



**Varied Journeys, Shared
Dreams and Traditions:
Standing Together as Neighbors**
August 28, 2024

Welcome Message

Dear OCON Participants,

In December 2015, a call went out to all those who cared about the well-being of our newest neighbors, “Come, let us work together for the betterment of our neighborhoods, cities, and region”. Thus, began our collective journey together through the Our City of Nations (OCON) experience.

“City of Nations” is a term given to Milwaukee in the late 1880s when the city was known for its myriad (mostly European) of immigrant populations. We also acknowledge that in Milwaukee we live and work on traditional Potawatomi, Ho-Chunk and Menominee homeland along the southwest shores of Michigami, North America’s largest system of freshwater lakes, where the Milwaukee, Menominee and Kinnickinnic rivers meet and the people of Wisconsin’s sovereign Anishinaabe, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Oneida and Mohican nations remain present. With Milwaukee’s indigenous roots, its historical immigrant settlements, and its continual refugee resettlement, it has always been a “City of Nations”.

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to “OCON 6.0” where we come together again as a community called to serve our region’s neighbors, both new and old. The theme of OCON 6.0 is “Varied Journeys, Shared Dreams and Traditions: Standing Together as Neighbors”. We gather together in hopes of strengthening our capacity to come together to ensure that services and resources are equitable, accessible, and justly distributed to our newest neighbors. Even now, more than ever, with continuing global conflicts, an upcoming presidential election, and world events both near and far, we must ensure that all members of our communities are safe and well.

Together As Neighbors Theme

Vision: Provide a platform for improved skills attainment, sharing, and captivation of advanced research and practices within the prism of Human Wellness, being interchangeably influenced by local and global factors.

Goal: Mobilize and harness the diverse knowledge, capacities, and services of various stakeholders interested to learn from and with those who interface with refugee and immigrant communities in the United States of America

Educational Objectives

Conference Objectives:

1. Gain an understanding of how newcomer neighbors are arriving and two new skills as best practices to best serve them
2. Understand how to create a welcoming environment and two ways to build belonging together with newcomer neighbors

Sponsorship

The fiscal home of the Our City of Nations initiative is the Medical College of Wisconsin's Office of Global Health. As the presenting sponsor, we are grateful to the State of Wisconsin for funding this year's conference and to the many others who offered their in-kind support to develop and implement this conference and sustain this unique educational opportunity.



Wisconsin Department of Children and Families



Planning Committee

The following people and organizations were essential in the planning and implementation of this symposium, bolded names signify planning leads: Maya Abu Ali, Vaughan Barden, Nancy Burns, Anastasia Christianson-White, Claire Duening, **Tiffany Frazer**, Melissa Hodzic, Ebrahim Mansaray, Aaron Pressie, Claire Reuning, **Dr. Jim Sanders**, Brian Scherschel, **Dr. Sebastian Ssempijja**, Lauren Smith, and Dr. Paul Trebian

Continuing Education Credits



Counselors, Social Workers, & Case Managers: Mount Mary University will provide counselors, case managers, and social workers certificate of attendance upon request with 6 clock hours identified commensurate with their attendance and seminar evaluation.



Logistics

Prayer Room: Ask at the registration desk for access to Conference Room #3910

Wifi:

Username: ThriveOn King - Public

Password: TO-MCW-Guest

August 28, 2024

Thrive on King and Virtual via Zoom

Registration, Networking

8:30 – 9:00 am

Opening Remarks

9:00 – 9:15 am

Opening Remarks

Welcome to the 2024 *Our City of Nations* Conference

Educational Objective: Welcome conference participants and review the impetus for this year's theme

Presenters:

- **Bojana Zorić Martinez**, Director - Bureau of Refugee Programs, Department of Children and Families/State Refugee Coordinator
- **Benjamin York**, Refugee Programs Administration Section Manager, Bureau of Refugee Programs, Department of Children and Families

Keynote Address

9:15 – 10:10 am

The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants and Our Mission

To protect the rights and address the needs of persons in forced or voluntary migration worldwide and support their transition to a dignified life.

Educational Objectives:

1. Understand various ways newcomers are arriving and ways to support them in our work as it relates to our theme of standing together as neighbors
2. Learn about immigration status and legal ramifications

Presenter: **Dylanna Grasinger**, Vice President of Refugee Programs, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

Interactive Workshop

10:15 – 11:15 am

Welcoming as the Bedrock: How Communities are Utilizing the Welcoming Standard to Promote Belonging and Build a Resilient Welcoming Infrastructure

A focus on building a sense of belonging and connection in changing communities. Communities often struggle with the stress and discomfort of change, especially when it exacerbates social isolation and inequality. This workshop will explore the importance of creating environments where immigrant residents and all residents of a community feel connected and build social cohesion through the framework of the Welcoming Standard. The criteria in the Welcoming Standard reflect programs, policies, and practices that local governments, community organizations, and other local stakeholders can implement to ensure that everyone, including immigrants, belongs and can thrive, while simultaneously creating the conditions to develop and maintain a resilient welcoming infrastructure.

Educational Objectives:

1. Attendees will be able to examine how they see the Welcoming Standard reflected in their own communities and where there are opportunities for growth, as measured against the Standard.
2. Attendees will leave with concrete examples and takeaways so that the Welcoming Standard can be utilized by those practitioners to help develop and strengthen the experience of belonging for immigrants, refugees, and all residents of their local communities.

Presenter: Briana Broberg, Midwest Regional Manager, Welcoming America

Connect, Networking Lunch

11:20 am – 12:20 pm

Opportunities to connect with leaders of the Milwaukee Refugee Community Advisory Board

Plenary Session

12:30 – 1:30 pm

Frontline and Resettlement Systems Panel

A discussion with multiple agency representatives on reception, placement, support services, ways of entry, and ways to welcome and build belonging with newcomers.

Educational Objectives:

1. Overview of "basic" newcomer arrival information: how they arrive, where they are coming from, how resettlement works, challenges experienced
2. Learn 2-3 skills from "on the ground" workers as they assist with newcomer arrival and welcome systems
3. Learn best practices and opportunities to welcome and build belonging with newcomers.

Speakers:

- **Omar Mohamed**, Executive Director, Lutheran Social Services
- **Andrea Vodicka**, Community Engagement and Grants Manager, Hanan Refugee Relief Group
- **Dr. Paul Trebian**, President & CEO, International Institute of Wisconsin

Panel Session I

1:40 - 2:20 pm

Education Perspectives on Best Practices to Engage Newcomers

Presentation from Milwaukee Public Schools and the Wisconsin Department of Instruction on best practices to engage students, families, and communities of diverse backgrounds

Educational Objectives:

1. Explore challenges that newcomers face when integrating into a new school
2. Learn best practices for engaging newcomer families and fostering belonging

Speakers:

- **Dr. Kourosch Hassani**, Teacher Leader & Family Engagement (ELs), Department of Bilingual and Multicultural Education, Milwaukee Public Schools
- **Risa Berg**, MSSW, APSW, School Social Worker, International Newcomer Centers/Refugee and Immigrant Support, Milwaukee Public Schools

Panel Session II

2:30 – 3:20 pm

Newcomer Systems Change: Barriers & Opportunities

Landscape that newcomers must navigate all areas of life in with an emphasis on legal status, health, and employment

Educational Objective:

1. Learn how individuals gain access to resources and best practices for providing legal care
2. Gain knowledge on the most common health barriers newcomers face and how to assist them in navigating systems
3. Gain knowledge on opportunities and challenges related to employment

Presenters:

- **Janice Beers**, Policy Advisor for New American Integration, Department of Children and Families
- **Marina Croft**, JD, Director of Immigration Services & Attorney, International Institute of Wisconsin
- **Dr. Sebastian Ssempijja**, Owner, Clinical Director & Psychologist, Sebastian Family Psychology Practice, LLC
- **Dr. James Sanders**, Adjunct Professor, Family and Community Medicine, Medical College of Wisconsin

Reflections 3:20 – 3:30 pm

Reflections from the day from our keynote speaker as it relates to our theme of *Varied Journeys, Shared Dream and Traditions: Standing Together as Neighbors*

Moderator: **Dylanna Grasinger**, Vice President of Refugee Programs with U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

Closing Remarks 3:30 – 3:55 pm

Closing Remarks

Closing remarks from the day's presentations and participation, and thoughts for the 2025 two-day OCON conference.

Educational Objective:

1. Varied Journeys, Shared Dreams and Traditions: Standing together as Neighbors

Presenters:

- **Bojana Zorić Martinez**, Director - Bureau of Refugee Programs, Department of Children and Families/State Refugee Coordinator
- **Benjamin York**, Refugee Programs Administration Section Manager, Bureau of Refugee Programs, Department of Children and Families

Consensus Statement

Best Practices for Refugee Care in Southeast Wisconsin
BMC Proceedings 2017, 11(Suppl 5):5.

Refugee resettlement requires a private-public partnership in an ongoing process involving community engagement.

To meet the needs of the increasing number of new refugees, agencies need to work smarter and faster in a collaborative fashion to integrate the best possible experience of these refugees.

In working with refugees, recognize the individual differences (i.e. that each refugee is unique even within his/her culture) but remain mindful of customs and err towards modesty with self-expression.

The stated goal of resettlement is self-sufficiency. It's not just safety or hospitality; it's working with refugees, so they are able to become self-sufficient citizens and achieve their hopes and dreams.

The refugee experience often includes circumstances that disrupt their cultural norms and reduce social support. Collectively, these may cause a loss of identity and distrust in government or larger systems.

Be aware of your own narrative (cultural background and personal experiences) in your encounters with refugees and be prepared to listen to refugees' narratives at their own pace.

The social context of interpretation is multi-faced; as such, consider the potential impact of who provides interpretive services. Avoid dual relationships and consider the client's comfort level with the interpreter.

Different cultures may conceptualize pain, illness, and disease differently from "western-based" frameworks; one size does not fit all. We must find critical elements that translate when the usual words and Western definitions fail.

Providers must seek to maintain cultural humility when assessing individual patients. Providers must strive to know something about: history, and culture, social structure, basic health and illness concepts, the spiritual aspects of health and illness, and key Western and cultural psychiatric/psychological concepts BEFORE asking questions.

To move towards health equity, we need to implement health in all policies with health equity as an explicit goal. Healthcare needs to change its focal point to helping communities better utilize primary care teams and community health workers to reduce reliance on emergency medicine.

We need to keep communication between the government and communities strong so that priorities set at a community level can be reflected in government policies and budgets.

More community navigators are needed to build relationships with community members, articulate and anticipate obstacles, and advocate for communities.

Many refugees are eager to seek health services and to learn to navigate the health care system; we must work to address the challenges for both providers and refugees to help achieve this medical self-sufficiency.

OCON
Our City of Nations
CONFERENCE

Save The Date

OCON 2025 Conference
April 23-24, 2025

