

# REFUGEES AND TRAUMA

Refugees have vastly different backgrounds and experiences. Traumatic experiences are common among people who are refugees or who have been forcibly displaced. It is important to recognize the role that trauma may have played on current functioning and health. It is recommended that providers take time to build trust, understand what the patient's current concerns are, and collaborate with patients in decision-making around health.



## KEY DEFINITIONS

- People who are forcibly displaced: refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants who have been forced out of their home or homelands due to persecution, war, human rights violations, or conditions that prevent safety.
- Trauma-informed care: collaborative and strength-based; some behaviors are understood as a collection of responses developed in response to traumatic experiences.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Mental Health Facts on Refugees, Asylum-seekers, & Survivors of Forced Displacement
- Refugee Mental Health: An Overview
- <https://www.kentuckyrefugees.org/>
- <https://www.unrefugees.org>

## ACTION ITEMS

- Recognize that each refugee's experience is unique. Ask questions and listen if needed rather than making assumptions.
- Take time to understand what the patient's current concerns are.
- Collaborate with patients by through shared decision-making. Helping to empower patients and allowing them to draw on their strengths can be helpful in reducing the negative impact of trauma.
- Health systems in their homelands may operate differently than in the United States. Explain your role as a provider to help patients understand with what you can and cannot help them.
- Screen and refer when needed. There are effective treatments for mental health needs.