



## **Best Practices in Immigrant Education**

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**Name of Community College:** Miami Dade College

**Title of Program:** Refugee/Entrant Vocational Educational Services Training (REVEST) Program. <http://www.mdc.edu/wolfson/administration/revest>

**Type of Program:** The REVEST Program is an adult education program.

**Primary Division(s) or Department(s) involved:** REVEST Program

### **1. Need for Program**

In existence since October 1999, the REVEST Program was created to serve the English language and vocational training needs of adult refugees, Cuban/Haitian entrants, political asylees, victims of severe forms of trafficking, and Amerasians in Miami-Dade County.

### **2. Brief Description of Program**

The REVEST Program is a comprehensive program of adult instructional credit and non-credit courses, designed to improve the employability of eligible clients. The REVEST Program also provides its students with academic assessment, long-term advisement, referrals to other service agencies; including legal services; employment referrals; transportation and childcare subsidies, and assistance with the translation and evaluation of foreign earned credentials (up to \$300). All services, including books and training tools (such as uniforms and equipment), are free for eligible students.

The REVEST Vocational ESOL program serves as a steppingstone to semi-skilled interim or alternative careers. It serves 3,000+ students per term, and is an intensive English language training program (16 weeks per term) that prepares clients for employment and self-sufficiency. Graduates are referred to placement agencies.

### **3. Specific Population Served**

Any individuals who are eligible for refugee services pursuant to state and federal regulation and who are in need of the services. Services are contingent upon clients being employed or engaged in job seeking efforts through employment agencies. Clients include refugees of all nationalities:



Clients include:

- Refugees and asylees of all nationalities
- Cuban/Haitian entrants, including parolees and asylum applicants
- Amerasians
- Certified victims of trafficking
- Lawful permanent residents who adjusted from prior refugee, entrant or asylee status

Client Characteristics:

- 39% employed at intake; others referred to workforce pipelines
- 45% have attended some university or obtained a university degree
- 18% have attended some form of technical school
- Cubans are a majority
- Medical fields are well represented
- Due to their lack of English skills most clients are either underemployed on in survival jobs

#### **4. Goals and Objectives**

The goal of the REVEST Program is to provide students with educational and support services. This includes English language training, Adult Basic Education and Vocational Instruction. The objective is for students to accomplish their personal, academic and professional goals.

#### **5. Outcomes**

More than 30,000 students have been served since 1999. The objective mentioned above is accomplished as evidenced by furthering the student's education, developing their technical and employability skills, and assisting them to move towards economic self-sufficiency and effective resettlement. The most popular vocational paths for REVEST participants include:

- Accounting Operations
- Administrative Assistant
- Business Supervision & Management
- Customer Assistance
- Legal Secretary
- Network Support Services
- P.C. Support Services
- Real Estate
- Massage Therapy
- Medical Assisting
- Medical Coder/ Biller
- Pharmacy Technician
- Phlebotomy
- Practical Nursing
- Security Guards

## **6. Collaboration**

Client referrals and partner networks are our best recruitment and publicity instrument. The network of service providers under the Office of Refugee Services funding includes SAVES, South Florida Work Force, Catholic Charities, Church World Service, Youth Coop and Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services, Inc., St. Thomas University Law School, Lutheran Services, Miami Dade Public Schools etc.

## **7. Success Factors**

A very comprehensive approach to academic advisement, combined with high levels of social work, and focused on the needs and specifics of the population to be served; an intensive curriculum developed based on the objectives of language acquisition and development of employability skills; support from Office of Refugee Services and Miami Dade College.

## **8. Challenges Faced and Overcome**

The challenge faced concerns the amount of time REVEST had to expend to establish viable liaisons with various community agencies and other external service providers to ensure a more holistic approach could be forged to serve a students' specific non-academic needs. That challenge was overcome with time, and the more REVEST needed to enlist the external partners' services and support on behalf of students, the more deep-rooted the relationship and ease of communication became between the REVEST and external units.

## **9. Funding and Sustainability**

The REVEST Program is funded by the Florida Department of Children and Families, Office of Refugee Services. Funding averages \$6 million per year since 1996.

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