



POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND SOMALI YOUTH: RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

1. Introduction

This handout compiles selective research and resources to assist organizations serving Somali youth.ⁱ BRYCS prioritizes resources that incorporate a “Positive Youth Development” approach, by:

- **Focusing on strengths and assets rather than deficits and problems.** For example, emphasizing the skills and competencies that will be needed in the transition to adulthood.
- **Acquiring strengths and assets through positive relationships, especially with pro-social and caring adults.** For example, emphasizing relationships with trusted adults such as parents and family, teachers, neighbors, business owners, and mentors.
- **Developing and acquiring youth assets in multiple contexts and environments.** For example, schools, workplaces, community organizations, social programs, and neighborhoods all offer opportunities to acquire developmental resources.ⁱⁱ

Ideal program elements in working with refugee and immigrant youth typically include:

- The engagement of refugee/immigrant community leaders, families and youth themselves.
- Recruitment of bicultural and/or bilingual staff.
- Support of family relationships.
- Providing socialization, safety and security.
- Supporting academic and educational achievement.
- Including adults as role models and mentors.
- Advocating for and with refugee students.ⁱⁱⁱ

2. Parenting Resources Available in English and Somali

Info-U Briefs from the University of Minnesota Extension Service

- [Thriving with Your Teen = Fahmidda Dhalinta](#)
- [Teens and Social Gatherings = Dhalinyarada Iyo Xafladaha](#)
- [Grow with Your Teen = La Soco Korniinshaha Ilmahaaga](#)
- [Prepare for College = Isku Diyaari Jaamacada](#)
- [Truancy: Why It's Important To Go To School = Muhiimida Adinta Iskuulka](#)
- [Teens-Tobacco, Alcohol and Khat = Ka hadalka maandooriyeyaashe](#)
- [Work With Your Child's School = Kala shaqee cunugaaga Iskuulka](#)
- [Teens and Dating = Haasaawaha iyo dhalinyarada](#)

Educational Handbook for Refugee Parents, by the IRC [in [Somali](#)]

[PACER Minnesota Parent Center](#) [Handouts in [Somali](#)]

Positive Discipline: A Guide for Parents, by Children's Hospitals and Clinics (MN) [in [Somali](#)]

Translated Topics from the Canadian Mental Health Association-Edmonton Region

- [Alcohol and Drug Problems Happen in all Kinds of Families](#) [in [Somali](#)]
- [Preventing Youth Suicide](#) [in [Somali](#)]
- [Children and Discipline: A Parent's Guide](#) [in [Somali](#)]
- [The Teenage Years: Making them Easier for Parents and Young People](#) [in [Somali](#)]

3. Research Specific to Somali Youth and Families

[A Gap in Their Hearts: The Experience of Separated Somali Children.](#) Lucy Hannan; UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2003. [In [Somali.](#)]

This 64-page report includes interesting sections on the migration experience from the perspective of children who are separated from their parents, as well as the difficulties for children who live abroad and are then returned to Somalia. The report uses first-hand accounts from Somali children themselves to illustrate issues related to: push factors, smugglers, care arrangements, education, identity, and deportation.

[Best Practices: "Somali Family Mental Health Support Program".](#) Ubah Nur, Maryan Dalal, Karyn Baker; Midyanta Association of Somali Service Agencies, Family Outreach & Response Program, Somaliland Canadian Society of Metro Toronto, 2005.

This 17-page report summarizes lessons learned from a collaborative effort to establish culturally appropriate mental health services for Somalis in an urban Canadian setting.

[Educating Immigrant Youth in the United States: An Exploration of the Somali Case.](#) Lidwien Kapteijns and Abukar Arman; *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, 2004(4).

This 26-page academic article describes research on the education of immigrant youth, as well as strengths and liabilities facing Somali youth. Topics discussed include Somali history, acculturation, biculturalism, school quality, parenting, communal identity, resistance to racism, Somali schools, the generation gap, Somaliness, Islam, and recommendations.

[Identifying Urban Health Issues Among Somali Youth – Wellesley Urban Health Research Program.](#) Midaynta Association of Somali Service Agencies Metro Toronto, 2004.

A brief report on five Toronto workshops on urban health issues facing Somali youths. Participants were grouped according to age and gender, with discussions focused primarily on concerns about education and family life issues. Youth concerns regarding education included teachers' low academic expectations of Somali students, lack of cultural sensitivity, and negative peer pressure. Youth concerns regarding the family included the effect of single-parent female-headed households, resulting in increased household responsibilities for girls and a lack of father-figures and male role models for boys.

[Needs Assessment: Somali Adolescents in the Process of Adjustment: Toronto 2001.](#) Katrina Reitsma; Children's Aid Society of Toronto.

This 36-page report discusses the results of a needs assessment of Somali adolescents in Toronto, summarizing concerns regarding: pre-migration stressors; racism/discrimination; education; negotiating identities between two cultures; intergenerational conflict; post-migration stressors; gender-related issues; local vs. city-wide issues; religion; and strengths brought to the acculturation process. The report includes a summary of themes from Somali youth focus groups and concludes with recommendations for future action.

[Report on Somali Youth Issues.](#) Adan Shukri; City of Minneapolis, Department of Civil Rights, 2007.

A 53-page report on issues facing Somali youth in Minneapolis, undertaken in response to a perceived increase in Somali youth crime. Issues raised include mental health concerns, poverty, recreation and community resource needs, language barriers, homelessness, educational challenges, truancy and gang membership. The report recommends development of a community drop-in center, a community outreach plan, and cultural/diversity training for the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board.

[Somali Family Strength: Working in the Communities.](#) Lynn Heitritter; Family and Children's Services, 1999.

A 12-page report presenting the views of two Somali focus groups in Minnesota on what makes a strong Somali family, and the challenges to and strategies for promoting Somali family strengths.

[Somali Mental Health.](#) David Schuchman and Colleen McDonald; *Bildhaan-An International Journal of Somali Studies*, 2004.

A six-page report briefly outlines the mental health challenges to Somalis in Minnesota, Somali concepts of mental illness, and treatment approaches through the Somali Mental Health Program in Minneapolis.

[Somali Refugee Youth in Maryland: Needs Assessment](#). Dina Birman, Edison Trickett, Natalia Bacchus; Maryland Office for New Americans, 2001.

This 23-page report summarizes the adjustment issues facing Somali refugee students in Prince George's County, Maryland. Themes arising from interviews with Somali students included: being different; fights, religious issues; academic adjustment; legacy of trauma; family life; future in the U.S. Parents' concerns focused on discipline and academics, while teacher's concerns focused on academic, behavioral, mental health, and social adjustment issues, as well as parent involvement and student separation within the schools. The report concludes with suggestions regarding positive classroom techniques and approaches.

[Trauma and Coping in Somali and Oromo Refugee Youth](#). Linda Halcón, Cheryl Robertson, Kay Savik, David Johnson, Marline Spring, James Butcher, Joseph Westermeyer, James Jaranson; *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2004(35).

This academic article presents the results of focus groups with Somali and Oromo adolescents, describing their history, the type of problems faced in the U.S., and coping strategies. Results are separated by gender and ethnicity, for comparison.

4. **BRYCS Youth Resources**

Spotlight Articles: Visit BRYCS' [Archives](#) page for all of our Spotlight articles and Highlighted Resources.

Youth:

- [Helping Refugee Youth Find the Right Path](#)
- [Youth Voice: Listening to Refugee and Immigrant Youth](#)
- [Blessed with a Difficult Task: Refugee Youth and the Transition to Adulthood](#)
- [Mentoring Refugee Youth](#)
- [Refugee Youth and the Juvenile Justice System](#)
- [Promising Practices in After-School Programming for Refugee Youth and Children](#)

Family and Child Welfare:

- [Helping Refugee and Immigrant Families Stay Together](#)
- [Family and Community Centered Child Welfare Practice with Refugees and Immigrants](#)
- [Cultural Competency in Child Welfare Practice: A Bridge Worth Building](#)
- [Determining Child Abuse & Neglect Across Cultures](#)
- [Refugee Resettlement and Child Welfare: Collaboration for Child Protection](#)

Refugee Youth and the Schools:

- [Welcoming and Orienting Newcomer Students to U.S. Schools](#)
- [Involving Refugee Parents in their Children's Education](#)
- [Refugee Students and the No Child Left Behind Act](#)

Toolkits and Resources:

- Toolkits—on [positive youth development](#), [parenting](#), [child care](#), and [child welfare](#)—are available at the top of BRYCS' homepage www.brycs.org.
- [Raising Children in a New Country: An Illustrated Handbook](#), to help newcomer parents with U.S. parenting practices
- [Youth Arts and Voices](#), Web page of artwork, resources and programs

If you know of other resources specific to Somali youth and families, please let us know by emailing info@brycs.org.

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ⁱⁱ Issue Brief: Focusing Juvenile Justice on Positive Youth Development. Jeffrey Butts, Susan Mayer, Gretchen Ruth; Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, 2005.

ⁱⁱⁱ Adapted from BRYCS' [Growing Up in a New Country: A Positive Youth Development Toolkit for Working with Refugees and Immigrants](#)."