

USCIS Citizenship and Integration Grant Program

Promising Practices

Organization Name:	Lutheran Community Services Northwest
Location:	Portland, OR
USCIS Grant Program:	FY 2010 Citizenship and Integration Direct Services Grant Program FY 2011 Citizenship and Integration Direct Services Grant Program— Citizenship Instruction and Naturalization Application Services

Establish Citizenship Classes in Low-Income Housing Communities

Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW) provides citizenship preparation services to underserved populations in the Portland metropolitan area. Under the fiscal year 2010 and 2011 Citizenship and Integration Grant Program, LCSNW expanded its services even further by bringing citizenship classes to permanent residents living in low-income housing complexes. In collaboration with low-income housing providers and residence coordinators, LCSNW now offers permanent residents a convenient way to access citizenship preparation services.

Volunteer Instructor Charlotte McKay with LCSNW program participants.



Purpose

LCSNW offers citizenship classes at low-income housing complexes in order to reduce barriers to class

attendance and expand access to citizenship preparation services.

Process

LCSNW works with the local housing authority to identify low-income housing complexes in the Portland

metropolitan area. LCSNW then establishes and maintains relationships with the residence coordinators

at each housing complex. Residence coordinators assist LCSNW in a number of ways. For example, residence coordinators help LCSNW secure classroom space at their complexes. Residence coordinators also assist LCSNW with outreach by distributing information

about citizenship classes to the permanent resident community. In general, residence coordinators act as a liaison between LCSNW and the permanent resident community.

Challenges

LCSNW finds it challenging to manage citizenship classes at low-income housing complexes during periods of staff turnover. Managing a successful citizenship instruction program depends largely on

established and trusted relationships between LCSNW staff, instructors, and residence coordinators. Therefore, it can be difficult to maintain program continuity when key staff members leave the organization.

Overcoming Obstacles

LCSNW maintains program continuity by relying on leaders within the low-income housing community, including recently naturalized student volunteers. As both residents of the community and naturalized

citizens, student volunteers help maintain the connection between LCSNW, housing providers, and the permanent resident community despite staff turnover.

Outcomes

LCSNW expands citizenship education services to underserved and isolated permanent residents by offering classes at low-income housing complexes. Offering classes at low-income housing complexes leads to an increase in student attendance. By moving classes closer to home, LCSNW addresses transportation and childcare issues for many students, thus reducing

barriers to student attendance. In addition, LCSNW increases its outreach to isolated permanent residents by collaborating with residence coordinators. Due to these efforts, permanent resident students have greater access to citizenship preparation services in a familiar and convenient location.

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