



CENTER FOR ADJUSTMENT, RESILIENCE & RECOVERY

## **What to Know: Culturally Appropriate Community Responses**

CARRE has changed the Crisis Spotlight section to highlight emerging issues for service providers, as access to services and resources may vary among communities in the U.S.

### **The Impact of the end of Title 42 on Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

As of Thursday, May 11, 2023, the Title 42 public health order has been lifted due to the public health emergency ending for COVID-19. Since March 2020, this has allowed the U.S. to expel over 2.4 million migrants under the guise of public health measures ([The International Rescue Committee](#)). However with the ending of Title 42, a new [asylum plan](#) has emerged to manage regional migration which poses a new threat for those seeking asylum at the U.S. southern border. Some important points for consideration include the following:

- More aggressive enforcement measures are expected to be in place, such as expedited removal and potential criminal prosecutions for unlawful entry.
- Under the new policy, non-Mexican asylum seekers who transited through other countries on their way to the US must apply for asylum in one of those transit countries first and be denied or they will be presumed ineligible for asylum in the U.S., unless they entered through a “lawful pathway” (such as parole or making an appointment to appear at a Port of Entry using the CBP One mobile app) or otherwise qualify for an exception.
- The risk of exploitation, discrimination, and violence is increasingly high for vulnerable community members such as Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, women, and children.
- The systems and tools intended to facilitate access to lawful migration pathways as an alternative to irregular migration are not fully in place or they are already being faced with accessibility issues such as setting up the regional processing centers (Columbia and Guatemala) and CBP One smartphone app. The app in particular has glitches and is not easily accessible. This keeps families in very risky situations for unknown periods of time when its intent should be to protect people fleeing imminent threat.
- Family Reunification Parole is limited to 4 countries (Venezuela, Cuba, Haiti, and Nicaragua) and requires applicants to have a financial sponsor in the U.S. and be able to fly into the U.S., thus limiting who can apply.

### **Considerations for Service Providers**

For all families and clients who are affected, either by direct association or perceived threat to safety and future, it is important for practitioners to use a trauma-informed, strengths-based approach while employing empathic listening as first strategies for response. While we may not hold immediate power to change policies and lift bans, we as practitioners overlooking the ongoing difficult traumatic experiences of our clients are equipped to support within our own communities and access to available resources. Some considerations to take as service providers include the following:

**1. Families with other family members on the southern border waiting for asylum**

- Acknowledge the situation while using empathetic listening and active counseling to summarize and validate emotions.
- Reflect emotions. Do not correct strong emotions of survivor guilt, grief around loss, fear, hopelessness, and frustration that may occur alongside flashbacks of personal experiences, retraumatization, and mistrust of government institutions and society. It is common for individuals and families to be consistently exposed to racist, xenophobic, and discriminatory reception. There may also be strong feelings associated with a lack of control over family reunification.
- Look to grief therapy and coping techniques rooted in community or faith-based healing. Discuss self-care or other calming rituals or symbols that have cultural and familial significance. Provide psychoeducation around grief and trauma.

**2. Family reunification for those who successfully cross**

- For both those who are arriving and those receiving loved ones, listen to immediate needs and plans to support one another. Link the families to resources that can support their agency and collective recovery.
- Provide a safe environment to discuss expectations on reunification, how this may shift family dynamics, and ways to maintain wellbeing and mental health.

**3. For immediate response for individuals who are able to enter the U.S.**

- By first asking and collaborating, provide psychological first aid and focus on meeting basic needs as deemed appropriate by the client. This may take referral and collaboration with other service providers.
- Employ empathetic listening and summarize integration expectations. Provide clarification of your role and its limitations (do not set expectations for clients that are not guaranteed).
- Support clients as they are adjusting, follow up by asking what they plan and hope to do within the upcoming days, months, and years. Assist them in identifying resources to help them achieve their goals such as connecting them to essential family, people, institutions, and legal outlets. This includes preferred community outlets and group modalities of psychological support.

**Recommended Resources**

- IRC welcomes the **expansion of resettlement pathways** while denouncing further [asylum restrictions](#)
- Proposed **Asylum Ban** Would Bar Thousands of People Seeking Protection from US Asylum and Threatens to Undermine Regional Protection Systems, [IRC says](#)
- **John Oliver covered the proposed Asylum Ban** on [Last Week Tonight](#)
- The IRC published a **swipe-through explainer on the Asylum Ban** on multiple platforms, including [Facebook](#)

### **Turkey Elections: Situation for Syrians**

An ongoing presidential election in Turkey is currently taking place with first round of elections resulting in a close tie between Erdoğan's governing coalition and the social democratic opposition Republican People's party (CHP) including other running candidates. The second round of elections will be held on May 28<sup>th</sup> and many forcibly displaced families from Syria are being used as political pawns due to heightened tensions and hostile sentiment around migration from opposition parties. While acknowledging Turkey's role in hosting [4 million Syrians](#) over the past 12 years, the current situation leaves vulnerable Syrian women, children, and families in unpredictable and worrying predicaments, including being "voluntarily" returned to Syria where there is reasonable cause for concern of sending families back to situations deemed unsafe. This is on top of the devastating earthquakes of February 2023 that impacted 8.8 million individuals in Syria alone. Syrians are currently facing mental and emotional impacts of experiencing multiple, simultaneous disasters, impacting those in the region and the diaspora as they await the election outcomes and consider possible scenarios and planning for establishing safety and shelter once more.

### **Situation in Sudan**

Ongoing fighting and recent conflict stemming from April 15<sup>th</sup> in Khartoum between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has left 45 million individuals and families inside Sudan in a cycle of instability, over 700 deaths reported and over 5,000 injured ([The International Rescue Committee](#)). The social and political turmoil, although not a new occurrence, continues to accumulate alongside the impacts of severe weather conditions due to climate change (flooding and droughts), food insecurity and malnutrition (impacting at least 39% of the population), internal displacement (3.7 million internally displaced), and an overall 15.8 million people in need of humanitarian aid. An estimated 90,000 individuals fled into neighbor countries such as Chad, leaving women and children at risk of exploitation and constant danger. Attacks and disruptions to aid and livelihood needs continue, millions significantly affected by destitution and displacement.

### **Considerations for Service Providers**

- Sudan has already been hosting an existing and growing forcibly displaced population from other countries due to the situation for example in Tigray, in addition to the internally displaced Sudanese population (before the recent conflict, 4.5 million Sudanese individuals were already displaced ([UNHCR](#))). According to [UNHCR](#), an estimated 860,000 may flee Sudan. It is important to understand the scale and nature of displacement and domino effect in the region.
- Unprecedented levels of basic needs remain unmet, and targeting of first responders and aid workers contributes to widespread fear and anguish, not to mention the deprivation causing individuals to flee multiple times. Neighboring countries are also stretched thin on capacity.
- The historical trauma and current, compounded situation can leave families in the U.S. in distress as they monitor the prevalence of uncertainty, violence, ambiguous loss, and continuous uprooting of loved ones. Not only navigating grief with regards to



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mourning individuals and the “homeland,” there may be feelings of survivor guilt witnessing what is happening back home.

- For many families in the U.S., they are attempting to access and balance essential needs including housing, employment, medical and legal services, in addition to mental health support and therefore, connections to comprehensive case management through entities such as local resettlement agencies remain crucial. Support and facilitate connections to client identified cultural, religious and/or ethnic appropriate communities and services (make sure to support in a client-centric way, listen to the client on what outlets are most appropriate and preferred).

### **World Refugee Day and Juneteenth**

On June 20<sup>th</sup>, we recognize and commemorate [World Refugee Day](#) as designated by the United Nations to honor those who have been forcibly displaced around the world. The scale of forced displacement this year alone has reached unprecedented levels as we are seeing 100 million individuals who have been forcibly displaced worldwide ([UNHCR](#)). As of 2022, the number of internally displaced individuals has reached 71.1 million ([Reuters](#)). With this awareness, we must recognize the strength and courage of those who have fled unimaginable horrors, persecution, and/or natural phenomenon and disasters. Supporting self-identified preferences for rebuilding and healing, with acknowledgement to agency, autonomy, and dignity, should be at the forefront of culturally appropriate collaborative and nonjudgmental care. Stepping aside with cultural humility, we are mindful of our potential biases and do not generalize, nor make assumptions, regarding the types and degree of trauma within and amongst communities. To better understand the historical and contextual backgrounds of situations impacting clients and families back home, we continue to monitor the updated global news and watchlists such as the [IRC 2023 Emergency Watchlist](#).

At the same time, we are observing and honoring [Juneteenth](#), the oldest celebrated remembrance to the end of slavery in the United States. Both World Refugee Day and Juneteenth stress the importance of acknowledging historical and ongoing trauma, marginalization, discrimination, and injustice surrounding racial, cultural, ethnic, and religious identities. Collectively, we must urgently act and hold institutions accountable that support the safety, dignity, and agency around intersectionality, freedom and safety for all. This World Refugee Day and Juneteenth, we hope you will join us in continuous, dignified engagement alongside families and youth who have been forcibly displaced.