

Building Capacity and Effective Clinical Intervention with Immigrant and Refugee Families



Morgan Merrell, LCSW

- Director of Health and Wellness at JVS
- 11 years of direct practice experience in refugee resettlement in both Kansas City and Philadelphia, PA
- Master's in Social Work from the University of Pennsylvania



Agenda



- What is a refugee?
- World statistics
- Kansas City populations
- Refugee Resettlement Services
- Tips for health care settings
- Case examples

**No relevant financial
relationships with ineligible
companies to disclose**

What is a refugee?

Someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence.



A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

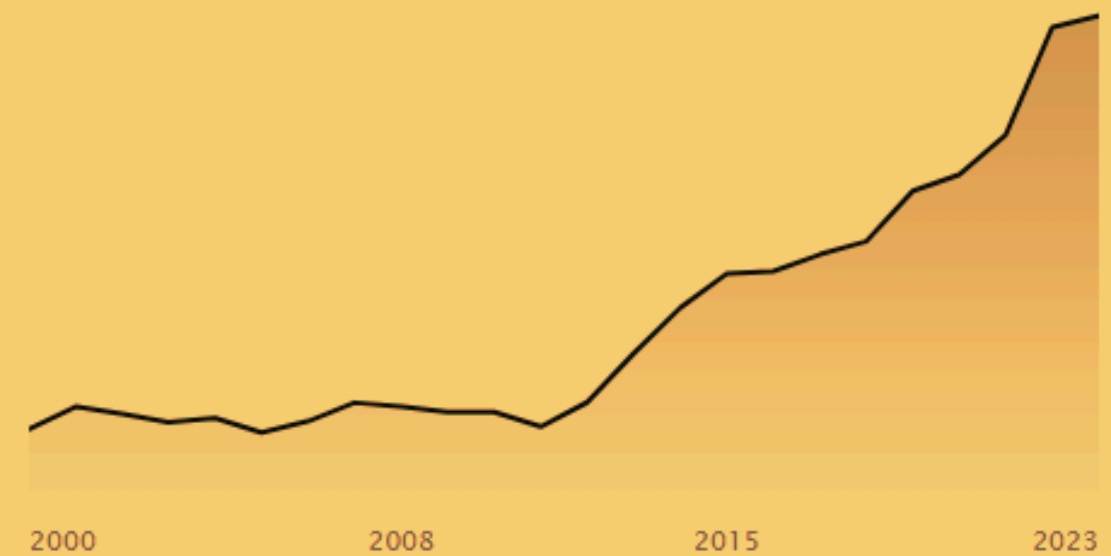
-UNHCR

UNHCR data

110 MILLION

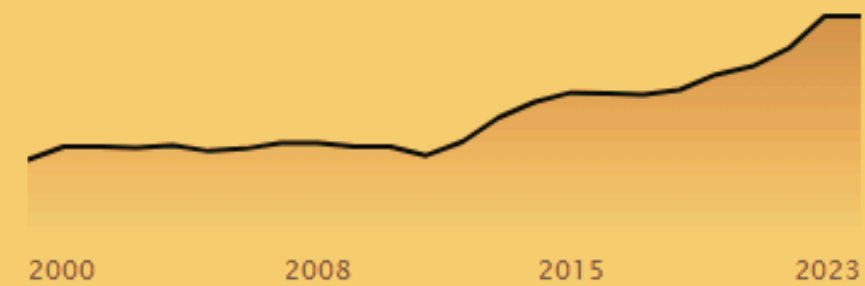
Forcibly displaced people worldwide

at mid-2023 as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.



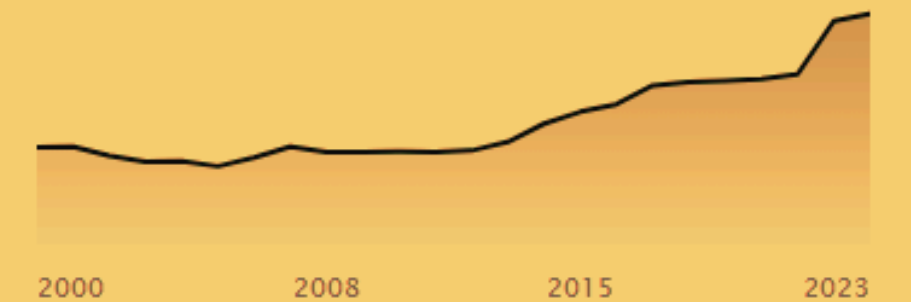
62.5 MILLION

are internally displaced people (Source: IDMC, as of end-2022)



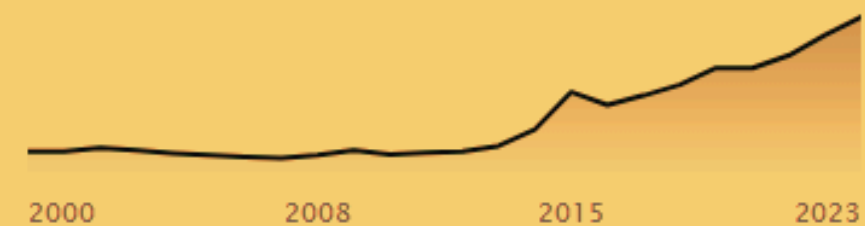
36.4 MILLION

are refugees



6.1 MILLION

are asylum-seekers



5.3 MILLION

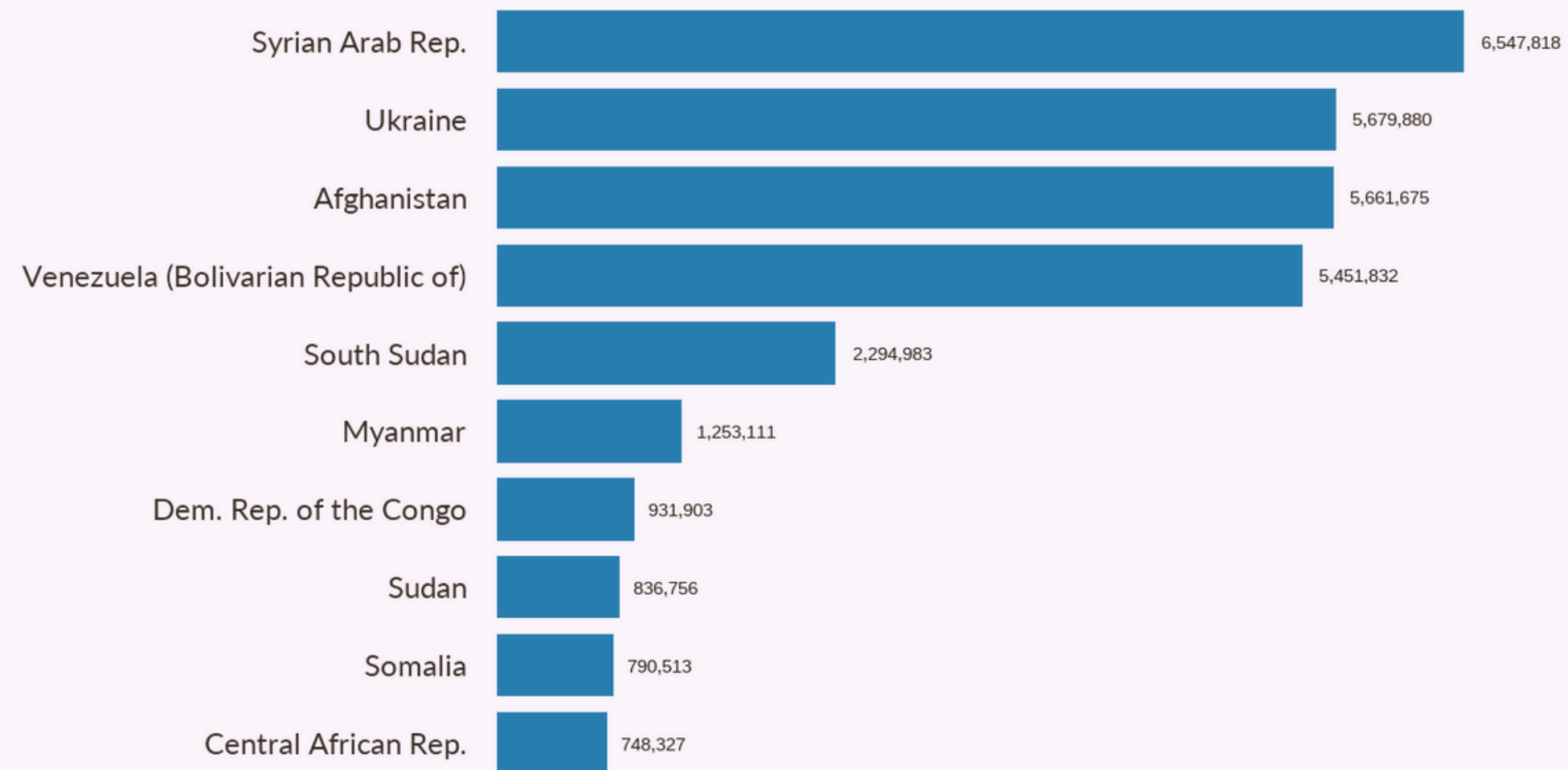
are other people in need of international protection

Source: UNHCR, last updated 24 October 2023

Global population data

Refugees and Other People in Need of International Protection

By country of origin | end-2022



Source: UNHCR Refugee Data Finder

Where are people going?

The vast majority of people who cross an international border seek safety in a neighboring country.

These are primarily low and middle income countries.

Iran: 3.4 million
Türkiye: 3.4 million
Germany: 2.5 million

Colombia: 2.5 million
Pakistan: 2.1 million

Global population data

Refugee children

- It is estimated that between 2018 and 2023, almost 2 million children were born as refugees.
- Almost half of the world's forcibly displaced persons are children.
- Refugees spend 17 years on average in camp.

What options do refugees have?

Return to their home country



Gain status in the second country



Resettlement to a third country



Less than 1% of refugees are resettled



Refugee Vs. Asylee

- Refugees register with UNHCR to gain status
- Background checks/health screenings all overseas
- Permanent immigration status

- Fear of persecution
- Cross an international border
- Wait years

- US Immigration Court
- Not eligible for public benefits
- Work permit after 150 days

Kansas City's major refugee groups



DRC Congo



Syria



Burma



Afghanistan



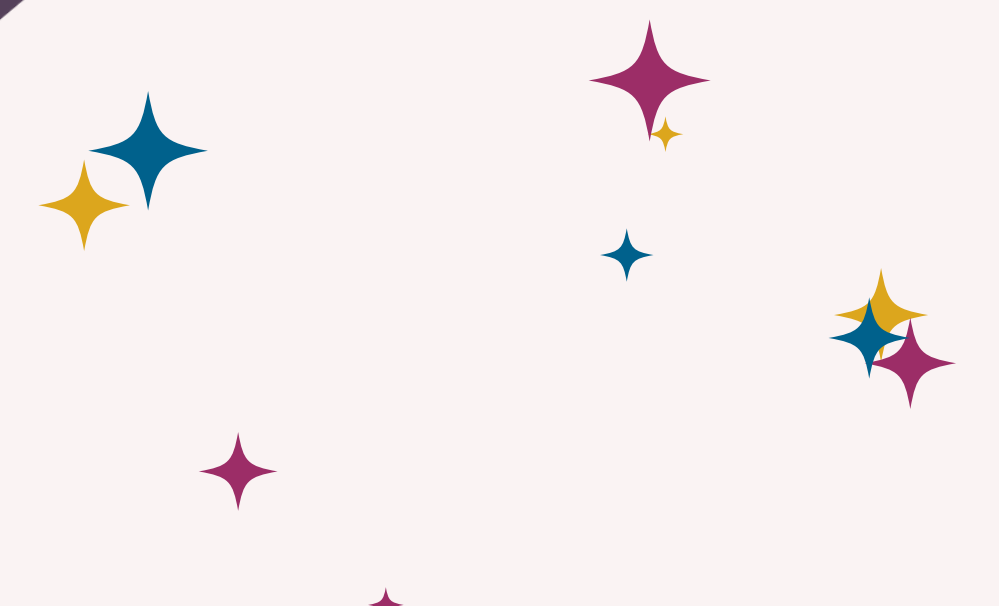
Sudan



Iraq

JVS refugee resettlement

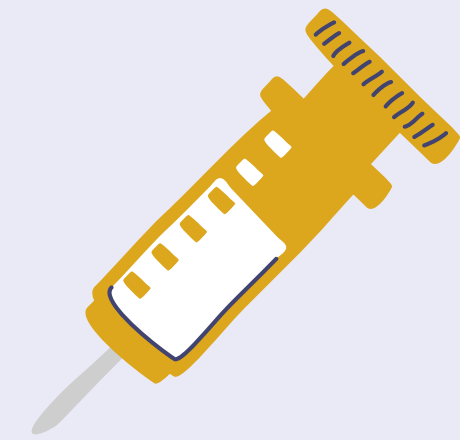
JVS is the largest of four refugee resettlement agencies in the Kansas City Metro area.



90 Days to self sufficiency



Airport pickup
Permanent Housing
Public Benefits- Medicaid/SNAP/Cash Assistance
SSA/EAD card
Health Screenings
School Enrollment
Community Orientation
Job Placement
ESL enrollment



Tips for the healthcare setting





Trauma

Every refugee client has experienced trauma.

Trauma affects everything about world views, including memory.



Past access

Access to adequate and reliable health care is a luxury.

The average wait time is 17 years in a refugee camp.





Trust

Spiritual and cultural beliefs will always impact care, even when they are not evident in the exam room.



Ask questions

Play the role of the detective.



Case example

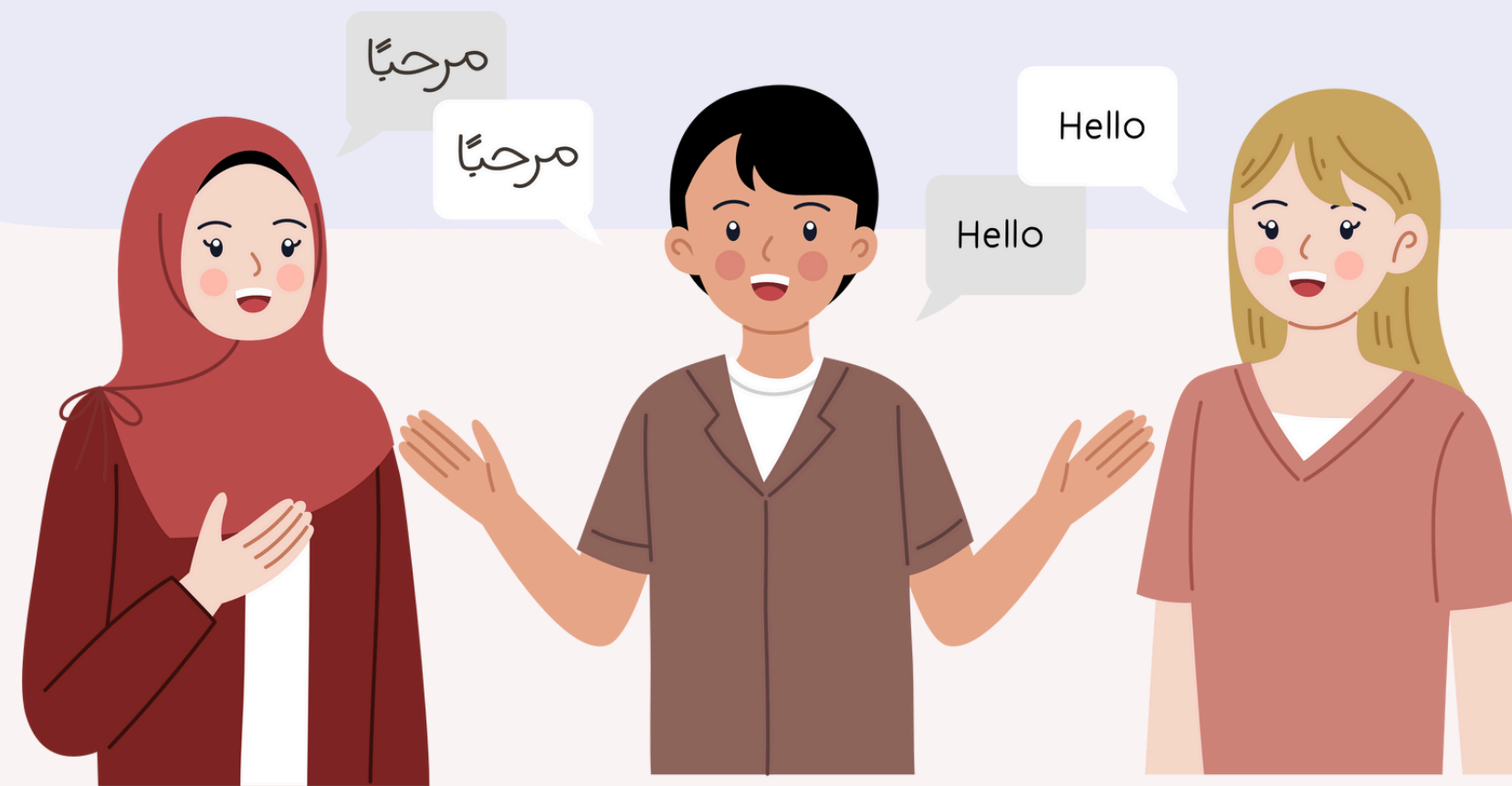
Congolese populations prepare for birth and death very differently than many western cultures.

If a cultural conversations aren't had, differences can seem concerning.



Interpretation

- Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Children are not interpreters.
- Speak directly to the client.
- Gender should match when possible.
- Check in with the interpreter.
- Not all clients are literate in their native language.



Case example

Minor went to the emergency room for a SANE exam after a sexual assault.

In person interpreter provided.

Client did not want to complete the exam. Without explanation, left.

Case example

Minor went to the emergency room for a SANE exam after a sexual assault.

In person interpreter provided.

Client did not want to complete the exam. Without explanation, left.

Client knew the interpreter.


Interpreter did not disclose relationship.



Explain everything

Explain every important part of care including how to use medication thoroughly.

If multiple providers are involved, ensure there is overlap in communication and roles are clear.



Case Example

In the clinic

- Burmese client
- Ear infection
- Interpretation provided
- Prescription given with directions in Burmese.



At home

- Abuse
- Medicine given incorrectly
- Worse outcomes

Questions?

