

Refugees in Pennsylvania: Through a Health Equity Lens

Office of Health

David Saunders , Director of Office of Health Equity

Maureen Nseyep Patty , BS, Intern Office of Health Equity,

Harrisburg, PA

Office of Health Equity

- ▶ Pennsylvania Interagency Health Equity Team (PIHET)
- ▶ Culturally Linguistically Appropriateness Services (CLAS)
- ▶ Public Health 3.0
- ▶ Health Equity Report

Objectives

- ❑ Focus Refugee population in Pennsylvania.
- ❑ Overview of Refugees Trends Arrivals 2009-2017
- ❑ Overview of Refugees Arrivals by Countries
- ❑ Overview of Refugees by area of Residency
- ❑ Identified needs of Refugees in Pennsylvania.
- ❑ Strategies to support the Refugees population.
- ❑ Benefits/importance of focusing on the refugee population.

Focus on refugees

- ▶ After 1980, over 3 million refugees resettled in the US.
- ▶ With a ceiling of 45 thousand , the country have received 22 thousand in 2018.
- ▶ This ceiling have been reduced from 110,000 in 2017 to 30 thousand for 2019.
- ▶ Refugee services are covered by 7 resettlement agencies
- ▶ Refugees are served by 7 Health care providers

Refugees Admissions steps.

▶ Forms require

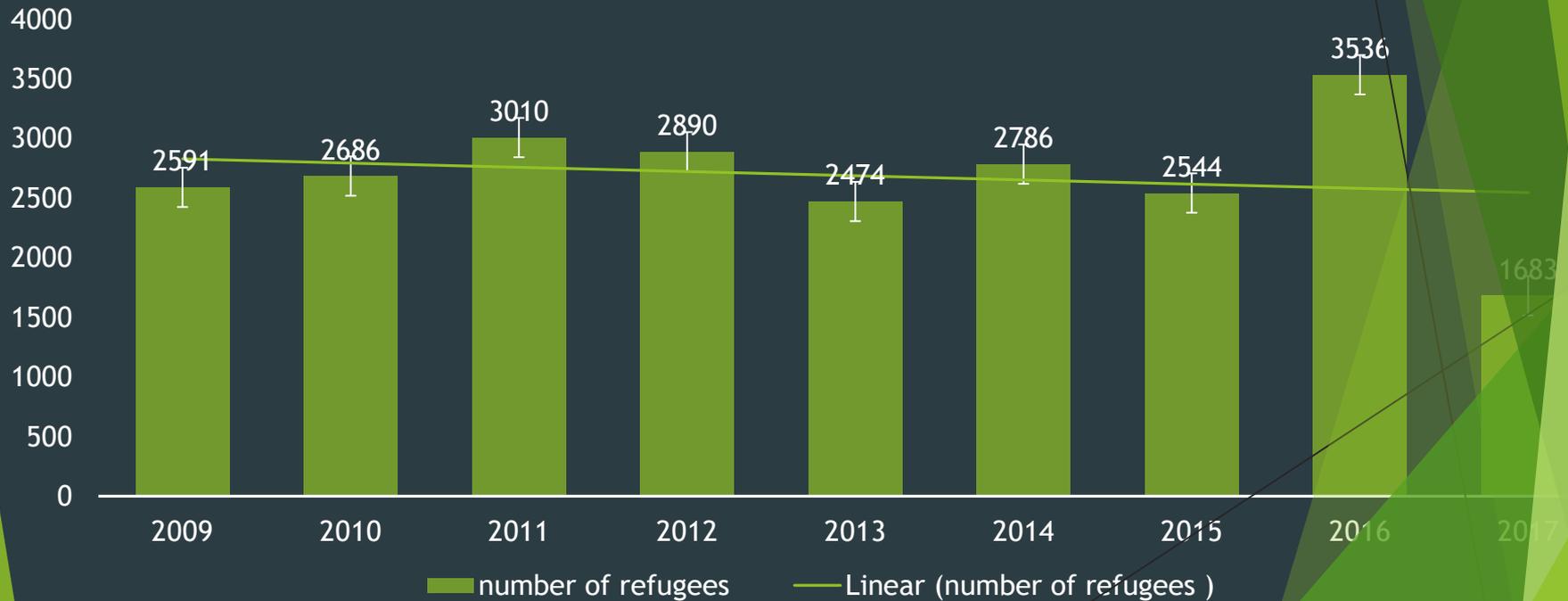
- ❖ DHS interview
- ❖ Security check

▶ Health Screening

- ❖ Mental Health Screening.
- ❖ Physical Exam: TB, Vaccine, STD

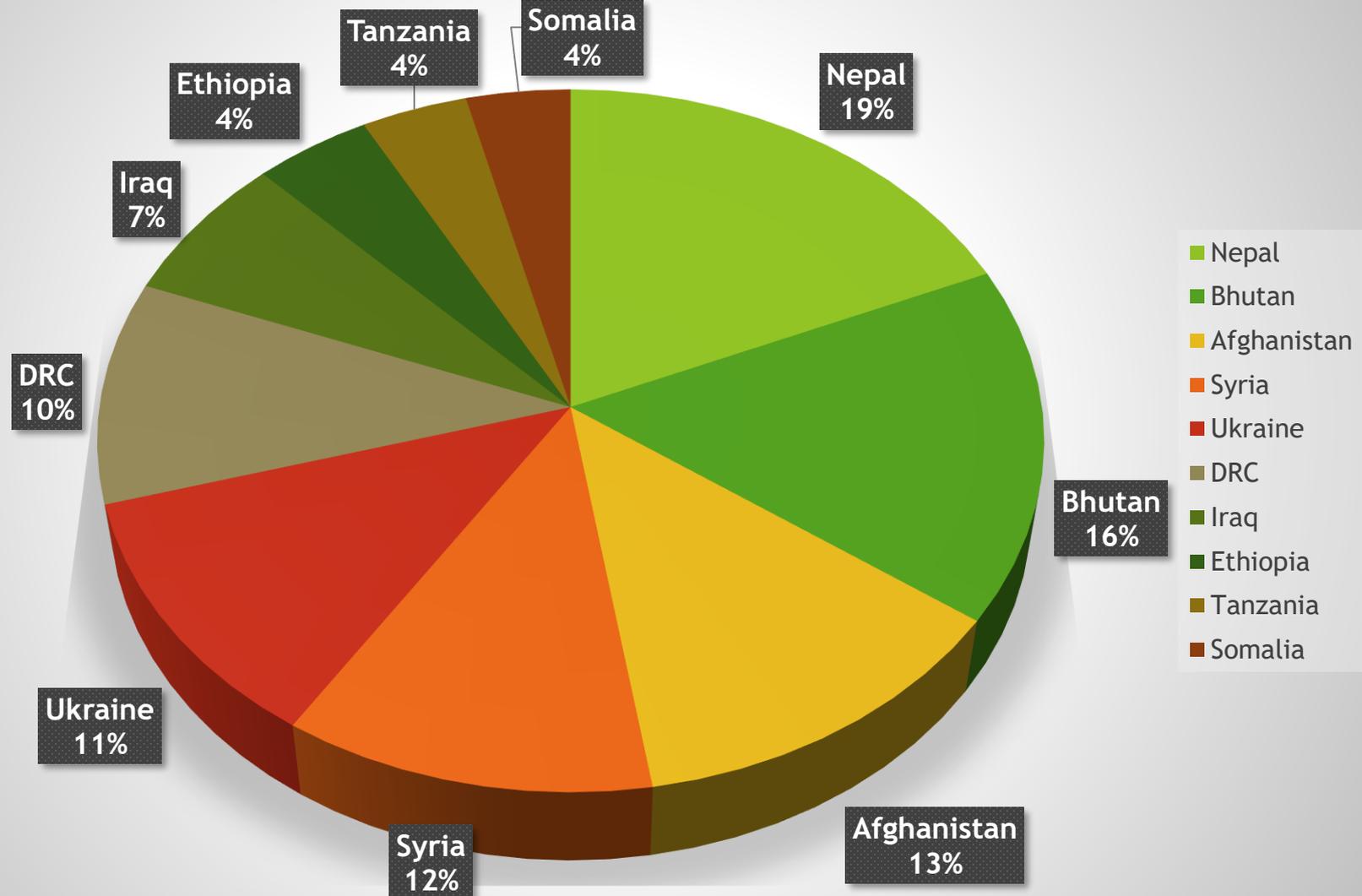
Refugees Arrival Trends in Pennsylvania 2009-2017

Refugee Health Program Report 2017



Top 10 countries or Refugees Arrivals in Pennsylvania 2017

Refugee Health Program Draft Report, 2017



Barriers Faced by Refugees in Pennsylvania

► Experiences of refugees :

- ❑ lack of food and water, faulty Education, living on camps, expose to communicable diseases(malaria cholera, Zika, TB...), faced a lot of mental issues (see people dying, killing to survive...), Prosecution, War, Rape...

► **Barriers**

- ❑ Access to care
 - ❑ Primary care
 - ❑ Mental care
- ❑ Other barriers : social Determinants of Health
 - ❑ Education
 - ❑ Transportation and Housing
 - ❑ Financial resources
 - ❑ Legal prospective

Access to care

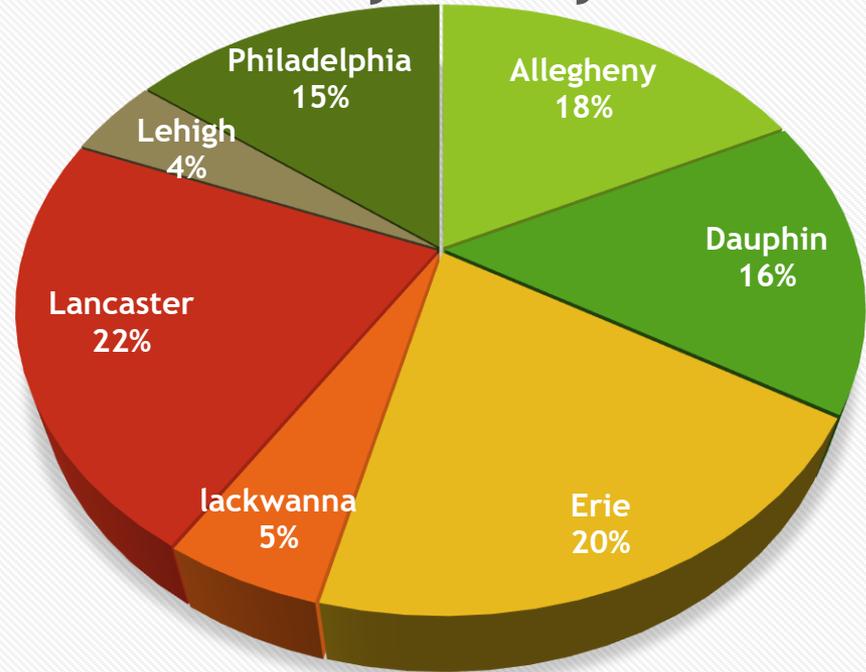
Before and after their arrivals , refugees are mandate a health screening.

EXAM: Infectious diseases – TB, Hepatitis, ,STD, Vaccination report, parasites.

hypertension, diabetes, dental and vision

Mental health issues – depression, trauma

Refugees health Screening result by county 2017



Primary care

▶ Health Screening:

- ▶ Prior to come to Refugees camps, Approximately 35% refugee have never had a complete check up (Healthydebate.ca,2016)
- ▶ The health support provided lasts past 8 months (Hebrew Immigration Aid Society)
- ▶ Lack of health care coverage.

▶ Limited follow up due to:

- ▶ Inadequate transportation
- ▶ Length of wait time to have an appointment
- ▶ Unawareness

Mental Health Barriers

- 94,3%, meaning 1792 Refugees have received mental health screenings in 2017 (Refugee Health Program Draft Report, 2017)
- 37% of refugees have reported incidents of torture which lead to high rate of PTSD and adjustment disorder ((PTSD in Refugees ptsd.va.gov).
- professionals services (not affordable for refugees).
- Prohibited to talk about personal concern to strangers due to cultural beliefs

Health Barriers

▶ Cultural barriers:

- ▶ Health proficiency (Patients and Physicians misleading).
- ▶ Lack of interpreter services
- ▶ Some body parts are considered sacred
- ▶ Preference to turn to a Spiritual Counselor rather than a Therapist
- ▶ The patients family is told the diagnostic (Host society).
- ▶ Foods and lifestyle habits cannot be easily readjusted

Social determinants of Health : Housing and Transportation

- ▶ Temporary accommodation from Resettlement agency.
- ▶ Refugees subject to scam or exploitation from their landlord.
- ▶ Affordable safe and adequate housing is expensive
- ▶ Language barriers increase challenges with transportation.
 - ▶ Driver's license-need a translator or must be literate
- ▶ Lack of transportation limits mobility and access to food, healthcare, education, and other essential resources.

Other Barriers: Education

- ▶ Situation might vary depending on whom you are supported by resettlement agency or post resettlement agency.
- ▶ ESL class provided only for three months by the resettlement agency.
- ▶ Limited education on various subjects like law and public health issues
- ▶ Continue their education (transcript and credibility of their knowledge).

Other Barriers: Financial Resources

- ▶ Low income (insufficient for basic needs)
- ▶ Lack of secure jobs
- ▶ Lack of work experience/job training opportunities
- ▶ Uneducated on how to manage finance, for example
 - ▶ Bank accounts
 - ▶ Investments
 - ▶ Loans

Opportunity to improve refugees situation

- ▶ Expand health coverage.
- ▶ Address English proficiency and expand education area of study.
- ▶ Reinforce Training.
- ▶ Revise the Personal Responsibility and Work Act (PWORA)

Opportunity to improve refugees situation

- ▶ Break cultural barriers
 - ▶ Provide care respectfully and be responsive to individual patient
 - ▶ Make interpreter services widely available
 - ▶ Train refugees as interpreters
- ▶ Provide opportunity to learn how to develop their own business and jobs skills
- ▶ Provide guidance and instruction in different languages on common issues faced by refugees

Importance to improve refugees situation.

▶ **Economic benefits:**

- ▶ Create employment.(high demand of employment)
- ▶ Good and services increase.
- ▶ Investment in the country.(taxes, importation...)

▶ **Personal benefits:**

- ▶ Integration (reinforce the meaning of live in America – “Diversity and acceptance”)
- ▶ Health status improvement. (Reduce suicide, chronic diseases)
- ▶ Fair access to care and public services.

Case Study: Unaccompanied Refugee Minor

Conclusion

- ▶ The refugees are qualify for Public Benefits and Assistance from the government (loan, for travel, medical examination, cultural orientation...).
- ▶ However, this Assistance can expire or exhausted.(8 months most of the case)
- ▶ How we can improve a fair and better support to this community? It is just a matter of willingness and time.
- ▶ Health Equity Measure

WORK CITED



- ▶ Health Challenges for Refugees and Immigrants - ReliefWeb. (n.d.)
Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ACB7A9B4B95ED39A8525723D006D6047-irsa-refugee-health-apr04.pdf>.
- ▶ Survey and Analysis of the Health Need and ... - Iowa. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/Files/MH/immigrant_study_2003.pdf.
- ▶ The 7 biggest challenges facing refugees and immigrants in the US. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/the-7-biggest-challenges-facing-refugees-and-immig/>.
- ▶ Transportation, Equity, and Communities at Risk: Refugee ... (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.uvm.edu/~transctr/research/trc_reports/UVM-TRC-10-018.pdf.
- ▶ Refugees Health Program Surveillance report 2017.
https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/specific/ptsd_refugee.asp
- ▶ <https://healthydebate.ca/2016/12/topic/syrian-refugees-ptsd>
- ▶ <https://refugeehealthta.org/physical-mental-health/mental-health/adult-mental-health/traumatic-experiences-of-refugees/>

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

- ▶ Dr. Leena Anil , State Refugee Health Coordinator, DOH
- ▶ Ms., Susan, Bowers-Miller, Social worker from DHS.
- ▶ Ms. Charlotte Fry , State Refugee Coordinator DHS
- ▶ Ms. Shah, Shakila, Public Health Program Administrator, Family Health Bureau, DHS
- ▶ Mr. Phuong N Truong, Executive Director International Service Center, ISC Harrisburg

THANK YOU!

- ▶ **David Saunders**

Director, Office of Health Equity
Pennsylvania Department of Health
625 Forster Street, Harrisburg
davidsaund@pa.gov
717-547-3315

- ▶ **Maureen Nseyep Patty**

Intern at the Office of Health Equity
East Stroudsburg University
Ropatty92@gmail.com