

>> Good afternoon. Welcome to our webinar series, "Addressing the Needs of Adolescent EL Populations in a Multi-Tiered System of Support Framework." This is Webinar 2: "Refugee Students in a MTSS Framework." The presenters for this webinar are Ana Sainz de la Peña, Paula Zucker, and Francine Dutrisac.

We will start with our PaTTAN mission. The mission of the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network is to support the efforts and initiatives of the Bureau of Special Education. And to build a capacity of local educational agencies to serve students who receive special education services. PDE's commitment to a Least Restrictive Environment recognizes that the placement decision is an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team decision. Our goal for each child is to ensure IEP teams begin with a general education setting with the use of supplementary aids and services before considering a more restrictive environment.

For Act 48, please -- You know that you have to participate in all three webinars to get Act 48. At the end of this webinar we will be presenting you with a Survey Monkey. And there's going to be a code that I will share with you at the end of the webinar. So you will have to enter the code to be able to answer the questions. You will be getting more information as we finish this webinar.

The outcome for our webinar is really to focus on the unique needs of refugee English Learners. And also to familiarize with some strategies that need to be in place to meet the challenges that these students present as they enter our educational system. We are also going to provide you with many resources and supports to help you tend to the needs of these children.

Since we are going to always start with the rationale for a Multi-Tiered System of Support framework, we have to really go over what this is and how important it is to provide all students with these instructions, or these ways to close the gaps that they will have in order to perform a benchmark in our educational system. We have to understand that through an MTSS framework what we're doing is looking at data to make decisions that are culturally-responsive to help our students meet their educational, social, and cultural needs. So when we look at MTSS from the perspective of ELLs, and more so from the perspective of refugee students, we really have to target the needs of these students. Which might be, you know, different than the needs of students who do not come with the same kind of life experience or background.

That is why we always want to ground our instruction work with ELLs who are refugees -- and all ELLs -- with the idea that we need to provide culturally-responsive teaching and learning situations in our classrooms. That all of our ELLs' needs are tended first in that Tier 1, which is that universal interventions for all students. We also need to be aware that if students are not meeting benchmarks, and they are ELLs, you have to provide those interventions that are provided to all students. But the number one piece that we need to understand is that we have to really work as part of a team to meet the needs of these children at Tier 1. And then if that cannot happen, then look for other avenues to support them. And all of that needs to be done within that culturally-responsive way of dealing with our students.

When we look at a Multi-Tiered System of Support and the kinds of supports that students need within this framework, we have to understand again that Tier 1 is where ESL instruction really lives. That is the place where we all have to understand that in Pennsylvania, ESL is core instruction. And the fact that most of these refugee students will actually needs ESL instruction. And also adaptations and

accommodations within Tier 1 to be able to meet those standards that all children are required to meet. And they also have the right to participate in all of the other interventions, if required or if needed. We also need to look at the area where we are looking at behavior. We are looking at that continuum of cultural adaptation and the very intense supports that some of these children will need in order to acclimate to their new schools and their new environments.

So why do refugees leave their countries? In many instances -- Because the whole idea of refugees is very new to some of our teachers, we have to understand that there are many instances, or many different reasons, why these families move out of their -- or away from their -- countries.

Another way to look at that is that we have a very specific characteristic for refugees. It is not just people who move from their countries into our countries. There has to be some rationale for them to meet that label of refugees. And that is what you see on this slide. Many people -- many refugees or asylees -- leave their countries because of war, because of persecution, because of their religion, because of their political opinion, or because they are members of a specific group of people that are not really welcome, or are persecuted for their ideas in their countries.

And what is persecution? Because sometimes the whole term could be foreign to many of us. We know that there's no universally-accepted definition of persecution. We know that they are considered, really, characteristics that these people have from the perspective of race. They could be persecuted because of their race. We have seen that happening in some of the African countries where there is an issue of belonging to different groups or different races of people. Apartheid is another example of race. Religion, because they really do not exercise the same religion as considered the religion of that country. Nationality. Sometimes that's also -- that creates persecution. All of the sudden -- Kurds, for example, in Iraq where they are persecuted because they consider themselves different from the rest of the people in Iraq. Political opinion. When you really have a different opinion about how a country should be run. So that political option opposing the leader of the -- or the president or dictator of a country -- can really create a big problem for people who think differently. And therefore they are persecuted. Members in a particular social group. That could be, like I explained before, maybe if you're a Kurd and you live in Turkey, for example, you also belong to this ethnic group that is different from the normal, from the rest of the country. In some cases homosexuality is also persecuted in some countries.

There are other serious violations of human rights, also, that are considered -- you know, constitutes persecution. And that is slavery, prolonged detention without a charge or a trial, torture, overwhelming discrimination. One thing that is really important to consider is that persecution is usually assessed in a case-by-case basis. Looking at the histories of these families and these children before they even are accepted to come to this country in what is really considered persecution. So refugees who live in camps, and they ask to come in and live here in the United States, really go through a very extensive vetting and a very extensive case work. And some people really don't get to come here after several years. So it is not just that you request to come in as a refugee and then the doors are open. So we are going to really talk a little bit more about that in the following slides.

The bottom line is that by nature of their situation, refugees have to leave their homelands behind. And that is very traumatic for many children. Maybe if you are an adult you can find some rationale for leaving your country and leaving your family and leaving everything that you know or are familiar with behind. But when you are a child, your world, really, is destroyed once you have to leave your country. It is very traumatic. And that is why, along -- you know, as we go through these slides, we have to

understand that the ESL program by itself will not be sufficient for refugee students to thrive in our educational system. We have this idea that if we just have the child in the ESL program with an ESL teacher and maybe some accommodations in the classroom it's going to be sufficient for them. No, that's not the case with refugee students. There has to be a lot of other services, a lot of more training of teachers, and a lot of more considerations about mental health, about trauma, about shock. About a lot of other issues that other ELLs do not bring with them.

Why? Because during their escape, refugees may experience all of these, you know, situations that are on the slide. Panic, fatigue, separation, fear, fear of being detected, hunger, danger. In many instances, many families have to walk very long distances to get to refugee camps. If you have been watching the news lately -- In the past two years, you know, we have seen on the news all of these refugees from Syria, you know, trying to get in boats and go to Greece. And then from Greece they are -- they go to another country, usually Turkey. And then from Turkey then they move towards more European countries. But they walk, they take trains, they . . . So it is really a very dangerous situation for children. Can you imagine doing that with babies? Or women with three, four children that they have to really move from country to country until they reach those refugee camps in -- And even there, in some countries they are not welcome. So all of those feelings of not belonging, of being rejected, have to be taken into account when we talk to a refugee or when we work with refugee children.

This is how a refugee camp, most of the time, looks like. Tents, temporary dwellings. Sometimes, you know, if there are not tents, they are placed in areas where they are not very close to cities. These are places where sometimes basic needs are not met. Sometimes there's not running water. Food is very scarce. There's not a lot of means to support them. Because if they arrive to a country -- for example, Turkey, which is the closest to Syria -- they themselves have issues with their own citizens in regards to poverty. So they do not have the means to really support these thousands of refugees that get to their country. So you have to understand that whatever you're reading on the screen is just, you know, some examples of what can happen. But there is a lot of confusion, there's a lot of violence in these places. This morning as I am driving to get here to PaTTAN, I was listening to CNN and they were talking about France and the thousands of refugees that they have in a camp that is -- has, like, a nickname called, you know, "The Jungle." And they were going to really get all of these refugees out of that camp and place them in smaller camps throughout the country. Now some of them, some of these refugees, would like to stay in France. But others, they don't want to stay in France. They want to go to England. And so you see that the people who are together in these camps could be people also from different countries. They don't have to come from one country. So in this particular camp in France, there were people from Afghanistan, there were people from Congo, there were people from Syria. So, you know, you get the picture that in these places there is violence because the people who are there are desperate. And on top of that, they are so close to one another, and there are no means to survive. So consider that. Consider those factors when you have refugee students.

Interview for Resettlement. So how do these families get to be in the United States? Well, first of all the United Nations officials interview the people who have requested to immigrate to another country. And one of the things that they have to -- that qualifies them as refugees is that they are not able to return to their countries because of their situation. Then after that, the U.S. Refugee Program officials and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services officials determine if they meet our eligibility requirements. And we know that the U.S. is stricter than the United Nations. For instance, fleeing due to famine is

considered economic migration, not persecution, by the United States. So if you are just fleeing famine, you cannot be considered to immigrate to the United States because that is not considered persecution.

Approval and Flight. Once they have gone through this extensive review of their cases, which can take more than two or three years. I heard -- My colleague, Francine Dutrisac, was sharing with me that she has been working with a family from Congo that waited 19 years to immigrate here with their children, who are now adolescents. So, you know, for people that think that it is just a petition and then it is -- you know, they come here -- it is not true. Okay? So these are the facts. And not only that, once their cases are approved, these refugee families have to be given, you know, some health screenings, cultural orientation . . . And then they fly and come to the United States. But that is called a travel loan document. They have to sign a document in which they commit themselves -- each family has to pay back the cost of their flights. So it is not just that they are brought here and they don't have to return anything to the government. They have to pay back for their flight.

Once they are here, we have some Refugee Resettlement Agencies. In Pennsylvania we have two agencies that are very active. One is the Lutheran Ministries that really works with the Resettlement Agencies. And the other one is the Catholic Charities that are very much involved in resettling these refugees.

When refugees are resettled, they may face all of these factors. Anxiety, daily survival issues. And of course there is the language barrier. There is that sense of, you know, losing everything that they know. Imagine that through the lens of a child. How they will feel once they are here.

And that is why since we are looking at refugees from the perspective of the educational system, the number one person or number one responsible for helping these children, of course, is the leadership in those schools. The leadership in those districts which have to provide an environment that is welcoming to these students. Not only that, but they also need to be responsible enough to really create situations where they train teachers in how to deal with refugee students. They Outreach for parents and community groups to support these new families that are moving into our districts.

One of the things that is also very important is that, What are some of the challenges or difficulties that we see, or we have collected, as part of our workshop here? We have to understand that some students are so eager to learn that they go through this period of adaptation really fast. Okay? So sometimes we are surprised to see how these children adapt themselves to the situations. But there are others that are not like that. So we have to really look at those issues, you know, in a case-by-case basis. We also need to understand that these students, especially adolescent students, have already, you know, had experiences with not being able to express their opinion. Not being able to really talk about their lives or talk about what happened to them in their countries. So we have to really think about, How are we connecting teachers, counselors, and administrators in supporting these students? And to provide access to a wide range of activities that will help them understand how they can really fit in our educational systems?

One thing is that we have collected some research from administrators and teachers who have been very successful with refugee students. And this is so important. You don't want your refugee students just to adapt to the environment; you want them to be contributing members of the school. You want them to feel part of your school. Not separate from the rest of the children, but part of the group of children that are, you know, their peers at their grade level. So what do you need to do? You need to

train your teachers. You need to train even your cafeteria workers. Everybody who is in touch with these children.

We have to remember that these children have left behind friends, other relatives. They are coming here and having to face the challenge of fitting into a new culture. And you have to give them, also, some time and encouragement as they really work their way into our society and our school system.

If there are some challenges that we have collected that are, you know, something that you can address with, of course, 0:22:09 and at a grade level -- is some of the concerns that people have is about, you know, personal hygiene, purchasing lunches, appropriate clothing that fits, use of restrooms, and finding classrooms. We have to understand that these children probably haven't been in school for three, four, or five years. So how do you really acclimate these children? Or if they have had some instruction in the refugee camps, it has been very limited, and in situations that do not mirror your school system. So many of the -- In many cases, you know, personal hygiene and really learning all of the routines that you have in your school could be something that you could address maybe with the ESL teacher. Maybe, you know, in a small group, and really connecting with these children.

Time is also very important because as we know, not everybody really is so connected with being on time in other cultures. You have to understand that these children maybe have never had, really, schedules. Some of the youngest ones were born in this refugee camp, so they don't know a lot of the routines that happen. So, you know, living in a home, for example. But you have to help them understand schedules, clocks, school attendance. All of that seems to be something common for all of us, but it is something very, very challenging when you are a refugee student.

So, one thing that we have seen through all of the research that we have worked with is that in many instances, teachers want these children to maybe talk about their life experiences in a refugee camp. Or write about it, or draw about it. And most of the research tells us that that is not very appropriate, especially when these children have just immigrated. Or they have just, you know, have had the very first-hand experience of being in school. Give them time. And give them the ability to trust their environments, and then feel comfortable to share their experience. In many instances there are really very traumatic experiences of violence. And there could be, you know, also some experiences about their country that they would like to share. But the advice in the literature that we have read is that focus on helping them make new friends. Focus on making them get acclimated in their environments and feel comfortable in your schools. If there is a time for them to share some of their experiences, it has to be at their own time. At the time when they feel comfortable. At the time when they just feel that they trust the environment and they would like to share their experiences.

With that said, I will pass the baton here to my colleague, Francine Dutrisac.

>> Good afternoon. As we move forward we're going to be addressing how, as a school, are we able to provide them with necessary support for them to strive in our -- to thrive in our schools. So the first thing that seems possibly minimal but it's really important, is that students and their families, when they come to school, are feeling welcomed by signs in many languages. They are posted around the school. It's a great way for every student to learn about another language. So it's not only good for the English speakers -- the native English speakers -- but also for English Language Learners. It's also important as soon as students are registering to a school, to look for possible interpreters to provide information in the mode of communication preferred by the family. The school administration may have a list of

qualified interpreters. And if it's not so, educators can look at consulting community groups that have refugees or are bilingual. They may look at Refugee Resettlement Centers, social services and community-based organizations that serve refugee families, healthcare agencies such as hospitals that may provide interpreters on site or through the phone. TransACT is a service that PDE offers all school districts in our commonwealth. TransACT offers a variety of forms in multiple languages, and might be a tool that you could use. It's actually in the list of resources at the end of this presentation. So we will be drawing your attention to it when we get to that slide.

Refugee students -- One thing that we must know about refugee students is they have -- Due to their experience in refugee camps, students often mistrust adults, especially law enforcement officials who might attempt to engage in a conversation with them. So sometimes refugee students, especially at the high school level, may seem very distrustful. And it's based -- it's due to their life experiences. School rules need to be explained very clearly and demonstrated so that refugee students are clear about what is expected from them.

School calendars are very confusing for English Learners, but even more for refugee students. Whenever there is a change in the schedule, teachers need to alert refugee students of any changes. From half days to holidays to vacation breaks to "Backwards Day" to "Pajama Day." Those are all going to be very foreign to them. Refugee students often come to school inappropriately dressed for the weather, especially when the weather changes drastically from one day to the next. So allowing students to have access to a resource where you have extra coats or extra hats or extra whatever is needed for the day, would be very practical. When the students are not prepared for the day, families, the school nurse, or the Refugee Resettlement Center should be alerted.

Educators should be aware that when possible, teachers should try and avoid these situations as much as possible. I remember my first refugee students in a high school setting. Any loud noise in the hallway and they would be ducking under the table. So any time that I could prevent a situation like that, I would. For example, when there was a fire drill, I would tell them ahead of time what it would look like, what it would sound like, so that they would know ahead of time what to expect.

Here are other situations that might be frightening for refugee students when first encountered. So the best way is to prepare refugee students for these school activities and make sure that they're assisted by peer mentors and faculty as they become familiar with them. So any of those would be a concern or a cause for consternation or fear in our newly-arrived refugee families.

Restrooms. It seems so benign, but for refugee families, prior to their arrival here, they may not have ever seen a restroom before. So make sure that they're clearly marked so that the students are using the appropriate restroom designated for them. And when a tour is provided, include the restroom as part of the school tour. Refugee students identified that navigating the restroom is their biggest concern about a new school. So because of that, it's important that educators explain to students when they are allowed to access the restrooms during the school day.

In order to provide effective teaching practices, teachers need information about the cultural background of refugee students. A good place for information about refugee students in general is the Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services, BRYCS.org, that we will be examining at a deeper level on future slides. It's also important to recognize that refugee students are going to need alternative instructional strategies, including the use of cultural frames of reference. Think about introducing a story

that is referring to animals as pets. For these students, pets -- there were no pets in refugee camps. And would not have any connection to the pets in general. Differentiated instruction definitely will be important in helping them as they acclimate to their new environment through social immersion. They are surrounded by people that are not in their refugee camp, so the whole process of social immersion can be very traumatic for some.

Teachers, as they are responsible for teaching refugee students, sometimes are frustrated and occasionally uncomfortable, especially when the content presented has a considerable amount of reading and writing. Supports need to be provided for both the teacher and the student as they are interacting with one another. So ESL instruction is only one part of the whole program that will need to be in place for these students to be successful. There are some signs that we need to be aware of that our refugee students are not acclimating easily. And those are very simple. One of them is attendance records. Teachers should watch those closely. High absentee is maybe a sign. Fear can cause refugee students to stay home. Fear of the unknown, how to navigate the lunch line, using the restroom, etcetera. Fear of being teased or even to look foolish, as they don't know how to navigate school yet.

When a teacher has a new student from a refugee background, it's important not to make any assumptions. First, find out their level of English comprehension. Find out as much as you can about their educational background and the academic goals of the student. For the first few weeks in America, refugee students are not only learning about how to navigate a new school, but they're trying to adjust to all those new things. A new language, maybe a new register. Housing, transportation, foods that look so different from what they are used to. Clothing, weather, how we go about doing school -- the protocols that are in place. School routines, our customs -- like exchanging Valentine's Day cards at Valentine's Day. Expected behaviors. They may never have been in a school setting, and have no understanding of what are appropriate, expected behaviors in a school setting.

When refugee students first arrive, they're often excited about the opportunities and choices provided for them, but can be easily overwhelmed and intimidated. Some American students may not be very welcoming either. So it's really important that we help students figure out how to build quality friendships and protect themselves from bullying. Helping refugee students learn school rules and procedures. Meet fellow students and become comfortable with the classroom environment. Once they have, they begin to adapt to their American school. Then they can tackle academic work, grades, and assessment. It goes back to the affective filter. The higher my level of fear and feeling of being -- of not feeling comfortable, the higher my protection and my inability to learn. So the quicker that we can reduce the affective filter, the better.

As we look at providing programs that are effective for those students, consider building the programs on students' funds of knowledge. Look for unique skills and talents. Encourage interests. Expose refugee students to subjects and activities that they may never have experienced before. Like seeing snow for the first time. So on and so forth.

Even if they can't use them immediately, it's important that refugee students become familiar with textbooks and other instructional materials. Even if they can't use them immediately, just allowing them to have the physical textbook like other kids in the classroom is an effective strategy. Assessing students is part of school routines in American schools. For some refugee students, test-taking -- they will experience test-taking before they even understand how to fill in an answer sheet. Guidance counselors,

ESL teachers, content teachers, and interpreters should be involved in determining when and how refugee students should be assessed.

Teachers need to be aware that refugee students who are -- of signals that refugee students are floundering, experiencing bullying, or developing unhealthy relationships. When you see change in behaviors, greater number of absences, hanging out with students with behavior issues themselves -- those are all signals that students are not thriving in our classrooms. Please take note that many of our refugee students will not talk about these problems because they do not trust adults. The adults in their lives have not -- have proven to be untrustworthy. So the longer we can -- The more we can show that we are -- can be counted on, the better.

For large scale assessment, schools need to find out ahead of time exactly what language the refugee students speak, prior to seeking an interpreter. We have seen situations where a Russian interpreter was brought to class for a PSSA exam, and the student was from Ukraine and did not speak Russian. Or a student is from Burma, and from Burma that student could speak Karen, Karenni, Thai, or other languages. So it's really important not to assume, but to find out exactly what language that student has expertise in.

Keep in mind that some refugee students may not be literate in their own languages. And may also have undiagnosed learning disabilities. It's important to involve ESL and special education teachers in planning for these students from the beginning. Final decisions about educational programming should not be made until the students have had a chance to acculturate to the school and become familiar with school routines. Otherwise, your assessment results will not provide you with the correct outcome. Acculturation for refugee students will take a longer time than it would for an English Learner coming from a cultural distance or language distance that is much smaller than it is for refugee students. Refugee students, for the most part, are dealing with not only cultural distance, but also language distance.

Assessments, as you know, are culturally-situated. Students can become confused about the multiple types of assessments that they are dealing with. Not only quizzes, multiple choice questions, but computerized assessment, like ACCESS 2.0 and the soon W-APT. That will be computerized also. Teachers need to model how to complete assessments, especially when it involves bubble answer sheets. Without overstressing achievement, teachers should inform students and families about the importance of assessments. Explain to them that assessments will help teachers plan for the student's education.

Refugee students are no different than any teenagers or the digital natives that we are facing in our classroom. They embrace technology through interaction with American students and teachers. Based on their interests, teachers must consider allowing them to participate in social media, provide them with opportunities to expand their knowledge, and remaining current regarding their native countries. Many refugee students are highly-motivated to learn through their smartphones, internet, and iPads.

As I said in a previous slide, and as Ana supported in her section, refugee students need a lot of support as they transition from the refugee camps to the American educational system. ESL teachers and classroom teachers need to know that in most cases, refugee students don't have school records or documentation to prove their educational history. Many of them don't even have a birth certificate, having left or having fled their country with only the clothes on their backs. It's important to establish

communication with these families early on to try and create a file of information about the child's educational history in order to help educators make the best decisions regarding the student's educational program. Find out if they are literate in their first language. Find out their numeracy skills. Find out if they've had interrupted education, or did they receive schooling in the refugee camps. Some refugee camps will provide education. Some of our refugee families are not from poverty. They are coming from well-off families that have been thrown out of their country for political reasons. So find out about who they are.

Consider assessing refugee students for the ESL Program after they've been in school for at least one week. I know this only gives us one more week to assess them. But this would be so beneficial, as they are so overwhelmed by the start in public schools -- in our school in Pennsylvania. So for the first week, they can be in the ESL classroom learning some survival vocab and school routines even though they haven't been assessed yet. Then once assessed, depending on their level of English proficiency, obviously they would be placed in the appropriate ESL class. If students have had limited or interrupted education, or never been schooled, then in addition to daily ESL instruction, a targeted educational plan to close their academic gap must be placed. ESL instruction alone cannot close that gap. Many of these students will need behavior supports, counseling supports, due to the trauma they have experienced in their previous life.

Here are a few resources as we come to an end of our webinar here. The Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance from New York, the New York government, has a wonderful website at the BRIA program. That is circled on your slide. And it provides a lot of resources. If you scroll to the bottom of that webpage, it provides you with access to curriculum, strategies for classroom teachers, school nurses, school administrators, school counselors. It provides you with a brochure on domestic abuse and refugees, and on anti-bullying. On how to provide an effective Peer Mentor Program for these students as they are navigating everyday life in school.

The other resource that I wanted to highlight for you is BRYCS, Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services. As you look on the left-hand side, there is a whole page on schools. But what I would like to draw your attention to is on Promising Practices Database that is highlighted in green on the left of the page. This provides you with a toolkit that will help information-sharing among school personnel and others working with our refugee children at a national level, but also at a local level. It also provides information on frequently asked questions in the form of "tools" that can be used for professional development for teachers and other school personnel. It also raises awareness for the native speakers in your school about the refugee children's needs in our schools. The information in these tools come from a combination of research and lessons learned through providing technical assistance to those working with refugee children in the schools.

And then we've provided you with a list of resources that might be helpful to you as you provide services for your refugee students. The first two are the official links to those two resources that I've talked to you about. One that you might not be aware of is the third one, "A Guide for the Placement of Students Presenting Foreign Transcripts" at healthinschools.org. It helps you determine how to interpret foreign transcripts, so to help you with placement of students. And understanding. In Pennsylvania, students need to be grade-age appropriately placed. Please don't misunderstand me. But what this will allow you is to see how this refugee student -- If there has been interruption or limited education, you

will be able to know what that student has completed so that you can address the gap in an MTSS framework.

Finally, Resources for Interpretation and Translation. Language Line and Pacific Interpreters are services that are for cost. But TransACT, as I said previously, is something that PDE is offering to all districts, local educational agencies, in Pennsylvania. And can be accessed through that website.

Finally, the last resource I wanted to make you aware of is our new PaTTAN EL Educational Consultant. Dr. David Vázquez-González is another resource available to you. And he can be reached at this email address.

As we come to the conclusion of this webinar, here are a few takeaways. Refugee students have the highest drop-out rate. These students need more than the supports provided by an ESL teacher. The whole school needs to rally to provide the necessary support for these students to thrive in our schools, and feel they belong here. The more they become comfortable, the better their chance of being successful in our schools.