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Toolkit for Mental Health Professionals, Social Workers, and Guidance Counselors Working with Immigrant and Refugee Students

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MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MANKATO

Toolkit for Mental Health Professionals, Social Workers, and Guidance Counselors Working with Immigrant and Refugee Students

Rojina Maya McCarthy
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Purpose / Significance

The purpose of this Capstone project is to develop a best practices toolkit for social workers and mental health professionals working with immigrant and refugee students in school setting. The toolkit is intended to be disseminated by The Advocates for Human Rights to social workers, guidance counselors, and other mental health professionals who work with immigrant and refugee children. This toolkit will also be used by the staff in the organization.

Methodology

A literature review was conducted using different library databases, such as Social Services Abstract, Sociological Abstracts, ProQuest Databases, and PsycINFO. Different key words like “immigrants,” “refugees,” “mental health,” “social services,” and “issues” were used while conducting the research. Other toolkits from different sources were also explored. There will also be exploration and study of different toolkits designed for professionals working with immigrants and refugees. After reviewing existing literature, other agency documents, and different best practices already published, the toolkit was developed for professionals with different tools that can be used while working with immigrant and refugee students.

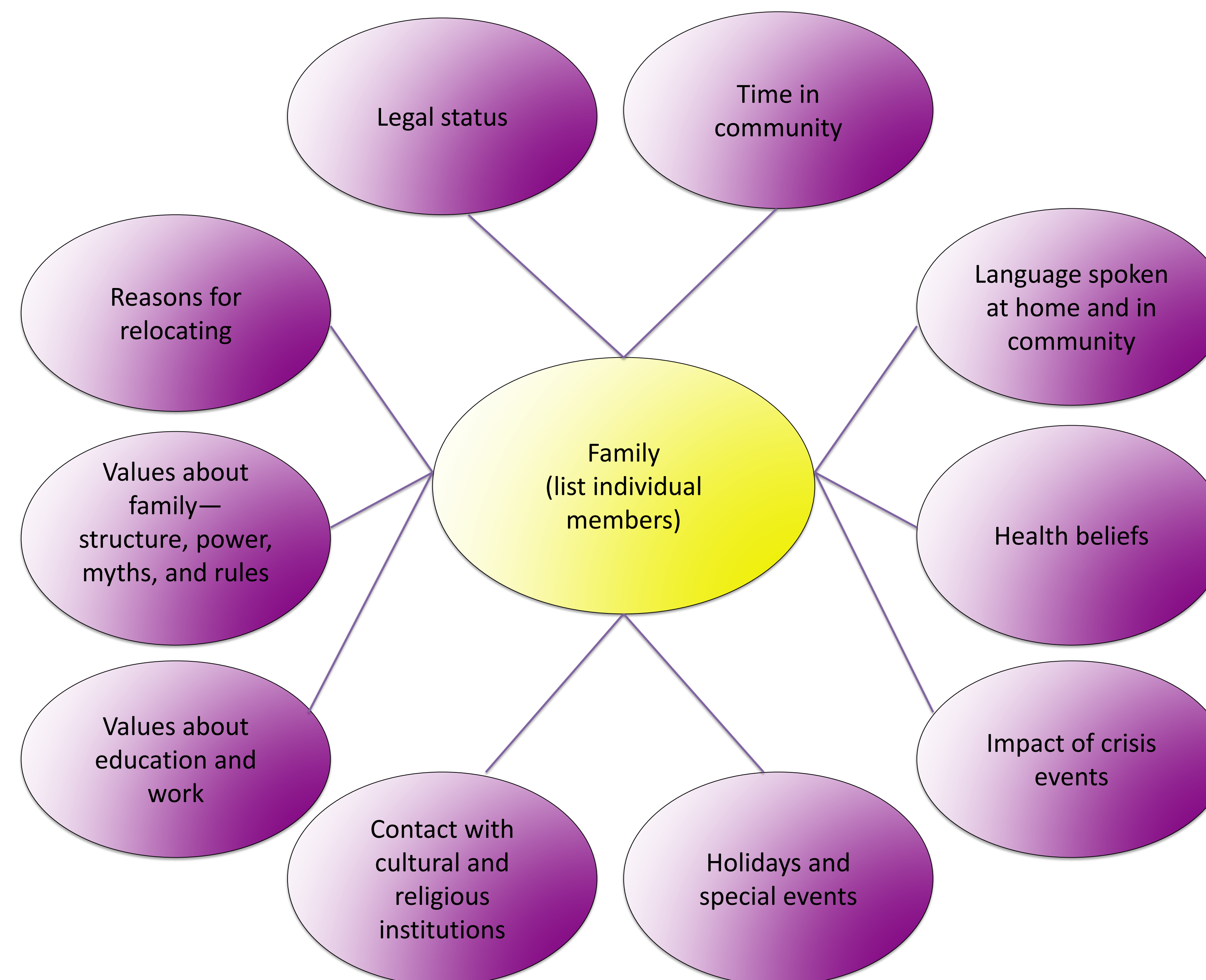
Identified Themes for Literature Review

- Professionals’ lack of knowledge about immigration status
- Cultural misunderstanding between professionals and families
- Lack of language access
- Sociopolitical barriers that prevent clients from being aware about legal rights, social services, shelters, and other available services

Foreign Born Population By Birth Place in MN (MN Compass, 2014)

Country of Origin	2010-2012
Mexico	70,988
India	26,273
Hmong (primarily from Laos and Thailand)	22,651
Somalia	21,227
Vietnam	18,548
Germany	7,617
Sweden	1,141
Norway	1,057
Number of foreign born	396,176

Dr. Elaine Congress’s Culturagram (as cited in Congress, 2004)



Factors Contributing to Mental Health Issues

- Refugees are forced to move to new countries, with different cultures, lifestyles, values, and norms that can be highly disruptive and unsettling (UNICEF, n.d.).
- Children often feel vulnerable given the fact that their parents and guardians are themselves overwhelmed (Pumariega & Rothe, 2005).
- During the pre-migration stage, individuals endure experiences before moving, such as war, famine, torture, and other traumatic events (Masaud, McNicholas, & Skokauskas, 2010).
- Children might be confused about the move because they might not have been included in the decision making process (Masaud et al., 2010).
- During the immigration process, individuals might have to travel without access to basic needs. Some might have to travel through different countries before reaching their destination.
- In the post-migration stage, individuals go through different stressors while trying to settle in the host country.

Recommendations

- Train professionals regarding different immigration statuses
- Enhance knowledge of the professionals regarding services immigrants and refugees can access
- Develop a handbook so that professionals can refer to it if they have any questions
- Initiate partnerships with different organizations to provide culturally appropriate services

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References available upon request