

## **World Refugee Day 2025: Learning from Communities Managing Uncertainty and Self-Determined Resilience**

June 20<sup>th</sup> is **World Refugee Day**, which honors the individual and collective agency and dignity of children and families who have experienced forced displacement. This day provides an opportunity to show [solidarity](#), empathy, understanding, and compassion to those forced to flee, many of whom are facing profound uncertainty. Uncertainty throughout the migration journey (Where can we go? Will we reach safety?), in exile (Can we ever go back? What happens next?), and within countries of safety (Will I be allowed to stay? Will I ever feel at home?) Uncertainty can impact a sense of self, community, and stability and in turn, affect wellbeing, healing, and adjustment.

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, CARRE hosted a panel discussion alongside partners at Jewish Family Services of Western New York, Church World Service, and Refugee Women's Alliance to stress the importance of ongoing reflection and centering community perspectives on managing uncertainty and cultivating resilience and strength.

The panelists spoke to a variety of experiences across the lifespan, including how uncertainty shows up for adolescents, families with children, and individuals with mixed cultures. Adolescence is a critical period of identity formation, and the panelists spoke about the particular challenges that forcibly displaced adolescents face. Common themes among forcibly displaced adolescents include catching up to their peers, navigating identity formation while also navigating the culture of home and the culture of school, and finding a sense of belonging. This may involve long-term thinking for not only carving individual paths, but paths that emphasize the success and security of the family. The panelists also spoke of caregiving challenges, and how to have difficult conversations with children about conflict, culture, and the future, especially when so much is unknown. For example, for some Ukrainian families, this is having children study in Ukrainian and English as it is unclear of where they will be in the future.

The panelists also spoke about the necessity of community as a place of anchor and ability to provide spaces for connection, healing, and perseverance. Several agencies discussed how they are hosting skills-based resilience groups that focus on enhancing social-emotional skills. Additionally, communities are emphasizing meaning making based on belief systems, highlighting pride and accomplishments and ensuring access for community members through peer advocacy.

Certain themes emerged from the discussion that can be helpful in guiding providers:

- **Recognize that current uncertainties, and the experiences of these uncertainties, may differ widely even within the same community** based on age, role, and immigration status. Provide care that keeps in mind different histories, experiences, and perspectives on what has and continues to happen (including the unknown).

There is no one way of thinking, coping, and responding. Some individuals might be feeling anxious or doubtful, some may be experiencing avoidance, confusion and/or insecurity (apprehensive about unwanted visibility), and some may adapt more easily. Meet families where they are at, with what they need.

- **Be careful of your scope and role**, especially related to many who are seeking immigration advice. Be transparent on things you are not aware of and what is not within your control. For some, restoring trust is needed with faith and confidence fluctuating. Communities are looking for presence, transparency, and consistency. Have conversations with parents, schools, and other regularly accessed institutions. Include children in age-appropriate discussions who may exhibit a lot of self-blame and guilt, reframe challenges that emphasize they are not at fault. Ensure adolescents have access to trusted adults and can practice problem solving.
- **Provide safe spaces for community connection and acceptance** that provide opportunities to foster resilience. In-language support and collaborative efforts with trusted agencies and partners such as schools are essential. Examples include focusing on activities related to wellbeing and flourishing (regulating and tapping into emotions, highlighting accomplishments, meaning making, etc.). Don't forget you as the provider, and what is needed for you and your colleagues when it comes to self and collective care, in this moment.