



# Refugee Services National Partnership for Community Training

Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services

## Torture Overview and the Refugee Experience

This program is funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR/ACF/DHHS)





# Who are we?



**The National Partnership for Community Training (NPCT)** is a technical assistance program funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement that provides training services and capacity building to mainstream providers in communities without torture treatment centers.

**NPCT's** primary objective is to train social service providers to effectively identify, refer, assist, and serve torture survivors to enable them to become functioning and contributing members of their families and communities.



# Technical Assistance

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# U.S. Definition of Torture

(18 U.S.C. § 2340)

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An act committed by a person acting under the color of law specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering (other than pain or suffering incidental to lawful sanctions) upon another person within his custody or physical control



# Prevalence of Torture

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- Studies show torture among refugees in general from 5% to 35% (Wenzel et al, 2007)
- The International Red Cross estimates that 20% of all refugees have been tortured (2012)
- Torture and ill-treatment reported in 150 countries, and widespread in 70 countries worldwide (Amnesty International, 2012)
- Since 1995, over 3 million refugees have been resettled in the United States (Office of Refugee Resettlement)

→ Who can torture survivors be?



# Nature of Torture

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Torture destroys one's sense of self and strips one of his/her dignity

Torture humiliates and shames

Torture shatters and distorts human reasoning, social interaction, and worldviews





# What challenges do torture survivors face?

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# What are some non-verbal indicators?

- Inappropriate affect
- Familial discord
- Children acting out in school
- Unable to maintain employment
- Client looks tired, mentions that they are not sleeping well
- Client complains frequently about headaches or stomach aches







# Torture Methods

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## Physical:

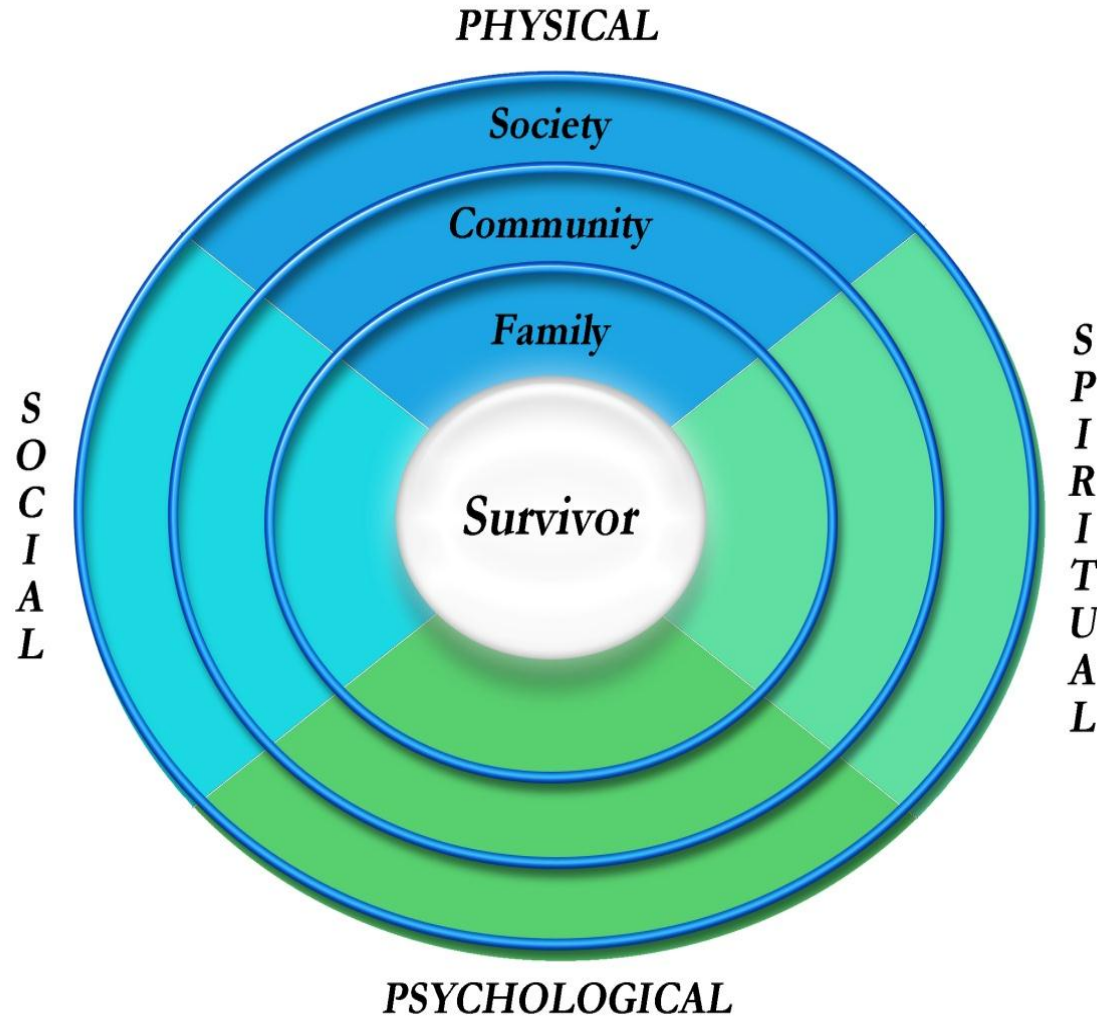
- Forced postures
- Electric shock
- Sexual torture
- Beating
- Burning
- Pharmacological torture
- Forced inhalations

## Psychological:

- Mock executions
- Witnessing torture
- Restricting food and water
- Sleep deprivation
- Inadequate medical care
- Repeated and systematic threats
- Sensory deprivation
- Sensory stress



# Impact of Torture





# Survivor's Natural Resources

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**Personal:** Personality, self-efficacy, skills

**Interpersonal:** Relationships, support network, resources

**Spiritual:** Meaning system, practice, order

**Community:** Services, access, engagement, purpose



# Refugee Continuum

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**Disruption**



**Flight**



**Resettlement**





# Disruption

- Harassment, intimidation, threats
- Being followed or monitored
- Fear of arrest/imprisonment
- Need for secrecy, silence, mistrust
- Loss of job/livelihood
- Disruption of studies
- Prohibition of religious practices
- Malnutrition
- Lack of medical care
- Loss of home and possessions
- Separation from family
- Living in hiding
- Arrests, physical assault, rape, torture
- Witnessing violence







# Flight

- Fear of being caught/returned
- Crossing checkpoints and borders
- Harassment
- Robbery
- Exploitation: bribes, lies, entrapment
- Crowded, unsanitary conditions
- Malnutrition
- Lack of medical care
- Uncertainty
- Competition for scarce resources
- Danger from war/raids
- Gender-based violence
- Intergroup conflict





# Resettlement

- Expectations
- Legal status
- Culture shock
- Change social and economic status
- Loss of identity and roles
- Language barriers
- Racial, ethnic and/or religious discrimination
- Family separation/reunification
- Inadequate housing
- Fear/mistrust of authority
- Re-traumatization
- Domestic violence
- Bad news from home





# What can you do?

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- Establish trust, always be honest
- Bring the best services to those with the least
- Focus on safety and empowerment
- Trauma-informed approach
- Focus on resilience of humans, learn from them and bring them help to move on with life
- Tie their experience to clients with similar ones who have progressed and healed
- Be humble about the effect you can have with these long-standing problems
- Take care of yourself





# Contact Information

The image shows a screenshot of the GCJFCS website. At the top left is the logo, which consists of a globe with a tree inside and the text 'gulf coast JFCS'. To the right of the logo is a navigation menu with the following items: Home, About GCJFCS, About You, Children & Family, Elderly & Disabled, Employment, Jewish Community, Mental Health, and Refugee. Below the navigation menu is a banner featuring a close-up photograph of an elderly Black man's face. Overlaid on the right side of the photograph is the text 'in times of need' in a large, white, serif font. To the right of the photograph, the text 'GCJF&CS Refugee Services' is displayed in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

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