

# MARCH COMMUNITY SCHOOLS COP – PRESENTATION OF URM PROGRAM

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PRESENTED BY:

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## Who We Are

- ❑ Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area ~ Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) Program
- ❑ Valeska Fernandez, MA ~ Youth Resettlement Specialist
- ❑ Davina Abujudeh, LICSW ~ Social Worker





# What We'll Discuss

- ❑ URM Program Overview
- ❑ Educational Challenges For Our Population
- ❑ Strengths Our Population Demonstrate in Education
- ❑ Undocumented Immigrants
- ❑ Ideas For Moving Forward

# URM Program Overview

## Case Study: Mohammad

- Originally from Afghanistan
- Migrated to Pakistan & Indonesia
- Came to US at age 17 as URM, placed in foster home in Beltsville
- Enrolled in 9<sup>th</sup> grade local public high school in ESOL program



# URM Education Challenges

- ❑ English Language Development
- ❑ Gaps In/Lack Of Formal Education
- ❑ Cultural Adjustment
- ❑ High School to College Transition
- ❑ Gang Presence in Schools



# Mohammad's Education Challenges

- ❑ Education fees in Afghanistan
- ❑ Lack of formal education during migration
- ❑ No English language skills upon arrival in US
- ❑ Complex trauma created difficulties in focus, memory, and learning
- ❑ Age/life experience differences among peers

# URM Education Strengths

- ❑ Resilience
- ❑ Drive
- ❑ Resources through CFSA
- ❑ Immigration status
- ❑ Flexibility



# Mohammad's Education Strengths

- ❑ “Street Smarts”
- ❑ Adaptability
- ❑ Learned English quickly – already accustomed to learning new languages
- ❑ Had support of his FP, SW, GAL, etc to advocate for IEP, education attorney, increased access to resources through school, etc
- ❑ Had options and was willing to explore them – Mohammad chose to leave public school and enroll in a GED program





# Undocumented Immigrant Youth

- ❑ Includes youth of undocumented immigrant parents
- ❑ Constant fear of detention/deportation
- ❑ Financial instability at home
- ❑ Lack of access to resources
- ❑ Similar challenges as URM youth



# Ideas for Moving Forward

- ❑ Vocational Training Opportunities
- ❑ Job Readiness Training
- ❑ METS Program





# Mohammad's Journey Onward

- ❑ Mohammad aged out of the URM Program at 21
- ❑ Did not complete GED/was denied IEP
- ❑ Considered JobCorps
- ❑ Is working full time and attending Next Step's GED program part time



## CONTACT US

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