



Virginia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services

FRMHC Conducts Mental Health Information Session

Mental health is a word with positive meaning but with a negative perception or stigma. This is not only true in the United States but also in other parts of the world. Its acceptance as a problem that needs attention and care, just like any other physical health problems, is evolving but has not been fully accepted in the society. This poses a challenge to groups and organizations, such as the Fredericksburg Refugee Mental Health Council (FRMHC), whose focus is to highlight the positive effects of mental health care and promote mental wellness.

Many mental health trainings, programs, and modules are available in English and designed to explain mental health in the context of American culture but none has been suitable for use with refugee populations whose cultures are different and whose members may have none to limited English proficiency. Looking deeper on how to reach out to these populations, the FRMHC came up with an idea to develop a community-based mental health information session where refugee community leaders have adequate time to clearly explain the concept of mental health in the refugees' native language, its advantages and



Participants to the Community Mental Health Awareness Session with Om Adhikari, facilitator and Laurel Collins, Associate Director, CCDA Migration and Refugee Services.

direct relationship to economic sufficiency and stability, as well as how to bridge the gap between what refugees know from their home country and how it is viewed and treated in the United States. With the support of Bhutanese community leaders in Richmond and Fredericksburg, the DBHDS-OCLC, and the Virginia Healing Partnership, a 4-hour Community Mental Health Awareness Session teaching guide was developed. It was piloted in Fredericksburg last June, 2015 with 10 adult refugees in attendance and the response was overwhelming. Another session is schedule in early Fall. Bhim Dahal and Om Adhikari, refugee community leaders, co-authors of the CoMHAS teaching guide, and certified Mental Health First Aid Instructors, facilitated the session.

Fredericksburg Refugee Mental Health Council

Vision: That all refugees maybe inspired to find a life of health and hope

Mission: To serve with compassion and provide support to strengthen the lives of Fredericksburg Area refugee families

Values: 1. Persevere to be our brother's keeper and value services as well as openness to the people of our community
2. Demonstrate empathy and compassion through family values which include hope, strength, and caring
3. Develop resilience to strengthen individuals, families, and communities
4. Demonstrate acts of charity, generosity, and giving to those who are in need
5. Create a network of support among agencies and organizations that serve refugees

Members and Support Partners

Bhutanese Organization of Fredericksburg, Catholic Charities Diocese of Arlington, Family Service of Fredericksburg, Fredericksburg-Rappahannock Area Community Services Board, Mary Washington Health Care, Mental Health America of Fredericksburg, Rappahannock Community Health Center