? Why or why not?

*Help clients see each case has unique needs, so support should be unique to that individual or family. This is done so everyone can be supported in the best way. If assistance was the same for everyone, those that need more support may not receive it.*

## Potential Solutions (Cont.)

Train staff to deliver and repeat universal messaging and information to clients throughout the R&P service period. Clients may ask the same question to different staff members, hoping for a different answer.

Reach out, educate, and collaborate with community leaders, U.S. ties, and formerly resettled refugee community members to promote correct messaging about resettlement agency services. If clients receive the same messaging from different sources, this will help promote trust and clarity about the resettlement process. Please keep in mind clients may have distrust of formal organizations due to corruption in host countries or countries of origin. Receiving information from more trusted sources, such as U.S. ties and formerly resettled refugees, can help reinforce messages the resettlement agency is trying to communicate to clients. To educate U.S. ties and formerly resettled refugees, it may be helpful to show them the negative impacts of spreading incorrect information on new arrivals (i.e. creates more difficulties for the new arrival to adjust to life in the U.S.)

Design messaging to address specific misinformation the resettlement agency is aware of from client interactions. For example, some clients may have been resettled by agencies that have other programs (ORR-funded) to provide services beyond 90 days, but these are not guaranteed and depend on location, resettlement agency, case size etc.

Work with clients throughout the service period to encourage them to remain in their original resettlement location, even if it's not what they imagined. Going somewhere else (out-migrating) doesn't mean the clients will receive more assistance. In fact, it may mean they will receive less assistance and support, which will negatively affect the clients' path to self-sufficiency.

# Role of the Resettlement Agency & Case Worker

The resettlement agency is expected to provide services or materials outside the R&P program requirements (ex: TVs, cars, toys, etc.)

The resettlement agency is responsible for all expenses (rent, utilities, etc.) over the course of 3 months, 6 months, 1 year etc.

Case managers should instantly respond to communications and requests (even outside of business hours)

## Potential Solutions

Educate clients domestically (i.e. Cultural Orientation) and emphasize the role of the resettlement agency and case manager is to implement the R&P program and make sure all refugees receive core services.

Set realistic expectations during intake appointment (ex: receiving all R&P services will take time, the length of time to receive benefits varies and is **not** up to the resettlement agency etc.) Clients should also be informed that resettlement agencies are not government agencies. Resettlement agencies assist clients to apply for government benefits, but the resettlement agency does not have control over timelines for documents or public assistance benefits. Delays in receiving documents are common and will delay receiving public benefits / employment.

Explain early the government decides how to allocate certain funds, so the agency works with limited funding from the government. Staff should let clients know the agency is a small part of a larger system and there are limitations to what the agency can provide.

## Potential Solutions (Cont.)

During the Role of the RA CO topic, focus on the role of the case worker. Explain to clients who the case worker is and note communication boundaries set by the agency. Affiliates can follow the script below as a guide and should modify as appropriate:

*I (case worker) am a guide, someone to ask questions to, someone who wants good for you (client) BUT also someone who works limited hours, has a boss, must follow rules and policies, and has limitations. You can always ask if something is available. I will be honest with you and want you to be honest with me. Sometimes the answer will be "no." I can only do and give what the program allows, but I have you in mind. I want you to have more. If more becomes available, I will let you know.*

Ask clients what they heard prior to arrival from U.S. ties, family, and friends and talk about how this compares to reality for their case. Encouraging clients to ask questions can be helpful when they might go to untrustworthy sources for information (ex: someone promising to give clients more money from tax refunds if the clients pay that person a lot of money)

Ask clients knowledge check questions throughout the service period (i.e. during client intake, meetings with case managers etc.) to repeat and reinforce correct messaging.

Repeat the resettlement agency and client roles and responsibilities throughout the 90 days. Create a visual task list to show rights and responsibilities of the case manager vs the client to ensure expectations are clear. **Please see an example visual task list on MRS Connect by clicking [HERE](#).** Affiliates can also use [CORE's Reception and Placement Overview using Settle In website Resources](#) activity.

Support clients to see the short- and long-term view during the 24-hour home visit or intake interview. Affiliates can follow the script below as a guide and should modify as appropriate:

*There are things you will be able to afford, achieve etc. perhaps in a year. Right now, we need to stabilize the short term (3 months) so you have the space and resources to build for your long-term goals. Please understand that this is just a **moment**, not your whole life in the U.S. Building a life here takes time, which can be frustrating but we are here to help.*

Utilize the service plan to confirm resources clients can access from the agency vs other providers and what limits are on available funds.

# Public Assistance & Budgeting

The resettlement agency is expected to provide high levels of financial assistance not tied to any services (free money).

The resettlement agency should provide the same level of support as clients in other states receive.

Employment should be based on past experience and re-certification instead of self-sufficiency.

There is easy access to goods and services in the U.S. which will allow clients to support family members and friends through remittances.

## Potential Solutions

Educate clients overseas and domestically (i.e. Cultural Orientation) that R&P funds are tied to specific services. Any additional goods and services are not guaranteed and depend on donations from community members etc.

Educate clients overseas (i.e. Cultural Orientation) to expect less financial assistance and public benefits. If clients receive more than expected after arrival, this will be a pleasant surprise. If clients receive less than expected after arrival, this will make adjustment more difficult.

During intake, set realistic expectations about the rights and responsibilities of the affiliate and client. The main income stream will be from working, not from public benefits or financial assistance. Public benefits vary across states, client eligibility, and is limited. Financial assistance can also depend on the resettlement agency's programs and capacity.

During different service touchpoints, reiterate to clients the positive and negative consequences of accepting or refusing the first job offer.

If feasible, bring in former clients to talk about their first job in the U.S. and how that served as a starting point for their successful resettlement.

Show clients example budgets based on cost of living in their area. Support clients to create a budget (along with goals) as part of their service plan. This can also show clients they may not have savings to send back home until they become self-sufficient themselves.

# Housing

The resettlement agency is expected to pay for 3-6 months of rent or provide housing that is paid for in full.

Housing can be refused based on preference. The resettlement agency is expected to find other housing options and pay penalties associated with breaking a lease.

## Potential Solutions

Educate clients overseas and domestically (i.e. Cultural Orientation) through scenarios. For example, if a family doesn't like the housing the resettlement agency provides and wants to move, it's not the resettlement agency's responsibility to help them find alternative housing and cover expenses from breaking the lease. Availability, pricing, quality, and type of housing varies and depends on where clients are located in the U.S.

Educate clients overseas and domestically (i.e. Cultural Orientation) that the cost of housing is high, so there is a need for double income (women in the family will have to work as well). Utilize CORE's resources on [Rental Housing in the U.S.](#) and [Employment for Refugee Women.](#)

Set realistic expectations during intake appointment about clients' roles and responsibilities related to housing. The resettlement agency will assist the family to find safe, clean and affordable housing (not a house). Client is responsible to sign and follow the lease as well as pay rent after assistance ends.

Review an agency housing policy information sheet with clients early on in the service period, so clients know what to expect if they refuse housing

Bring in legal providers to discuss what breaking a lease could mean

Negotiate a short-term lease with landlords for the R&P period, so clients would only live in housing secured by the agency for 90 days

Educate the U.S. tie about R&P housing requirements before and after a client's arrival

# Cultural Adjustment

Families believe they should be able to become self-sufficient without the women in the family working.

Some cultural norms from origin or host countries are also acceptable in the U.S.

It is the responsibility of others (whether people or institutions) to follow up and help families complete tasks or resolve issues.

It is acceptable to gather as many resources as families think is necessary, even if it means having more than what is needed.

## Potential Solutions

Educate clients overseas and domestically (CO) of American cultural norms and values and how these may impact their integration in the US (ex: women need to work outside the home to help the family become self-sufficient)

Throughout the service period, address cultural norms and how they compare in different countries. For example, in some countries women are expected to stay at home and take care of children. In the US, women are expected to work and men are expected to share household responsibilities.

Reach out to community leaders to educate and break the stigma against victims of domestic violence. Victims will often stay silent for fear of being kicked out of the community. Education and community support around other taboo topics (ex: sexual harassment, drugs etc.) could also be useful.

Collaborate with community partners, such as

- Schools - to provide education around appropriate parenting techniques and legal consequences of child neglect / abuse
- Law enforcement - to explain consequences of breaking the law
- Social service providers - to address polygamy and how this will affect public benefits for children, child wellbeing, and other family dynamics

## Potential Solutions

Provide scenarios during each core service about U.S. culture of advocating for yourself. For example, if you don't check for your bill to come in the mail, the bill can get sent to collections if it's overdue. It is your responsibility to keep track and follow up to get things completed.

Provide clients with translated materials in their language about U.S. cultural norms and laws, such as CORE's Cultural Adjustment video, podcast, and factsheet

Reinforce information about U.S. laws in Cultural Orientation through role plays, bringing in guest speakers who faced consequences of breaking the law etc.

Define self-sufficiency at every opportunity throughout the service period and explain what this looks like for each case

Educate clients about services the affiliate will provide and inform them about referrals available for additional services to help clients come out of a scarcity mindset

Provide a policy on donations for clients early in the resettlement process and reference as appropriate. For example, a donations policy could list that each family can only receive one vacuum cleaner to ensure other families can also have a vacuum cleaner.



# Public Transportation

The resettlement agency is expected to provide a car or enough resources for clients to purchase a car soon after arrival.

Utilizing public transportation is not necessary, because it is limited.

Most areas in the United States are walkable.

## Potential Solutions

Educate clients overseas and domestically (i.e. Cultural Orientation) they will most likely not be able to own a car early in their resettlement journey. A scenario may be helpful to show how public transportation can be used and how savings can enable clients to purchase a car in the future.

Provide experiential learning opportunities where clients can take public transportation and use it to navigate their new community early after arrival

Provide bus passes to clients until they begin working

Incentivize clients to practice using public transportation by coming to the agency office to pick up checks or goods

Connect clients with driver's education classes or encourage them to begin studying for the driver's license exam soon after arrival. If possible, utilize part of the match grant program to pay for driver training.

Provide or refer clients to financial literacy classes that provide car loan / purchasing information. Caution clients against purchasing cars from untrustworthy car dealers

Include car safety orientation in Cultural Orientation

Repeat information throughout the service period to reinforce transportation concepts