



Catholic Social Services

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News Release

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Capacity Building for Ethnic Community Groups Focus of Federal Grant

Department of Health & Human Services Awards Catholic Social Services \$160,000 from the Compassion Capital Fund Demonstration Program to strengthen local grassroots organizations.

Anchorage — Catholic Social Services' Refugee Assistance & Immigration Services (RAIS) program recently received a \$160,000 grant from the Compassion Capital Fund Demonstration Program administered by the Department of Health & Social Services to strengthen local ethnic grassroots organizations. This grant focuses on capacity building for four to six local (Southcentral Alaska) faith-based and community based organizations to effectively become agents of change for the communities they serve. Capacity building training will focus on leadership development, organizational development, program development and community engagement.

Through the provision of training, technical assistance and sub-awards, Catholic Social Services hopes to enhance each group's ability to provide social services and to increase organizational capacity and sustainability.

CSS' RAIS program successfully provides newly arrived refugee families with the supportive services necessary for self-sufficiency. For example, with assistance from the RAIS program, 75% of Refugee clients arriving in Alaska with no support from relatives obtain employment within six months and 78 % are still employed three months later. But many, especially from ethnic communities, still struggle and are not connected to services at established agencies. They seek help first from their fellow community members.

Through this leadership grant, ethnic community groups will have a chance to build stronger organizations, better equipped to serve their neighbors. For example, RAIS has had the opportunity to work with community groups such as the Hmong from Laos and Thailand, Sudanese, Bhutanese and Slavic refugees from the Former Soviet Union. CSS' RAIS strongly believes that the communities are at a point where they can best provide leadership for their community members. This grant will provide these ethnic community groups with many of the resources needed to accomplish these goals.

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