Refugee Welcome Collective

Taking a Strengths-Based Approach

When working with newcomers, it can be easy to focus on the challenges or a checklist of tasks. In an effort to be "the helper," sponsors sometimes see newcomers' needs first and assume they know how best to meet them.

What does it mean to take a strengths-based approach?

Taking a strengths-based approach means recognizing that individuals possess the strengths (i.e. skills, knowledge, connections, and capacity for growth) to meet the challenges they may experience.

What a strengths-based approach looks like:

- ✅ Newcomers' strengths, efforts, and progress are centered and praised

- ✅ Emphasis on "how can I help?"

- ✅ Focus on the newcomers' desired outcome and goals

- ✅ Holistic and multi-faceted view of newcomer goals and services

- ✅ Sponsors are seen as supportive collaborators and maintain healthy boundaries

- ✅ Collaborative, newcomer-led goal setting and prioritization

- ✅ Newcomers' community assets are recognized and valued

- ✅ Fosters a sense of hope and newcomer confidence while increasing newcomer connection to their community's resources

- ✅ Service delivery involves preparation on behalf of the sponsor to incorporate capacity- and skill-building

- ✅ Open-ended questions are used to focus on learning motivation and building understanding

What a strengths-based approach <u>does not</u> look like:

- Newcomers' limited language, education, or cultural knowledge are assumed to limit their capacity to learn a skill or to play a meaningful part in service access

- Focus on the services or steps

- Emphasis on "what's wrong"

- Service delivery viewed as isolated steps

- Sponsors are viewed as the experts and do not set or maintain boundaries

- Judging, labeling, and pathologizing are common

- Limited or no choices

- Limited or no consent

- Misuse or overuse of inherent power dynamic differences

- Creates a sense of dependency on the sponsor themselves and on the sponsor as an access point for other community resources

- Closed-ended questions are used (this focuses on simplicity and time-saving)