



SESSION 7: Health

OBJECTIVES

1. To familiarize clients with health services in the United States.
2. To give an understanding of what to expect during a medical exam.
3. To give an understanding of the importance of exercise.
4. To give an overview of some cultural hygienic practices in the United States.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Flip Chart
Markers
Copies of “Planning your Family” (attachment 21)
Copies of “What Kind of Birth Control is Best for You” (attachment 22)
Copies of “Nine Core Competencies for an Interpreter in Community or Health Care Settings” (attachment 23)
Copies of “Information for Health Care Provider when dealing with a Muslim Patient” (attachment 24)
Copies of “Guidelines for Interpreted Visits” (attachment 25)

HOW TO DO IT

DISCUSSION

- Discuss using the following questions:
Describe healing/medicine in Somalia.
Describe healing/medicine in Kenya.
What do you know about healing/medicine in the United States?
What differences are there between medical practices in these three locations?
Do you have any concerns about health services in the United States?
What is your favorite type of exercise?

HEALTH SERVICES IN THE UNITED STATES

- Discuss the difference between a “doctor’s office,” and a “hospital.” A doctor’s office is where an individual may go if they feel sick or need a routine medical exam. A hospital is where an individual may go if they feel very sick and the doctor’s office is closed. A doctor may refer an individual to a hospital for tests such as x-rays or for surgery. If a patient is very sick or recovering from an illness, and needs constant medical surveillance by medical staff, they may stay for several days in a hospital.

- Discuss how to make a doctor's appointment. Explain to the client that, if they or a family member is sick, they should call the doctor's office during office hours to make an appointment. They will receive a time and date to come in. Often an appointment will not be available for several days, or even weeks, so it is best to call for an appointment before feeling seriously ill.
- Discuss emergency procedures. If a client feels seriously ill or badly injures them self they should go to the hospital. If the client does not have access to transportation or cannot be moved, they should call 911.

NOTE to CO Facilitator

According to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, any organization that receives financial assistance from the federal government (i.e. hospitals, HMO's, health service providers) is required to provide free interpretation services to persons with limited English proficiency. (see attachment "Know Your Civil Rights"). Ensure that your clients are receiving medical services from a facility that provides interpretation services.

- Discuss the importance of understanding what the doctor says. If the client does not understand the doctor, they will not know if they have an illness or how to treat it. If the client does not understand the doctor/interpreter, they should ask the doctor/interpreter to repeat themselves. Emphasize to your client that they should feel free to ask questions. If your client does not clearly understand the interpreter, they may request another interpreter; if the client does not feel comfortable with their doctor, they may look for another doctor.
- Explain to your client the importance of understanding what to do with the medicine a doctor prescribes, and knowing what the medicine is for. Medicine may be in the form of a lotion or cream, for the patient to apply topically, or may be in the form of liquid or pills, for the patient to swallow. The doctor may ask a patient to take the medicine once, twice, three, etc. times a day. The client should store medicine in a locked cupboard or up out of the reach of children, as ingesting medicine can make a child very ill.
- Discuss holistic medicine. Certain physicians in the United States practice types of medicine that the Somali Bantu may traditionally use – herbal medicine, relaxation training, spiritual attunement, etc. The American Medical Holistic Association publishes a directory of holistic physicians.
- Explain that some types of medical practices – burning, cutting, or any practice that leaves a mark on the patient – are not legal in the United States unless performed by a licensed physician.
- Explain to the client that they must take their health card to every medical appointment/hospital visit. Explain the details of coverage – what payments the client is responsible for, such as co-pays and pharmaceutical payments, and what costs the insurance provider will cover. If the client changes health providers, it is important that they confirm that the new doctor's office accepts their insurance.
- Discuss childbirth. Explain that it is possible to give birth at home with the assistance of a midwife, but home births are not always covered by health insurance. Home births may also be dangerous for the mother and child if the pregnant woman is circumcised. If clients want more information on giving birth at home, have them speak with their health care provider.
- Discuss "family planning" – family planning is a way to plan the number of and spacing between children. There are many family planning options – distribute "planning your family" (attachment 21) and "what kind of birth control is best for you" (attachment 22) and encourage clients to discuss birth control further with their doctor.

MEDICAL EXAM

- Discuss "preventive medicine."

Preventive medicine is averting and avoiding disease – this can mean using tests to look for signs of a disease, even if the patient feels healthy, or encouraging the patient to eat healthy foods and exercise in order to avoid disease in the future. Preventive medicine is a proactive approach.

- Discuss preventive medicine in Somalia/Kenya. Discuss how practices like exercise, eating well, and vaccinations are examples of preventive medicine.
- Discuss why U.S. states require medical screenings for refugees entering the United States. U.S. states require refugees to have a medical exam when they enter the country to look for signs of illness, and to treat any sicknesses already found during the overseas medical exam. Medical screenings are required for all residents of the United States at different times –children typically have medical exams when they enter certain grades and before they join a sports team – adults will sometimes have a medical before they take a certain job, etc. Many residents of the United States choose to have a medical exam every year.

NOTE to CO Facilitator

Refugee/immigrant health screenings requirements vary from state to state. Review your states' requirement and familiarize yourself with the tests that your clients will be having.

- Discuss with your clients some of the tests that they will have at the doctor's office.

The nurse will draw blood, and test the blood for signs of sickness. This is a very common test in the United States – almost every person who has a health exam has blood taken. This test is not just for refugees and immigrants. Although it may look like the nurse is removing a lot of blood, the human body is able to handle the loss, and there should be no side effects.

The nurse will also do a test that measures blood pressure – this involves putting a cuff around the client's arm and then using a pump to increase the tension of the cuff. The cuff will be tight for a few seconds, but this test should not cause pain.

The doctor may ask for stool and urine samples.

If, during any exam, the client has questions about the tests, or about what the doctor is looking for, encourage the client to ask the doctor questions.

NOTE to CO Facilitator

Doctors will often do a gynecological exam for female patients during the health screening – this may prove a traumatic and invasive experience. Caseworkers should speak with female clients about this procedure before the appointment – if the caseworker is a man, they may wish to ask a woman to talk with the client. The caseworker can explain that this is a common exam in the states for all women of child bearing age – it is common for women to have this exam once a year. Also speak with the health provider – ensure that the doctor examines the female patient in the presence of another female (see attachment Information for Health Care Providers).

NOTE to CO Facilitator

Distribute “Somali Bantu Resettlement: Background Information” (attachment 17), “Nine Core Competencies for an Interpreter in Community or Health Care Settings” (attachment 23), “Information for Health Care Provider when Dealing with a Muslim Patient” (attachment 24), and “Guidelines for Interpreted Visits” (attachment 25) to your clients' health providers.

EXERCISE

- Discuss exercise. Exercise leads to a longer life and improved health – it can prevent heart disease and many other problems. It also makes people stronger, more energetic, and less stressed. It is very important for children to exercise, because habits formed early on will often stay with a child through their life. Active children often become active adults – and play is very important to a child’s development. Identify local parks.

CULTURAL HYGIENIC PRACTICES IN THE UNITED STATES

- Discuss cultural hygienic practices in the United States. Explain to your clients that U.S. residents generally put a high emphasis on cleanliness.

Residents of the United States generally:

Bathe or shower once a day or every other day.

Change to a different outfit every morning, and wash their clothing often, after every wear or every other wear.

Wash their hands with soap several times a day, particularly after using the bathroom or changing a diaper, and before cooking or eating. This practice can prevent illness, and it is particularly important for children to learn this practice, as through their play and social interactions they are exposed to a lot of germs.

Use deodorant under their arms, to cover the odor of perspiration.

Wear underwear – school faculty will expect the clients’ children to wear underwear to school.