

Public Assistance Programs in the U.S.

Preparing to Facilitate

Introduction
Ice-Breaker—Loteria
Transition
Video Segment One
View Video Segment One—Introduction to Public Assistance Programs in the U.S.
Discussion
Video Segment Two
View Segment Two—Cash Programs, Food Programs, Housing and Shelter Programs
Discussion
Video Segment Three
View Segment Three—Legal Services, Health Programs, Programs for Children
Discussion
Conclusion and Follow-up
Video Running Time = 20:06 Total Estimated Session Time = 1 hour 20 minutes

Materials and Equipment

- Name tags
- Flip chart paper
- Markers in different colors,
- Masking tape
- DVD Player
- Video
- Discussion Questions
- Voices for Community Success Program materials for long version
- Participant Handouts
- Public Assistance-related Resources
- Loteria game cards
- Loteria instruction sheet
- State TANF Program sheet

Participant Handouts

- Spanish brochures from local agencies, if available
- Public Assistance programs “cheat sheet”
- List of local/regional Public Assistance Contacts
- Blank copy of application form(s) from local social service agencies (optional)
- Loteria game cards and counters (buttons or dry beans)

Facilitator’s Note: If possible, this discussion may be greatly enhanced by the presence of an “expert” guest. For this particular topic, this could include: a representative of State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) or other social worker, Department of Human Services, HUD worker, or representatives of other local agencies that provide assistance such as local Hispanic centers or other community-based organizations

Introduction

5 Minutes

Begin the session by introducing yourself and your position. Explain that you will be facilitating today's session.

We suggest that you may want to begin with a quick introduction that highlights discussion goals/objectives and what may be learned from the video and discussion.

This brief introduction could highlight:

- How the video/discussion will help participants and their families connect with and receive local public assistance services
- Who is eligible, what the requirements are, for both documented and undocumented workers, and what Spanish services and information are available
- How the U.S. public assistance system works on a local level and what are the benefits received when you apply
- Which programs could cause negative immigration consequences if an undocumented individual applies and/or lies about their legal status in the country

Ice-breaker—Loteria

10 Minutes

To play this game, you need a group of 3 or more. There are large player cards one for each participant and the facilitator's small cards with pictures of a service provided by the State Government. All of the large cards have four different pictures. Each picture also has a number in the upper right hand corner. However, no picture will have the same number. For example, a picture of food on one large card, may have the number 3; on another card, the same picture may have the number 5. The facilitator's deck of cards includes all possible combinations of pictures and numbers. The facilitator shows a picture and calls out the corresponding number one by one from the stack of small cards. If a player has the picture AND matching number on their big card, they mark it with a counter (usually beans, buttons, stones, etc). The first person who gets two pictures with the corresponding numbers either on a vertical, horizontal or diagonal line shouts out "Loteria" and becomes the winner. The game may be repeated to give others an opportunity to win.

Facilitator's Note:

Some Spanish-speakers may feel a bit shy speaking in public but you may encourage them to participate without feeling that they will be judge on what they have to say during the session.

Transition

5 Minutes

After playing “Loteria”, the facilitator shows the pictures from the winning card and asks the group to identify the type of public assistance services the pictures represent. Tell the group that they will learn more about these programs during the video.

Video

10:50 Minutes (from beginning of video to the end of Sandra’s statement that begins with: “How do I apply to a particular benefit?”)

Segment One

Creation and purpose of public assistance programs, applying for services as a non-English speaking immigrant.

Discussion—suggested questions to ask participants

8 Minutes

1. What are some reasons why the U.S. government created public assistance programs? How are the programs primarily funded? Who can apply to these programs?
2. When requesting information and/or services, what right do you have to have someone help you in Spanish?
3. What if you are undocumented, but your child or children are born here and therefore citizens of the U.S.? What services may your children be eligible for that you are not?
4. If you do not have a social security number, or use a false one to work, what should you do if social services personnel ask for this number? When are you required to report your immigration status? What could happen if you lie when applying for public assistance?
5. What information do you need to provide in order to receive different public assistance services? How do you know if someone with your immigration status is eligible, and if applying may have negative consequences now or in the future?

Facilitator’s Tips:

- The facilitator may keep a visual log on newsprint of responses from participants. This helps generate thought and participation.
- Keep in mind the literacy level of participants, use simple phrases, or associate concepts with simple related examples.
- Always refer back to the concepts discussed at the beginning of the session in order to re-emphasize new knowledge and understanding of concepts.

Video

14:10 Minutes (Begins with Sandra saying: “Cash Programs.” Stop when Sandra says: “...contact the Department of Housing and Urban Development to find out where to apply.”)

Segment Two

TANF, Food stamps, WIC, LIHEAP, rental housing programs from HUD.

Discussion—suggested questions to ask participants

8 Minutes

1. What program provides cash? Who is eligible to apply for cash programs? If you are undocumented, can you apply for it and not get in trouble?
2. What are food stamps? What are the eligibility requirements? Where do you apply?
3. What does WIC stand for and who can apply to this program? What do you use vouchers for? Can you apply for this program if you are an undocumented immigrant but your child is a U.S. citizen?
4. What is the name of the program that provides energy assistance? Are there any emergency housing programs for immigrants regardless of their status and, if so, where do you get information about these programs?
5. Does anyone know someone who has applied for any of these programs? If so, what was their experience while applying and receiving the assistance?

Facilitator’s Tips:

- When federal programs (such as TANF and SCHIP) have state-applied names and acronyms, highlight both for participants for future recognition. Continue to guide participants to local agencies, which can explain all requirements, eligibility rules, etc.
 - Encourage participants to share personal experiences, generating discussion from examples.
 - If available, during or after the next two segments’ discussion, the facilitator may distribute any available brochures from Department of Human Services, HUD, Administration for Children & Families, or other community-based organizations that provide public assistance programs, or help Spanish-speaking immigrants apply for assistance.
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Video

18:28 Minutes (Begin with Sandra saying: “The Legal Services Corporation provides...” Go to the end of Luis Valdez’s concluding words: “... éxito en el norte.” If you choose to show all the credits at the end, the length of this segment will be 20:06 minutes.)

Segment Three

Legal services, Medicaid and Children Health insurance, Head Start and Early Start, Child Care, and finding assistance in your local community

Discussion—suggested questions to ask participants

8 Minutes

1. Are there any free legal services for undocumented workers and residents?
2. What is Medicaid and who can apply for these services? Where do you apply for this program?
3. What is the name of the federal program that provides health insurance assistance for children? What is this program called in your state? How and where do you apply for this assistance for your children, and what are the eligibility requirements?
4. In addition to health insurance, what other programs are available for children? How do you know if your child qualifies, and where do you apply?
5. Where can you find more information about what public assistance programs are available locally, or in your state? What local agencies or organizations provide this information, or could help you apply?

Facilitator’s Tips:

- Ask if anyone would like to share their (or their partner’s) experience or stories with the group that relate to any program stated in the video. Continue adding important points from these experiences and discussions.
- If comfortable, participants could role-play asking for information or services for themselves or their children.

Facilitator’s Note:

Keep in mind that, besides locally-operated federal agencies, there may be other local or regional sources of assistance for public assistance programs, with bilingual services. This could include local Hispanic Centers, other community based organizations such as Community Action, and service organizations such as Catholic Charities. Please refer to Public Assistance-related resources, Segment 3 for information on locating these types of services.

Conclusion & Follow-up

8 Minutes

The last few minutes of the discussion can be used to thank members for their participation, reinforce important concepts, and ensure that participants know where and how to access healthcare in the future. Wrap-up might include one or two of the following:

1. Highlight the benefits of some of the public assistance programs and information learned.
2. Refer to the handout given to participants and summarize the public assistance programs. Then ask participants what other doubts and/or questions concerning these programs they may have.
3. How well do public assistance programs and benefits meet the needs of immigrants, and specifically of Spanish-speakers?
4. Invite and encourage participants to speak with any professional guests and ask directly to them specific and personal questions
5. Gauge if there is a need for additional information, possibly through a follow-up session, educational fair, invitation to local service provider, and plan any follow-up with participants.

Facilitator's Tips:

- Hand out the Public Assistance Programs "cheat sheet" to participants for future reference. If available, provide blank application forms from local agencies.
 - Also distribute the List of locally and regionally available Public Assistance Contacts.
 - Allow participants to share questions that the video raised in their minds that need further discussion.
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