



Children's Crisis Treatment Center

# West African Refugee Assistance Program

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# Tamaa

- ❖ Tamaa, meaning “glorious, smiling, hopeful” faces,” signifies the positive message of the hope that the program seeks to instill within the West African population in Southwest Philadelphia. The derivation of “tamaa” from the Swahili root word “hope” is particularly applicable to our target community, symbolizing the complex aspirations of the refugee community to simultaneously adapt to a foreign culture and transform past challenges into strength and healing.

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## Tamaa's Offices in Southwest Philadelphia



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# What is Tamaa?

- ❖ A community- and school-based program
- ❖ Established for West African refugee children and their caregivers who have relocated to Southwest Philadelphia
- ❖ Designed to meet mental health and social service needs
- ❖ Targets refugees from Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea who:
  - Experienced war trauma in their homelands and refugee camps
  - Struggling with acculturation issues in the U.S.

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# Why Tamaa?

- ❖ Designed in response to a clearly identified gap in the social and mental health service delivery system
- ❖ The West African community is a significantly underserved population
- ❖ Community underutilizes services, despite their considerable needs

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# Barriers to Service Utilization

- ❖ Lack of knowledge about available resources
- ❖ Fear of accessing resources due to past negative experiences and worry about future consequences
- ❖ Cultural stigma associated with using mental health services
- ❖ Limited availability of culturally competent service providers

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# Program Timeline

- ❖ 2001 call from SW at CHOP
- ❖ 2002 awarded 3-year SAMHSA grant which funded program development and start-up
- ❖ 2003 awarded 2-year grant First Hospital Foundation
- ❖ 2003 awarded 2-year grant from Victory Foundation
- ❖ 2005 all grant funding ended
- ❖ 2005 to present, shift to more traditional mental/behavioral health funding streams
- ❖ 2005 to March 2007, no funding for one component (School Trainings)
- ❖ March 2007 3-year Robert Wood Johnson Caring Across Communities Grant (will enable us to re-introduce and expand School Trainings)

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# Tamaa's Services

## **School-Based Components:**

- ❖ West African Refugee Children's Trauma- and Grief-Focused Therapy Groups
- ❖ School Trainings

## **Community-Based Components:**

- ❖ West African Refugee Caregiver Education and Support Group
- ❖ Case Management Services
- ❖ Multicultural Community Events

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# West African Refugee Children's Trauma- and Grief-Focused Therapy Groups

**These groups are designed to help West African refugee children:**

- ❖ Process war-related trauma, displacement experiences, and acculturative struggles
- ❖ Identify strengths and resources, personal and cultural
- ❖ Develop skills to promote positive interaction with peers
- ❖ Decrease feelings of isolation

**These groups are facilitated by a Trauma Therapist and a West African Co-facilitator**

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# School Trainings

**These trainings are designed to help school staff:**

- ❖ Understand how trauma affects children's behavior, school performance, and peer relationships
- ❖ Gain insight into the cultural backgrounds of refugee students
- ❖ Understand refugee-specific trauma and acculturation issues

**Trainings were developed with input from school staff**

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# Sample School Training Curriculum

- ❖ “Understanding and Responding to Traumatized Children in the School Setting”
- ❖ “Managing Conflict and Diversity-Related Challenges that Arise in the School Setting”
- ❖ “Understanding the West African Refugee Experience and Its Impact on School and Family Life in the United States – Part I & II”
- ❖ “Overcoming Barriers to West African Parental Involvement and Engaging Families in their Children’s School Experience”
- ❖ “Responding to West African Refugee Children and Other Children with Different Learning Styles and Learning Backgrounds in the Classroom”
- ❖ “Understanding and Managing Sexually Reactive Children in the School Setting”
- ❖ “Survival Strategies: Managing Stress and Ways to Take Care of Yourself in the Challenging Work Environment of an Inner-City School”

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# West African Refugee Caregiver Education and Support Group

**This group is designed to help West African refugee caregivers:**

- ❖ Gain a better understanding of how trauma affects their children's behavioral, social, emotional, and cognitive/academic functioning
- ❖ Process their own trauma and displacement histories
- ❖ Understand how their trauma histories and current stressors may impact their ability to manage day-to-day responsibilities
- ❖ Explore the difficulties both children and caregivers experience in acclimating to a new and dramatically different environment
- ❖ Learn about various community resources and services available to them through topical presentations

**The Group is facilitated by a Caregiver Support Group Specialist assisted by a West African Co-Facilitator**

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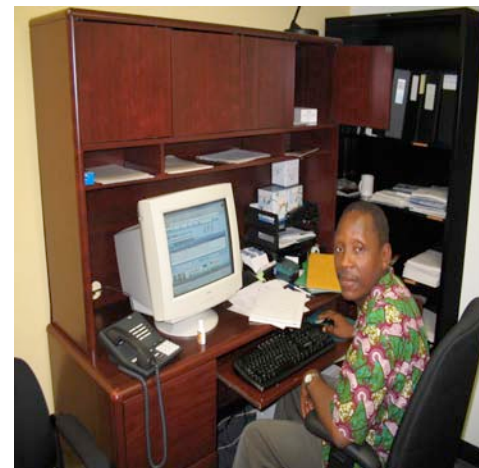
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# Case Management Services

**These services are designed to assist caregivers in obtaining needed services and supports for their families including:**

- ❖ Medical care
- ❖ Mental Health Care
- ❖ Job Training
- ❖ Housing Assistance
- ❖ ESL Classes
- ❖ Adult Literacy Classes
- ❖ After School Programs for Children
- ❖ Camp Programs for Children
- ❖ Recreational Activities
- ❖ Legal Services
- ❖ Immigration Services
- ❖ Housing Assistance
- ❖ Social Security/Disability

**Both Case Managers are from Liberia**



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# Multicultural Community Events

These events are designed to:

- ❖ Promote social interaction between fragmented West African groups in the community
- ❖ Establish positive interaction between West African groups and the Southwest Philadelphia community
- ❖ Provide a non-threatening forum where West African community members can learn about available resources



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# Advisory Board

**The Board is designed to oversee the implementation of the various components of the program**

**The Advisory Board consists of:**

- ❖ Mental Health and Social Service Professionals
- ❖ Politicians
- ❖ Educators
- ❖ Community Activists
- ❖ Cultural and Religious Group Leaders
- ❖ West African Refugee Community Members

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# Nine Essential Components for Success

- ❖ Do your homework
- ❖ Ensure program fits agency mission and vision
- ❖ Involve target population/community in program design
- ❖ Create continuous feedback loop
- ❖ Develop a multidimensional service delivery model
- ❖ Make careful staffing decisions
- ❖ Locate or co-locate program in the community
- ❖ Get involved in the community
- ❖ Collaborate and develop strategic partnerships

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# RWJ CAC Grant For Tamaa School Training Program

- ❖ Enable us to re-introduce and expand our School Training for the next 3 academic years
- ❖ 7 trainings per year, each 2 hours in length, approximately 1 per month
- ❖ Curriculum will be developed and modified each year based on input from school personnel
- ❖ Each year, trainings will be held at a different school, but open to staff from the Southwest Region
- ❖ Attempts will be made to incorporate trainings into School District's training calendar
- ❖ Teachers will be paid for participation, and Act 48 credits will be provided

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# Teacher Training Evaluation

**Descriptive statistics on attendance and school affiliation and position of attendees**

**We will also use a four-level framework for evaluating School Trainings:**

- ❖ Reactions of school professionals to the training
- ❖ Learning by school professionals from the training
- ❖ Transfer of teacher knowledge into behavior
- ❖ The impact of training on West African Refugee student mental/behavioral health