



Tips Sheet for Working with Recent Immigrants





Tips Sheet for Working with Recent Immigrants

This Tips Sheet is intended to aide practitioners in the development and implementation of relationship and marriage education programs for recently immigrated Hispanic couples.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

The new environment faced by Hispanics immigrating to the United States often results in a lost sense of comfort, security, self-assurance and orientation previously enjoyed in their country of origin. Instead, apprehension, insecurity, confusion, and discomfort replace the previous positive states of being. Mediating, or protective factors that have the potential of reducing the tension created by the immigration process are a sense of hope, family, and positive experiences with the new community. This document lists potential ways in which to incorporate these protective factors into program implementation.

- Use recognized and trusted sources in the community to introduce and promote the program to couples. New immigrants may experience emotions related to lack of trust, fear, and insecurity when accessing community services.
- Incorporate activities or examples that validate couples' efforts to endure adverse circumstances in order to create a better future for their children.
- Recognize that family is a core value for Hispanics; reinforce the connection between the family and its potential to offer stability and security to the couple relationship.
- Create a welcoming, inclusive environment that will help establish a sense of community for couples.
- Previous support systems in the couples' homeland (e.g., parents, neighbors, teachers, pastors, grandparents) are likely to be absent in their new environment.

CHALLENGES

Some of the more common challenges facing recent immigrant couples may include but are not limited to: immigration, acculturation, gender dynamic, children as cultural brokers, extended family, marriage license challenges, employment, and language.

Listed below are some possible ways in which to provide services while remaining sensitive to these issues.

- Include exercises and activities related to partner expectations as a way of overcoming differing levels of acculturation and resistance to change.
- Provide an opportunity for couples to discuss gender role changes as a normative part of transition.
- Encourage couples to learn to maneuver in an English-speaking society in order to reinforce their own leadership role and eliminate the undo pressure placed on their children acting as cultural brokers.
- Be prepared to provide services in Spanish.
- Plan ahead to accommodate participants whose spouse may be living in the country of origin.
- Consider providing special sessions for extended family members to discuss the general principals of healthy relationships, including making independent versus collaborative decisions.
- Learn about state marriage laws and investigate with the appropriate consulates procedures for undocumented couples seeking to be married.
- Be creative in offering various opportunities for couples to participate in activities since employment schedules may not always allow couples to participate together.
- Promote program services as an opportunity to strengthen family and parent-child relationships to help couples preserve their public image.