Refugee Welcome Collective

Managing group dynamics and conflict

Scenario:

The sponsorship program for your local office has a commitment of nine months. A family of six was resettled and matched with a sponsor group eight months ago. The family has two employable adults, Samir and Alma. There are four minors in the family. Three are school age and one is not yet old enough for school. Samir found full-time employment within his first three months in the U.S. The school age children were enrolled into the local public school within the first two months. As it took a while to get the youngest into daycare and it is only half day, Alma is only working part time. She started around her sixth month in the United States. As the oldest school child, Moses, is 18, Alma can go full time for the summer when the oldest minor can look after the child in daycare. Summer will start when the commitment period is ending.

One member of the group, Allan, has done a great job keeping the group on task. He is an excellent planner. He is a retired teacher and sees a lot of career potential for Moses. In the past few months, however, the family has been feeling anxious about money and is encouraging Moses to leave school and work.

With only a month of commitment left, you have noticed a lot of emails from Allan. He is taking Moses on college tours to show him a potential future. He is asking the group's school committee to aggressively search for a new daycare. He is asking the employment team to find new options for Alma.

He has called a meeting with you expressing concern that the family has decided that their 18-year-old son will go to work instead of school. He is very upset with this and wants the coordinator or caseworker to convince the clients that going to school is more important than getting a job right now. He also wants the group to work with the family through the summer because he feels they are not able to survive the summer without the group's support.

Reflection / Discussion Questions:

1. What might Allan (other group members and the refugee family) be feeling and thinking in their sponsorship experience?
2. How might you approach Allan's request to meet and prepare for that meeting? What might you say to (or ask of) Allan?
3. How might you engage proactively with Allan?
4. How might you support Allan and the group, and propose a resolution?