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Mental Health and Resilience in Adolescent Refugees Resettled in Philadelphia

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Mental Health and Resilience in Adolescent Refugees Resettled in Philadelphia

Introduction: Mental health in adolescents has a large impact on physical health, academic achievement, and overall well-being; moreover, refugee youth are at an increased risk for mental health disorders. While growing evidence shows that positive youth development interventions can prevent health risk behaviors, there is need for further evaluation that shows how to tailor interventions to meet population-specific needs.

Objective: The aim is to assess how targeted interventions can enhance protective factors and reduce negative adult outcomes in vulnerable refugee adolescents. The goals are to understand the current status of mental health and access to resources among resettled adolescents in Philadelphia, while increasing awareness and discussion of mental health.

Methods: Six semi-structured interviews with key informants were conducted to understand the scope of the problem, including social workers and refugee program directors. Individual interviews with 14 adolescents at Southeast by Southeast inquired about living in the US, performance in school, and personal life. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed via thematic coding with NVivo12 to identify elements influencing the refugee experience.

Results: The major overarching themes identified as key elements of the resettlement experience were identity, vulnerability, resource utilization, responsibility, and resilience. Themes were further split into subthemes distinguished from the key informant and adolescent interviews.

Conclusion: Refugee adolescents resettled in Philadelphia high schools face unique experiences that make them vulnerable to adverse outcomes. A deeper understanding of resettlement

experiences and protective factors in their personal, social, and cultural contexts can provide avenues for more accessible focused programming.