

Experts offer strategies for working with immigrant victims of violence (w/ Video)

November 10 2009



Deb Hume, assistant teaching professor in the University of Missouri Master of Public Health Program, speaks with MU students about working with immigrant victims of violence. Credit: MU News Bureau

Last year, the United States provided asylum and resettlement assistance for nearly 80,700 people from other countries, an increase from 71,300 individuals in 2007, according to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. University of Missouri health experts say the increase has made issues of immigrant and refugee violence and the need for effective intervention strategies more apparent.

Deb Hume, assistant teaching professor in the MU Master of Public Health (MPH) Program, and Barbara Bogomolov, director of refugee services for Barnes Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, recommend the following prevention and intervention strategies to address immigrant

and refugee [violence](#):

- Consider potential cultural and language barriers, such as religious customs and social structures, when working with victims, such as religious customs and social structures.
- Know how to work with language interpreters prior to communicating with refugees or immigrants. Use qualified interpreters, not victims' family members, to translate.
- Communities should maintain a group of contacts for victim services, including health care, social services and law enforcement.
- Be aware that it is rare for individuals to self identify as victims of violence; they are more likely to be present in emergency departments or hospitals for unrelated health causes, including pregnancy assessments or children's doctor appointments.

"Although interpersonal violence and violence against women and children are universal occurrences, language and culture are unique to individuals, and service providers need to be sensitive to each person's specific needs and circumstances," Hume said. "We cannot know what trauma any one person has experienced, and we have to be vigilant about making communication as safe and culturally appropriate as possible."

Hospitals, clinics and service organizations can train workers and language interpreters to be aware of these issues. The experts say it is important to recognize that immigrants and refugees:

- May be, or are, victims or witnesses of torture;

- May be under pressure to perform potentially abusive rituals or practices;
- May be victims of human trafficking (are being sold for sex or labor);

Hume is working with the Central Missouri Stop Human Trafficking Coalition to develop a support network for victims of violence in Columbia. For more information about immigrant victims of violence, please visit: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/index.html>
http://www.endabuse.org/section/programs/immigrant_women

Source: University of Missouri-Columbia ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Experts offer strategies for working with immigrant victims of violence (w/ Video) (2009, November 10) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-11-experts-strategies-immigrant-victims-violence.html>

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