

# REFUGEEWORKS

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR REFUGEE  
EMPLOYMENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY



# Recertification for Refugees with Professional Backgrounds



# Many clients are overqualified, but underemployed

How many Iraqi refugees are college educated?

63%

What types of jobs have Iraqi clients applied for?

Entry-level jobs

66%

Professional jobs

29%



## RefugeeWorks Survey Data:

- Between Oct. 2007 and Jan. 2008, 1,324 Iraqi refugees have been resettled in the U.S.
- 12 resettlement agencies in 20 states responded to survey (50% of newly resettled Iraqi refugees)

# RefugeeWorks Recertification Project



- Job developers face the paradox of overeducation and underemployment on a daily basis - not only in the case of Iraqi refugees.
- Many job developers acknowledge that it is nearly impossible to provide additional services such as recredentialising programs, in light of the fact that they have to assist a high volume of clients on a limited budget.
- Rather than helping highly skilled refugees reclaim their careers, they often focus on getting them their “first jobs.”

RefugeeWorks Newsletter  
No. 24, “Iraqi Refugees in Focus”



# Job market analysis: Healthcare industry



## 1. What backgrounds do your clients have?

**Healthcare.** Many refugees have received training in healthcare fields back home.



## 2. Which professional backgrounds are in demand?

**Healthcare.** Nearly 1 million nurses will be needed in health care facilities across the country by the year 2010.

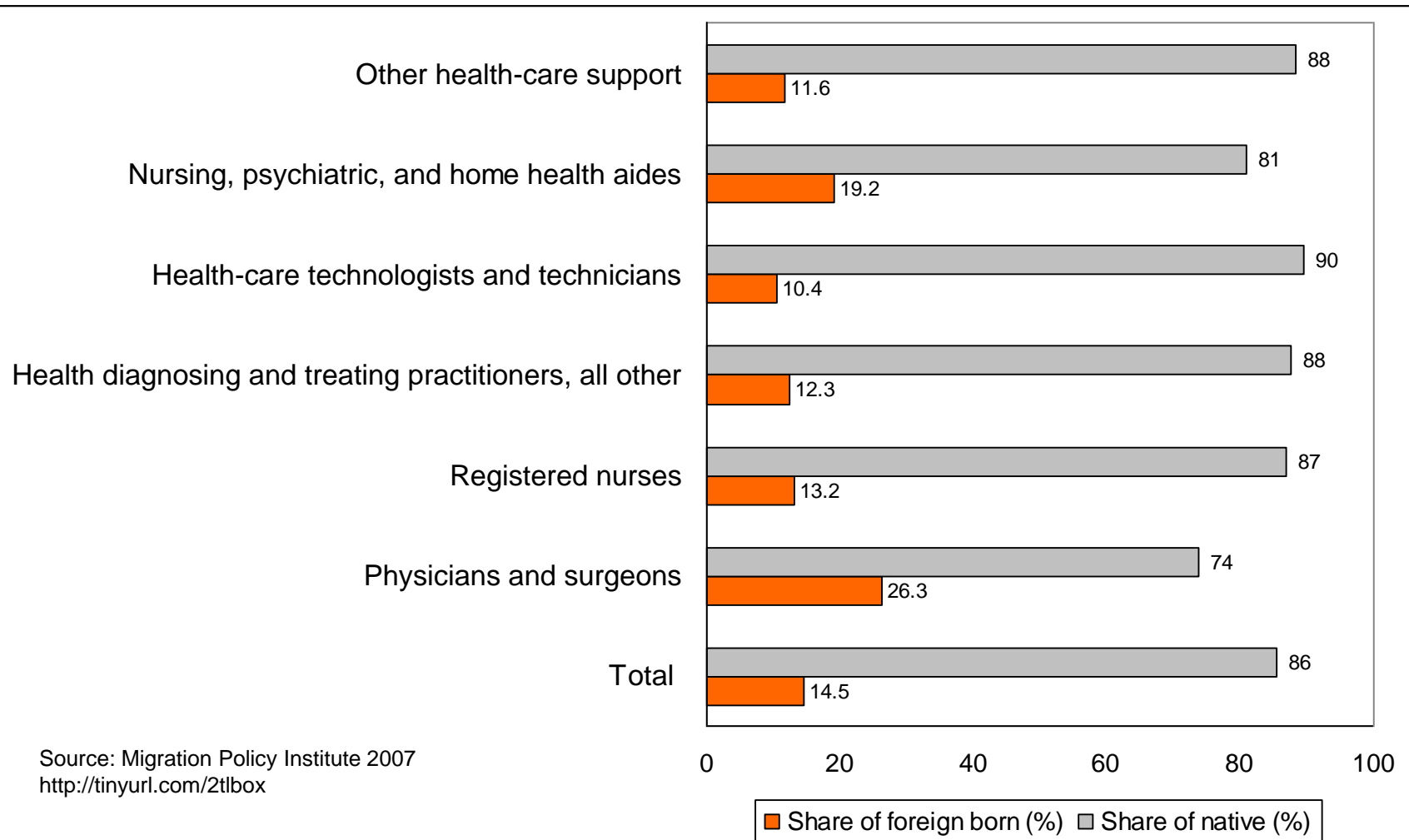


## 3. How successful have immigrant medical professionals been in this sector?

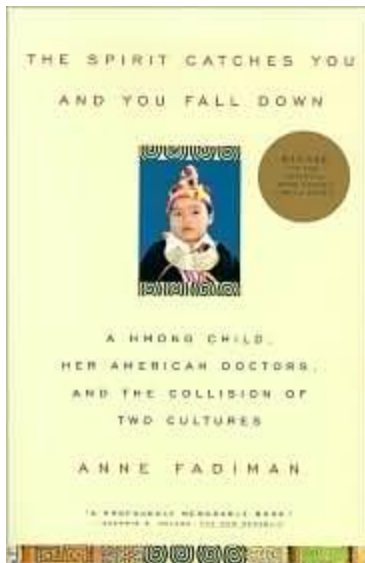
**Successful.** In 2005, 15% of all U.S. health-care workers were foreign born.



# Immigrant healthcare workers are a significant part of workforce



# Hiring refugee professionals may be easier than cultural competency training



Anne Fadiman  
(1998), “The Spirit  
Catches You and  
You Fall Down: A  
Hmong Child, Her  
American Doctors,  
and the Collision  
of Two Cultures”

- Lia Lee was born in 1981 to a family of recent Hmong immigrants, and soon developed symptoms of epilepsy.
  - By 1988 she was living at home but was brain dead after a tragic cycle of misunderstanding, overmedication, and culture clash.
- “What the doctors viewed as clinical efficiency the Hmong viewed as frosty arrogance.”**

# Career laddering for medical professions

Dietitian

Occupational  
therapists

Social workers

Psychologists

Physical therapists

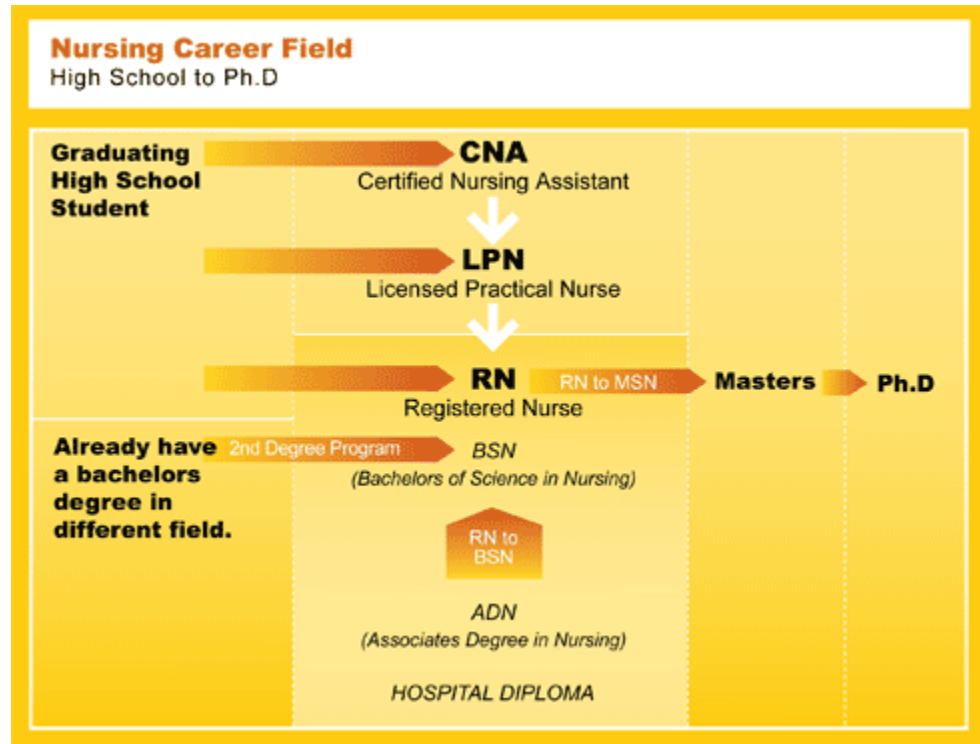
Speech pathologists

Clinical laboratory  
profession

Pharmacists

## Licensing Overview Flow Charts

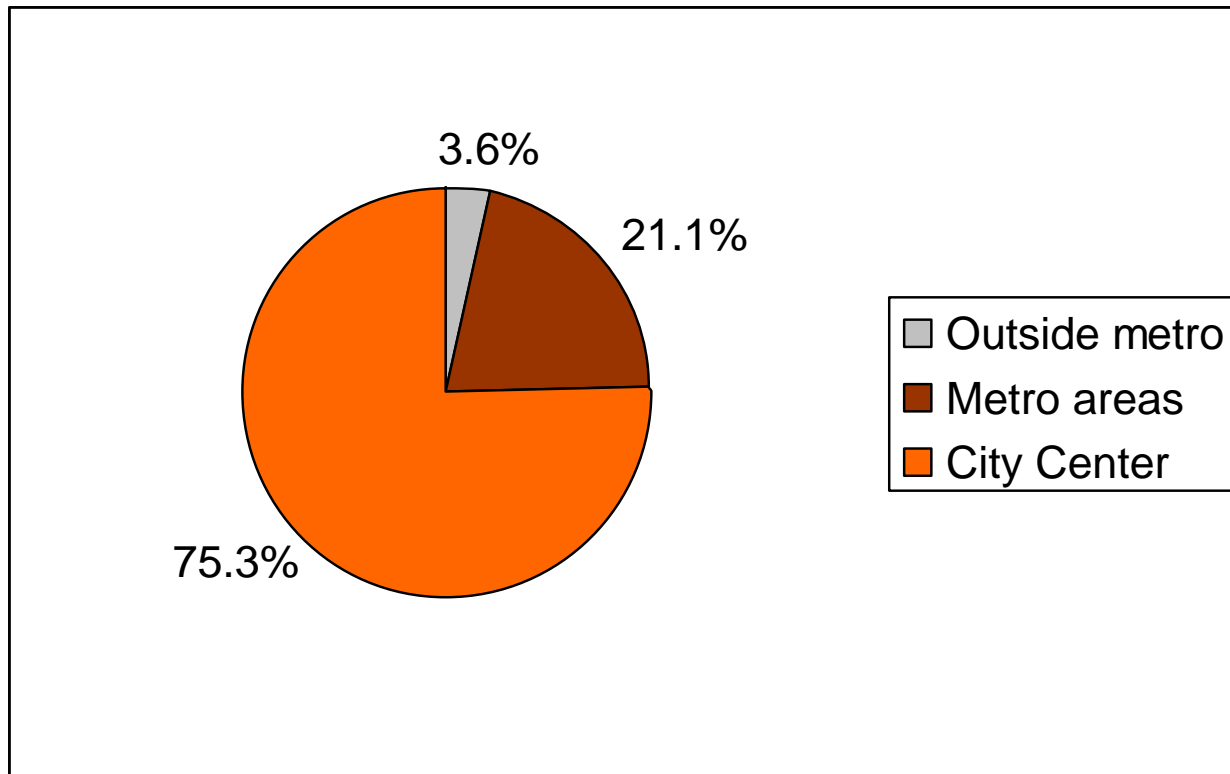
## Detailed Licensing Information





# Healthcare jobs are usually in metro areas, where refugees live

## Distribution of healthcare jobs



# The healthcare sector: Professionals jobs with good pay



Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kVv2aqnEjs>

# Who are good candidates for recertification?

**The candidate most likely to succeed will:**

- **have good English.**
- **have made a good adjustment to living in the U.S.**
- **enjoy the idea of further study.**
- **keep all appointments promptly and stay in close touch with job counselor.**
- **have all documents and certificates.**

# ORR has published detailed fact sheets on re-licensing



[ORR Home](#) > [Resources](#) > U.S. Registered Nursing Re-Licensing Process

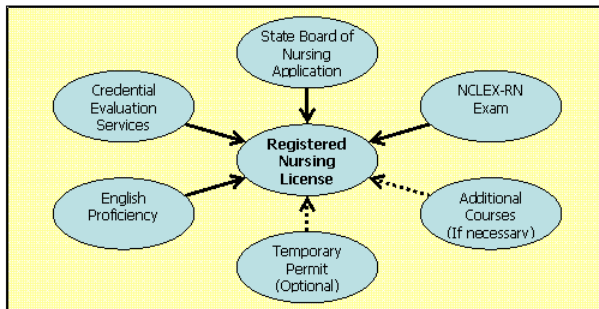
OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

## U.S. Registered Nursing Re-Licensing Process

### Re-Licensing Refugee Nurses:

Nursing licensure standards and regulations for international and domestic nurses (NCSBN), whose membership includes nursing boards from all 50 states, the Dist Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN) examination. NCLEX-RN is a stanc a State Board of Nursing will issue a license. In addition to passing the NCLEX-Rf Nursing. For refugee nurses and other foreign graduates of nursing school, the s proof of English proficiency, and possibly, additional nursing courses (See diagram

### Registere



The actual re-licensure process for international nurses also varies by state. Some States suggest that the applicants complete the credential evaluation before ap

Fact sheets on refugee professional re-licensing are available from The Employment & Training Administration (ETA) and the Health and Human Services/Office of Refuge Resettlement (ORR).

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resources>

# Career Voyages provides info on high growth occupations

The screenshot displays the Career Voyages website interface. At the top, the header includes the Career Voyages logo, the slogan "good jobs better pay brighter future", and a search bar. Below the header, there are navigation tabs for "students", "parents", "career changers", and "career advisors". The main content area is titled "Health Care" and features a list of sub-categories: Nursing, Allied Health, Medical Laboratory, Primary Care, Acute Care, Long-Term Care, and Home Health Care. Below this list are buttons for "Industry Overview" and "In-Demand Occupations". At the bottom, there is a section for "Education & Training in Health Care" with buttons for "Apprenticeship", "Community Colleges", "4-year Colleges", and "Other Options". A left sidebar lists various industries, and a "what's new" link is at the bottom left.

Career Voyages is the result of a collaboration between the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education. It is designed to provide information on high growth, high demand occupations along with the skills and education needed to attain those jobs.

<http://www.careervoyages.gov/healthcare-main.cfm>



search:



You are here: [HOME](#) > [Health Care](#) > [Allied Health](#)

## high growth industries

Advanced Manufacturing

Aerospace

Automotive

Construction

Energy

Financial Services

Health Care

Homeland Security

Hospitality

Information Technology

Retail

Transportation

## emerging industries

Biotechnology

Geospatial Technology

Nanotechnology

## other stuff

[what's new](#)

[other in-demand occupations](#)

[career videos](#)

[career compass](#)

[links](#)

[document library](#)

students

parents

career changers

career advisors

## Health Care - Allied Health

[Español](#) | [Print Version](#)



Did you know that doctors and nurses are only 40 percent of all health care providers? The other 60 percent are **allied health practitioners**. The work of these highly skilled health care providers support, facilitate, and compliment the roles of doctors and nurses. Over 5 million health care providers in the United States work in

more than 80 allied health professions, which include:

- [certified athletic trainers](#),
- dental hygienists,
- diagnostic medical sonographers,
- dietitians,
- [health information management](#),
- [industrial hygienist](#),
- medical transcriptionists,
- occupational therapists,
- [orthotists and prosthetists](#),
- physical therapists,
- radiographers,
- respiratory therapists, and
- speech language pathologists.



[Career Videos](#)

[Career Links](#)

[Tools & Technology](#)

[STEM Occupations \(PDF\)](#)

[PDF Industry Profile](#)

[PDF Hot Facts](#)



**U.S. Medical  
Licensing Process  
for Foreign-Trained  
Medical Graduates**

**Licensed  
Doctor**

**7. Receive License to Practice Medicine**

**6. Apply to State Medical Board for License**

**5. Pass USMLE Exam Step 3**

**4. Complete Residency**

**3. Apply for Residency**

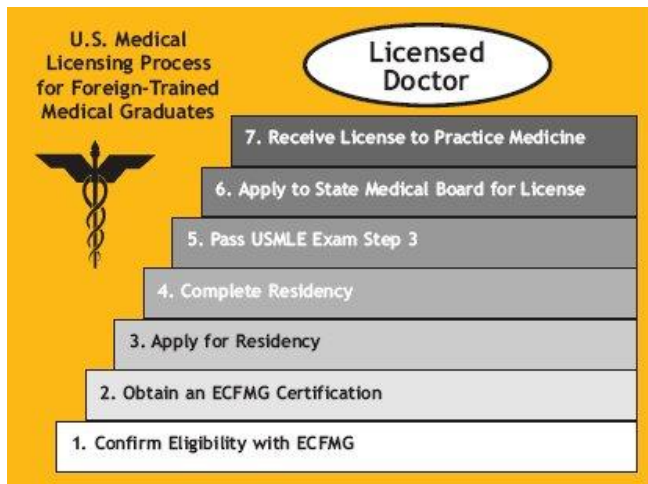
**2. Obtain an ECFMG Certification**

**1. Confirm Eligibility with ECFMG**



# Getting recertified as a medical professional is costly

- **Doctors will need an estimated \$20,000** in student loans per year.
- If you get into residency, the first year you are already making \$45,000. You can start paying back.
- When you become a doctor, you can easily work on a **loan-forgiveness program** where there's a need. There's a **scarcity of doctors** in many communities.



# Integrating Foreign-Trained Healthcare Professionals for Self-Sufficiency



**Interview with Wilhelmina Holder**, executive director of Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE) & The African and American Friendship Association for Cooperation and Development.

# AAFACD pilot study findings: What career barriers exist?



- **Lack of access to required transcripts** from foreign medical colleges (U-Baghdad was bombed).
- **Lack of an organized system** for understanding the complicated licensure process in the U.S.
- **High costs** associated with the licensure process.
- **Language barriers** that prevent applicants from understanding information.
- **Need for coaching**, advocacy, family and peer support.

# Program design

## 1. Tuition assistance

- In October 2007, AAFACD, in collaboration with the Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment, **received a grant of \$168,370 per year for three years** from the Ethnic Community Self-Help grant program of ORR



- **Program provides \$800 to nurses** who apply for licensure exams.
- **Program provides \$1,500 to physicians** who apply for licensure exams.

# Program design

## 2. Mentorship

- **Licensed doctors provide phone assistance** and give advise how to prepare for the interviewing process.
- **Partnering MDs review the personal statements** clients have to include in their residency program application.





# Minnesota recertification success stories



- A hospital hired a doctor who had **originally been trained in Somalia.**
- When news broke in the Somali refugee community, many **Somali refugees switched providers to become patients with this doctor.**
- Due to the increased demand, the healthcare provider **hired several additional Somali doctors.**

# Specialized ESL training

## The Welcome Back Initiative

San Francisco Welcome Back Center

International Health Worker Assistance Center



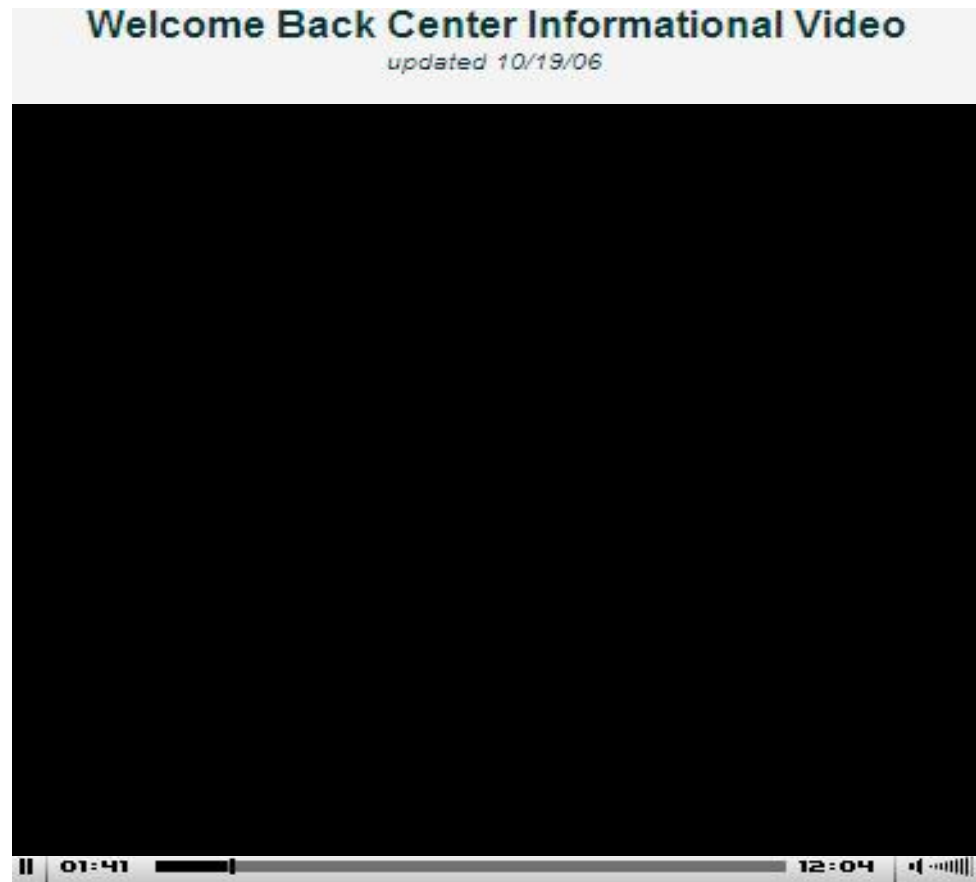
Based in San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Boston, Rhode Island, Puget Sound, Montgomery County



**Interview with José Ramón Fernández-Peña, Director of the Welcome Back Initiative**

# Specialized ESL training

## The Welcome Back Initiative



Source: <http://welcomebackinitiative.org>

Welcome Back director says:

**“98% of the time life gets in the way.”**

**“98% of the time life gets in the way,**  
rather than lack of language skills or  
training. It’s their families here and  
abroad, and it’s housing and money.”



**Interview with José Ramón Fernández-Peña, Director  
of the Welcome Back Initiative Director**

# Program design

## 1. Specialized ESL training

### Jose Ramon Fernandez-Pena:

- Typically, **ESL curriculum is designed for folks with a lower level of literacy**. So you learn to say, “Hi, my name is Bob, may I have soup, please.” But you don’t learn what you need for certain career levels.
- So we created an **accelerated, health-focused ESL curriculum** that’s completely contextualized in the health setting and focused on oral communication.
- The written aspect is **focused on writing charts and notes, electronic and on paper**. When participants come out of our classes, they can say, “Hello, Mr. Smith, where does it hurt?” And while they may not be able to discuss a book with you, or talk politics, they can write, “Patient refers pain on lower-left quadrant.”

# Program design

## 2. Peer support

### CENTER LOCATIONS

San Francisco Welcome Back

Los Angeles Welcome Back

San Diego Welcome Back

Boston Welcome Back

Rhode Island Welcome Back

Puget Sound Welcome Back

Montgomery County Welcome  
Back

- The Welcome Back Center has developed **group workshops and activities**, licensing exam **study groups**, and general information meetings to serve as **peer support groups** by profession.



# Program design

## 3. Intensive counseling

- **Coping With Test-Taking Anxiety:**  
University of St. Thomas. Be sure to review the Test Prep & Test Taking section of this website, at:  
<http://www.studygs.net/>
- **General exam stress-busting tips.**  
<http://www.isma.org.uk/exams.htm>
- **General Study and Test-Taking Suggestions:**  
[http://www.harvardwestlake.com/students/study\\_skills/index.html](http://www.harvardwestlake.com/students/study_skills/index.html)



# Welcome Back - San Francisco

## success stories



**7,546 active participants**

**891 clients passed licensing exams**

**740 clients obtained licenses in their original professions**

**524 entered new careers in healthcare**

**958 obtained employment in the U.S. health sector for the first time**

**56 were accepted into medical residencies**

# Career laddering

## exercise

**Career laddering for refugees/asylees is defined as the development of a career track with multiple steps towards an agreed upon career goal.**

**Based on the following background, discuss this client's (Esther's) career plan. What career options would you recommend?**

- **Ukrainian Refugee**
- **Resettled in Jacksonville**
- **Unmarried**
- **30 years old**
- **Dentist**
- **Low level of English**

**Career Goal: Dentist**

# Recertification programs for Foreign-trained professionals

## Welcome Back Center

Jose Ramon Fernandez-Pena

Welcome Back Initiative Director

San Francisco / Los Angeles / San Diego

Phone: 415-405-0488

E-mail: [jrfp@sfsu.edu](mailto:jrfp@sfsu.edu)

<http://welcomebackinitiative.org>

## Upwardly Global

San Francisco Office

Christina Fialho

Executive Assistant

582 Market St., Suite 1207

San Francisco, CA 94104

Phone: 415-834-9901

E-mail: [Christina@upwardlyglobal.org](mailto:Christina@upwardlyglobal.org)

[www.upwardlyglobal.org](http://www.upwardlyglobal.org)

# Recertification programs for Foreign-trained professionals

## New Americans in Nursing Program

Florida International University

(aka Foreign-Educated Physicians Nursing Program)

Mairelys de la Guardia

FIU School of Nursing

11200 SW 8th St., Rm. 492

Miami, FL 33199

Phone: 305-348-7724;

E-mail: [guardiam@fiu.edu](mailto:guardiam@fiu.edu)

[http://chua2.fiu.edu/NursingMD\\_RN/](http://chua2.fiu.edu/NursingMD_RN/)

## South Florida Workforce

Refugee Career Laddering Program

Arlene Diaz

7300 Corporate Center Dr. Suite 500

Miami, FL 33126

Phone: 305-594-7615 x 399

E-mail: [adiaz@southfloridaworkforce.com](mailto:adiaz@southfloridaworkforce.com)

[www.southfloridaworkforce.com/refugee.htm](http://www.southfloridaworkforce.com/refugee.htm)

# Recertification programs for Foreign-trained professionals

## Integrating Foreign-Trained Healthcare Professionals for Self-Sufficiency

Wilhelmina Holder, Executive Director

Women's Initiative for Self Empowerment (WISE), Inc.

Hamline Park Plaza

570 Asbury St, Suite 110

Saint Paul, MN 55104

Tel: (651) 646 - 3268

Fax: (651) 646 - 3278

E-mail: wilhelminaholder@aol.com

<http://www.aafacd-inc.org>

## Medical Careers for New Americans Program

International Institute of MN

1694 Como Ave.

St. Paul, MN 55108

Phone: 651-647-0191 x 300

E-mail: info@iimn.org

[www.iimn.org](http://www.iimn.org)



# Recertification programs for Foreign-trained professionals

## Rochester Healthcare Academy

Workforce Development, Inc. (WIB)

Melissa Lewis

300 11th Ave. NW, Suite 114

Rochester, MN 55901

Phone: 507-292-5152

[www.workforcedevelopment.ws](http://www.workforcedevelopment.ws)

## Nursing Career Academy Links

Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association

Avni Patel

2500 Valleyhigh Dr.

Rochester, MN 55901-2739

Phone: 507-289-5960 x 121

E-mail: [avni.patel@imaa.net](mailto:avni.patel@imaa.net)

[www.imaa.net/linked\\_websites/NCA\\_links.html](http://www.imaa.net/linked_websites/NCA_links.html)

# Recertification programs for Foreign-trained professionals

## Foreign-Trained Professionals Program

1199 SEIU Training & Employment Funds

Manhattan Office

330 West 42nd St. 2nd Fl.

New York, NY 10036

Phone: 212-629-5505

[www.1199etjisp.org/training/immigrants/foreign\\_trained\\_professionals.aspx](http://www.1199etjisp.org/training/immigrants/foreign_trained_professionals.aspx)

## Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians

Amanda Bergson-Shilcock

1617 John F. Kennedy Blvd. 13th Fl.

Philadelphia, PA 19103

Phone: 215-557-2864

Email: [Amanda@welcomingcenter.org](mailto:Amanda@welcomingcenter.org)

[www.welcomingcenter.org](http://www.welcomingcenter.org)

# Recertification programs for Foreign-trained professionals

**Boston Welcome Back Center**  
**Boston-Bunker Hill Community College**  
**Daniel Lam**  
**Executive Director**  
**250 New Rutherford Ave. Rm. B206B**  
**Boston, MA 02129**  
**Phone: 617-228-ICAN**  
**E-mail: [dlam@bhcc.mass.edu](mailto:dlam@bhcc.mass.edu)**  
**[www.bhcc.mass.edu/inside/18](http://www.bhcc.mass.edu/inside/18)**

# REFUGEEWORKS

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR REFUGEE  
EMPLOYMENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

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