

CULTURAL ORIENTATION GUIDANCE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

BASIC INFORMATION

Cultural Orientation (CO) provides newcomers (e.g., refugees, Special Immigrant Visa holders, and humanitarian parolees) with the vital knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to adapt to their new lives and achieve self-sufficiency. CO generally begins overseas and continues in the U.S. within the community, usually with a local Resettlement Agency. Some topics covered during CO include safety and U.S. laws. Receiving communities, including law enforcement, also play an important role in delivering key CO messages.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY



BE TRAUMA-INFORMED

Consider the events that led to the newcomer's displacement, such as the trauma of unwillingly fleeing their country of origin and the cultural adjustment experienced from resettling in a new country. In some cases, newcomers may mistrust law enforcement because of past experiences. These traumatic experiences can impact how newcomers interact with the police, such as being afraid of speaking to police officers. To build trust, connect with community leaders and ask how the community's police department can best support their community.



PRACTICE CULTURAL AWARENESS

American culture is still new for newcomers. While not knowing the law does not excuse violations, law enforcement should recognize that newcomers may be unfamiliar with all U.S. laws when they first arrive. Some laws may have been different in the newcomer's country of origin. Police officers serving as community liaisons can use CORE's translated Settle In resources, such as CORE's video on how to interact with the police, to review U.S. laws with newcomer families.

RESOURCES

CORE's multilingual resources include the Settle In website and Settle In app. Resources are available in Arabic, Burmese, Dari, English, Kinyarwanda, Spanish, Swahili, Pashto, Russian, and Ukrainian.

The following are additional resources that may assist law enforcement in delivering CO.

- [CORE: U.S. Laws Activity Bank \(including activities on public safety\)](#)
- [Settle In: Rights and Responsibilities video](#)
- [Police Executive Research Forum](#)



Settle In App
desktop.settlein.app



Settle In Website
settleinus.org



KEY CULTURAL ORIENTATION MESSAGES ABOUT U.S. LAWS



- 1 All communities have police, fire departments, and emergency medical services, which serve and protect residents.
- 2 To receive help in an emergency, dial 911 on the telephone. If you do not speak English, you can say, "No English. Help."
- 3 If you are a victim of a crime, you have the right to seek legal action. To report a crime, contact the police. If it is an emergency, call 911.
- 4 In the U.S., laws protect the rights of all people. You must learn and follow the laws.
- 5 Not knowing the law does not prevent you from being punished if you break the law. Breaking the law can lead to fines or jail and affect your immigration status.
- 6 The role of the police in the U.S. is to maintain public order and safety, enforce the law, and protect the civil rights of individuals in communities across the U.S.
- 7 You have the right to work. No one can use your race, religion, or sex to deny you a job.
- 8 It is illegal to harm or injure another person, including family members. Harm can include harassment, sexual assault, and domestic violence.
- 9 You have a legal right to an interpreter. If you are accused of breaking the law and are arrested, you have the right to remain silent and talk to a lawyer before being questioned. If you cannot afford a lawyer, the court will pay for one to represent you.

DELIVERING KEY CULTURAL ORIENTATION MESSAGES


When delivering key CO messages, apply adult learning strategies, such as asking open-ended questions and engaging in a two-way conversation.

The following activity provides an example on how to deliver the key CO message: dial 9-1-1 to receive help in an emergency.




INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Ask newcomers: Have you heard of 9-1-1? If so, what is it? And when might you use it?**
- 2 Explain to newcomers: 9-1-1 is a phone service you can call anytime (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) for emergencies.**
- 3 Explain to newcomers: You might need to call 9-1-1 for an emergency. Provide newcomers with examples of emergency situations: reporting a kitchen fire, requesting an ambulance for a car crash if someone is injured, reporting domestic violence, or suspicion of child neglect.**

 **Key Messages:** Refugee Medical Assistance and Medicaid will not cover the cost of 9-1-1 services if you call 9-1-1 when there is not an emergency. Emergencies are when your health and safety are at risk, and you cannot make it to an emergency room on your own. Do not call 9-1-1 if it is not an emergency.

- 4 Explain to newcomers: The person who answers the 9-1-1 call is called an operator. Ask newcomers: What information will you need to say to the 911 operator?**

 **Key Messages:** You will need to give the 9-1-1 operator your name, phone number, address, and explain the emergency. Stay on the phone until help arrives. The open line will help the operator know where you are.

- 5 Assist newcomers in navigating the Settle In website. Under "Life in the U.S.," select the topic: Rights and Responsibilities. Explain that this lesson will review information about laws in the United States. Play the video "How to Interact with the Police in the United States."**

Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange

For more information, visit CORE at coresourceexchange.org.



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