

To: Professor Toomey, Instructor of English 379: Introduction to Professional Writing

From: Olivia Yahner, Student

Subject: Feasibility Study for Russian/Belarusian Immigration Therapy Program

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Purpose:

The goal of this therapy program is to create a culturally sensitive mental health program for Russian and Belarussian immigrants as well as families in the United States who have Russian and Belarussian relatives who are mentally impacted by past and present events relating to immigration issues and the Russian/Ukraine War. My analysis of the feasibility in creating and submitting a project proposal for a grant will be submitted by the end of the fall 2024 semester.

Summary:

For my grant proposal to be plausible and securable, I would need to conduct my research on culturally sensitive mental health programs, specifically towards Russian and Belarussian populations.

This would include studying trauma therapy modules used by mental health facilities, challenges of immigrant mental health, and culturally competent therapy techniques used by professional psychologists and therapists. My research would also involve examining events like the 2020-2021 Belarusian Protest, Police brutality and false imprisonment in response to the protesters, Russia-Ukraine War.

I have identified potential mental health programs that could assist me in my research. The U.S. The Refugee Resettlement Program seemed like a good place to start. Despite its controversy in lacking a tight national mental health strategy, it seems like a good place to research because of its loose ends and certain weak points. I believe by analyzing its weak points, I can reflect on it and avoid making similar mistakes the program has made to ensure the program provides my targeted population with the help they need. Another program I found was called Inclusive Therapists, which is a social justice and liberation-oriented therapy program for collective liberation and healing: Racial, 2SLGBTQIA+, Neurodivergence, and Disability Justice. I feel like this program could be conducive in helping me research how they help people of different cultures, race, and identity, which I could use for the modules in my program.

Background:

Historically speaking, both Russian and Belarussian immigrants have immigrated to the US over several decades, mostly for economic opportunities or escaping political instability like war and immigrants who were “forcibly displaced from the previous living area and, especially, entering a new cultural environment significantly contributes to the mental health issues caused by war exposure and witnessing”. Ever since the fall of the Soviet Union and recent geopolitical conflicts, emigration has increased.

A study showed that “those who were directly exposed to military actions, physical violence, or severe human suffering had higher levels of anxiety, depression, stress, and trauma-related symptoms”. War can cause deep everlasting trauma on a person, and PTSD because of trauma can impede a person’s way of life.

I would like to propose a therapy program for Belarussian and Russian Immigrant refugees, specifically young adult and adult Belarussian and Russian immigrants who have experienced significant trauma. For this program to work, I would need the following conditions:

- I would like this program to be initiated in Eastern Massachusetts, center of Boston preferably where immigrants are most likely to be populated. However, I feel like this is a bit of a huge leap so if that doesn't work, plan B would be to establish a program in a smaller town near Boston. I might research a bit more into this to get better advice of where it would be a great place to set up a therapy program
- The program will have instructors who are fluent in both Russian, Belarussian, and English language.
- I want this therapy group to be non-profitable and accessible to low-income immigrants. Assuming most do not have medical insurance or are struggling to make ends meet shouldn't be paying to heal their mental health. I want this to be a place to network and provide the therapy they need.
- I want specific hours to be set in place. I feel like two 3-hour sessions a week. Saturday 12pm-3pm and Sunday 12pm-3pm. The requirement will be for participants to attend one a week. I assume most participants will not be able to attend Sunday meetings either due to religious reasons or time conflicts, Weekdays tend to be working days hence why I chose weekends for my program.
- The group meetings will have exercise practices and "homework" assignments, talk circles where they share their experiences and connect with other members, and complimentary snacks and a 30 min break in between sessions.

- Include events that sell merchandise, baked goods, and donation promotions to help the program.
- With these considerations, I believe these will cement a durable foundation if the program were to be established.

The program itself would not bring in a lot of money, but it's not about money it's about providing Belarussian and Russian immigrants the help they need to heal and acclimate to their new and unfamiliar environment.

The project itself isn't new, for there are multiple immigration therapy groups established across the US and around the world, but it can be real and verifiable because of recent events like the Russia-Ukraine War, and Belarus' ongoing political and immigration issues have caused major trauma towards my targeted audience, especially for those who served in the war.

This program will be timeless because immigration around the world happens every day and "Migration, either voluntary or forced, is a major stressful event for individuals and families and, therefore, is a prominent risk factor for exacerbation of mental disorders".

The program will have a combination of multiple elements including: trauma-informed care, cultural and linguistic providence, and long-term mental health support. The scalability of this program is adaptable. It can serve other immigrant populations other than Russian and Belarussian populations. There are other countries affected by immigration and wars, especially the Russia-Ukraine War. With more adjustments and specific considerations, this program could expand geographically.

Given my research skills, and knowledge of Belarusian and Russian events I'd say this project is well within my abilities. I have the tools, the target audience, and visual of what I need to make this feasible into my grant proposal.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, my proposal for a mental health program for Belarusian and Russian immigrants, particularly those who were impacted by recent geopolitical conflicts such as the Russian-Ukraine War and immigration issues is both timely and necessary. The idea of an immigrant focused mental health program isn't new, but it focuses on specific demographics: Russian and Belarusians. The structure of my planned program is flexible and scalable despite its non-profit status. The program even has promise of possibly expanding geographical to other demographics who are also impacted by geopolitical conflicts. My research skills and understanding of my targeted audience's mental health challenges will ensure the program's relevancy and succeed in supporting Russian and Belarussian mental health.

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