

DECEMBER 3-4, 2015

# Our City of Nations

*Supporting Refugee and Recent Immigrant Populations*

## Conference Executive Summary

### Introduction

Each year over one thousand refugees are resettled in Wisconsin, with the majority being resettled in the southeastern part of the State. Social services, government agencies, and healthcare systems must work quickly to properly integrate recently resettled refugees into their new communities. Yet, programs and services aimed at supporting refugees and immigrants are too often disconnected from one another despite sharing similar goals and clients.

In December 2014, an inter-agency, inter-disciplinary group of professionals came together and voiced an idea for a conference that might “mobilize and harness the diverse knowledge, capacities, and services of various stakeholders, interested to learn from and with those who interface with refugee and immigrant communities in the USA” was initiated.

### Action

One year later, this multi-disciplinary conference entitled, “Our City of Nations”, was held on December 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

Over 200 participants from 62 different agencies, 16 different professional fields, and 10 different regional cities attended. Speakers included national level policy makers, state level government officials, service organization leaders, healthcare providers, and local activists.

Concurrently, an inter-professional education refugee health session was held for 127 students from 11 different academic institutions and eight different degree programs.

A photography exhibition entitled “Here, There, and Elsewhere: Refugee Families in Milwaukee” provided a glimpse into the lives of Milwaukee refugee families through a collection of 30 photographs. These intimate portraits provided a window into the daily lives of some of the newest, least familiar Milwaukee residents.

### Sponsors:

*Children’s Community  
Health Plan*

*Concordia University  
School of Physician  
Assistants*

*Lutheran Social Services  
of Wisconsin and Upper  
Michigan*

*Medical College of  
Wisconsin*

*Milwaukee Health  
Services Molina Health*

*Mount Mary University*

*Sebastian Family  
Psychology Practice*



## Impact

Participants' feedback was documented through paper evaluation forms, handwritten scribe notes during each session, and an online, 10 question post-conference survey. *[Please see "Our City of Nations Conference Impacts" document for a full summary of impact statements].*

Conference evaluation and session notes were presented to conference participants at the end of each day, for consensus vote. Results indicate that providers and professionals who attended believe that:

- Ongoing collaboration between all types of agencies, communities, navigators, and government is necessary, and private-public partnerships are essential in the ongoing resettlement and health needs of recently arrived populations.
- All providers and agencies must work towards the dual goals of refugee health equity and refugee self-sufficiency.
- We must 1) remain aware of the individuality and uniqueness of circumstances, histories, and cultures of every recently arrived person; 2) remain aware of ourselves and the biases, narratives, Western ideas, backgrounds and experiences we bring to our work and interactions with these individuals; 3) remain aware of how we provide services and utilize systems.

Post-conference surveys demonstrated significant enthusiasm for the conference, with the overwhelming majority attesting that attendance improved their ability to deliver services, provided relevant content, and addressed themes meaningful to their work.

*"I've had some follow up meetings as a result of the conference... Our clinic, Bread of Healing, will be working with [DHS Community Healthcare Workers] to assist in medication access and literacy. We will be participating in some seminars called "Let's talk about your medications". The conference has opened up several opportunities to assist in the resettlement process and the continued healthcare of those being resettled in Milwaukee. Thanks for your work in putting this conference together and the future work on refugee issues." -Paul J. Hoffmann, RPh; Bread of Healing Clinic & MedShare Program*

## Summary

This locally relevant conference explained the core competencies and integrative strategies needed to enhance the care for the region's diverse refugee and recent immigrant populations. Regional social service and healthcare systems have to consistently adapt to new cultures as they assist the refugees and new immigrants with their primary health needs and challenging social service needs. Providers must remain aware of how they and others provide services and communicate across disciplines and sectors to ensure all recently arrived populations achieve self-sufficiency and health equity.

## Next Steps

The momentum from this conference must be advanced for the betterment of refugee and immigrant communities and for all agencies assisting in the process of acculturation and integration. We propose another conference be held in mid-2017 to forward the agenda of best practices and higher standards of care for our newest community members.

***By coming together and sharing our experiences with each other we can do better as individual providers, agencies, and as a community.***

## Planning Committee:

Concordia University  
School of Physician  
Assistants

Froedtert Hospital,  
Global Health Nursing  
Committee

International Adoption  
Clinic, Children's Hospital  
of Wisconsin

Kingdom Workers

Lutheran Health Alliance

Lutheran Social Services  
of Wisconsin and Upper  
Michigan

Medical College of  
Wisconsin

Mount Mary University,  
Counseling Department

Sebastian Family  
Psychology Practice

State of Wisconsin  
Department of Health  
Services, Refugee Health

Ugandan Behavioral  
Health Consortium

UW-Milwaukee, Institute  
of World Affairs

Wisconsin Lutheran  
College