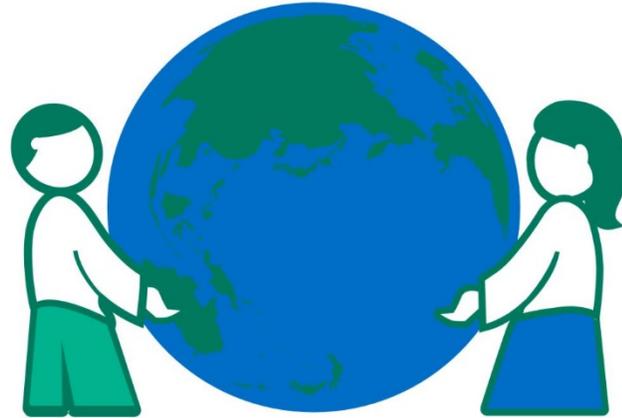


The Elder Refugee Citizenship Struggle



MULTICULTURAL
COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER

Providing Hope and Opportunity for the ESL Community

Elder Refugee Program

Multicultural Community Resource Center

Erie, PA

Background Information

- Elder Program started at MCRC in 2012 to help reach out to Elder Refugees who were staying at home.
- The program looked to help these clients learn English, Life Skills, Health Literacy, Community Integration and skills to help them pass their citizenship interviews.
- Elder Refugee populations in Erie at the time were Bhutanese, Iraqi and Kurdish.

N-400 Application Statistics

Year	N-400 Applications completed in our Immigration department	# of Seniors (not necessarily refugees) that applied	# of Seniors (not necessarily refugees) that passed the interview	# of Senior Refugees participating in the program that passed the interview
2012-2013	no data available	no data available	no data available	0
2013-2014	206	17	4	3
2014-2015	225	14	8	1
2015-2016	274	35	7*	4*

* Some applications are still pending

Current Elder Program Make-up

# of enrolled Seniors	# of Seniors enrolled at 5 years	# of Seniors enrolled over 5 years	# of Seniors enrolled over 7 years	# of Seniors in the program currently waiting on N-400 applications to process	# of Seniors in the program who have attempted the interview and failed (this year)	# of Seniors receiving citizenship (this year – either through n-648 or successful interview)
38	14	3	2	5	2	4

Major Issues or Barriers

- The majority of the refugee elders in the program and coming into the country currently are pre-literate in their own language.
- Deteriorating mental and physical capacity as the body ages.
- Difficulty in determining if an elder is experiencing issues with memory loss, eye sight, hearing, etc. due to communication gaps.
- Difficulty in obtaining N-648 Disability waiver.

Challenges with our USCIS relationship

- Good relationship present with Pittsburgh USCIS Office
- Erie services relocated to Buffalo
- Buffalo USCIS staff given bigger workloads
- Interviews became more difficult
- Asking continuation questions to those listed on the N-400 form
- Disability waivers seemed to be accepted less

Challenges with the N-648 Disability Waivers

- Only one civil surgeon in Erie
- Difficulty getting him to complete waivers
- Difficult to diagnose issues based on language barriers

Challenges with talking to our local legislators

- Unwilling to discuss changes in legislation
- Attempted to offer Band-Aid solutions
- Seemed out of touch with the connection between Erie's population and the number of refugees being resettled here

Best Practices

- Peer study of history and civics questions
- Dictation practice using provided vocabulary
- Group discussion of N-400 questions and answers
- Viewing of sample videos of naturalization interviews
- Utilizing Bi-lingual YouTube videos to help practice questions