

The Vermont Cultural Brokers program provides integrated prevention and early intervention services to refugees and immigrants living with, or at risk for developing, substance use disorder. Six Cultural Brokers from Vermont's Somali/Somali Bantu, Nepali/Bhutanese, Central Africa/Cong, and Arabic speaking communities act as liaisons to local schools, clinics, community agencies, medical providers, mental health agencies and law enforcement.

Cultural Brokers build trusting relationships with Vermont's refugee and immigrant communities offering screening and referral to treatment for substance use disorder.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Since the program began in 2015 over 7,790 people have been screened

What are our goals?

- Raise awareness around mental health and substance use within refugee communities
- Implement culturally responsive universal screening models that can reduce stigma associated with mental health and substance use treatment
- Connect community members to needed services
- Facilitate access to culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health crisis response

What progress have we made in the past year?

Screening

Cultural Brokers utilize Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment ([SBIRT](#)) within their communities. SBIRT is a public health approach to the delivery of early intervention and treatment services for people with substance use disorder (SUD), as well as those who are at risk of developing SUD¹. Between July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, 910 people were screened.

Suicide Prevention and Awareness Training and Cultural Adaptation

In the past year, we have worked with the Vermont Department of Health Division of Emergency Preparedness, Response and Injury Prevention and Office of Health Equity Integration to improve access to mental health and suicide prevention education and support for former refugee and immigrant communities connected to the Cultural Brokers Program in Chittenden County. As part of this effort work the Cultural Brokers worked with the National alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) – New Hampshire Chapter to adapt and translate the NAMI [Connect](#) Suicide Prevention and Awareness training. Eight community educational sessions were then offered to the Nepalese, Somali and Somlai Bantu, Congolese and Arab-speaking communities in Chittenden County. This training helps community members to recognize when someone may be struggling with their mental health and how to help connect them with support.

For more information, contact AHS.VDHDSU@vermont.gov.