



SUDANESE

Most of the approximately 2000 Sudanese people in Guilford County have arrived in the last eight years. A majority are Muslims from the northern part of the Sudan. However, in the last couple of years a group of young men from the South, primarily Christian and nicknamed the “Lost Boys,” have been resettled as refugees. Within the local Sudanese population there are many who were professionals in their home land (lawyers, doctors, veterinarians, etc.) who are now working as cab drivers.



• DID YOU KNOW?

- There are over 2000 Sudanese people who live in Guilford County.
- Most Sudanese are here as either refugees, fleeing the war in Southern Sudan, or as immigrants that have arrived on student visas or by lottery.
- Most Sudanese refugees have come through either Kenya or Egypt.

- Information included here is provided to help you become more aware of the culture and traditions of your clients, students and co-workers. Please use this only as a guide, keeping in mind that all people within a culture are not the same. Be sure to ask your clients and their families about their specific beliefs, practices and customs. Showing respect and openness toward their traditions will help you build better relationships and provide more effective services.

• CULTURE

LANGUAGE In Sudan there are 600 different ethnic groups who speak more than 400 languages and dialects. The official and most common language is Arabic.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES & BELIEFS The two main religions in Sudan are Islam and Christianity. Islam is predominant in the North whereas Christianity is the most common among the people of the South. Islam insists that the relationship between a person and God should be direct. No intercessors can be between an individual and God. In Islam, females are not allowed to show any part of their body in the presence of males except for face, hands, and feet. The exceptions to this rule are husband, father, brother, and uncle. It is cultural that a female be seen or attended to by a female provider. Most women from Sudan feel uncomfortable with male service providers.

SOCIAL CLASS Social class is generally related to tribal origin and membership in a particular ethnic group. This is important in Sudanese culture especially with respect to marriage. Cross-marriage between some tribal and ethnic groups is not socially

acceptable because some groups consider themselves superior to others. This is also reflected in daily life since certain ethnic groups tend to dominate particular jobs. Within a given ethnic group there are three socio-economic classes: high, middle, and low. Class largely determines the places people live and with whom they socialize.

EDUCATION Education is very important in the Sudanese community. Those who have earned high degrees are respected for their knowledge, regardless of which ethnic group they belong to. Most Sudanese are educated, and those who are not are making efforts to go to school.

TIME ORIENTATION Sudanese people tend to have a relaxed approach to time. To be late is very normal and does not imply rudeness. It only means that something “came up” (usually within the family or among close friends). Sometimes lateness is related to social status. Important people are expected to be late while everyone waits for them.

FOOD & DIET Most Sudanese eat meat, such as lamb, beef, fish and chicken. They eat a mix of beef and vegetables. Most of these foods are fried. Also, they eat bread,

especially pita bread. Sudanese live to drink tea and their morning milk tea is very important.

LEISURE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY Most Sudanese do not participate in leisure physical activity because most individuals work long hours or have more than one job.

• FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS

GENDER ROLES Family relationships are highly valued in Sudanese culture. The family unit includes: mother, father, wife, children, brothers, sisters, grandparents, nephews, nieces, cousins, in-laws, and godparents. By tradition, the father is the head of the household and the official leader. He is responsible for all financial aspects of family life. Customarily, the father makes all decisions regarding the family and may consult his brothers and brothers-in-law or other male family members.

Families support one another financially and socially. Traditionally, families take care of their sick, old, and mentally ill members. Women provide most of these social services and are also responsible for maintaining the home and raising the children.

CHILDREN & YOUTH One of the challenges young people in the Sudanese community are facing is their parents' difficulty adjusting to life in this country. Many families have a hard time finding jobs that meet their financial needs because they are not qualified. It is extremely hard to fit into a new culture that is very different from one's own. At school the Sudanese face language and cultural barriers. It is hard for them to fit in and behave like the others without denying a part of themselves. In the larger community, the Sudanese youth want to adapt to American culture while their parents want them to hold onto their own culture.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Sudanese people are very peaceful by nature. They try to avoid conflicts as much as possible. When it comes to health care, for example, they will not question the provider if they do not like something. Instead, they will not come back to receive services in the same place.

Family conflicts are handled differently. When internal social or behavioral conflicts arise, people try to resolve them within the nuclear family. If this fails, mediators from the extended family become involved. It is

seldom that a stranger, such as a health provider, would be approached. Most of the time Sudanese people prefer to live with their problems than to involve people they do not know.

GREETINGS & SHOWING

RESPECT Respect is a very important part of everyday life. Elders receive the highest respect and are considered a source of cultural knowledge, experience, and wisdom. To show respect, all older people are called either uncle, aunt, grandpa, or grandma regardless of their actual relationship with a person. Teachers are also respected and traditionally have the right to discipline children at all times in all places.

Religious leaders are well respected and can sometimes be consulted in personal matters.

The word "Sheikh" has to precede their name or they can be called "Mawalana" instead. The prayer leader in the mosque is called "Imam". It is considered disrespectful to call these people by their names only.

GESTURES & CUSTOMS

Sudanese culture is very informal. Except for elders, teachers, and religious leaders, every person is called by their first name. This is considered very friendly and appropriate. Shaking hands is

very important when greeting someone or saying goodbye. Some females do not like shaking hands with males and men should not initiate a handshake with a woman unless she extends her hand first. The right hand should be used for greeting,



eating, and all other activities. The left hand is used only for bodily hygiene.

"Please" and "thank you" are often used and are appreciated. Eye contact among the Sudanese is very important. Making eye contact with someone means that you care about them.

Avoid showing the sole of your foot to someone. This is a sign of disrespect. Also, avoid using an index finger to call someone. This is seen as rude and disrespectful.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

HEALTH BELIEFS Although staying healthy is very important in the Sudanese community, people do not usually access preventative medicine, nor do they have a clear concept of health and wellness. Except for children's immunizations, no one seeks professional medical help unless they become very sick and cannot be treated at home. For mild illnesses that can be handled by herbs or over-the-counter medicines, they do not consult a health care provider. Many Sudanese in Greensboro suffer from diabetes, hypertension, and seasonal allergies, and some are known to be overweight.

Culturally, Sudanese people do not talk about sexual issues openly, but Sudanese women don't have a problem discussing their reproductive health with their health care providers. They tend to feel more comfortable, however, with female providers.

Traditionally, girls from the Sudanese community get married at an early age, but sex before



marriage is unacceptable. However, the incidence of adolescence pregnancy continues to be a problem within the Sudanese community. HIV/AIDS and STDs are uncommon.

ALCOHOL & SUBSTANCE USE

In some communities, it is okay to drink alcohol, although the prevalence among Muslims and women is very low. Drug abuse has not typically been a problem for the Sudanese. However, use of illicit drugs is becoming a more prevalent issue among the youth. Smoking on the other hand is common, though not among women.

OBSTACLES TO ACCESSING

CARE The largest obstacles to accessing health care are language barriers, lack of health insurance, and no transportation. Financial barriers are directly related to lack of insurance. The other limitation is not understanding health and wellness concepts.

OUTREACH TIPS

- Utilize members from the community. Many Sudanese are well educated with a good knowledge of the medical system.
- Use bright colors for printing flyers and brochures.
- Place announcements in places where Sudanese people spend their time: Middle Eastern grocery stores, laundromats, and mosques.
- Word of mouth is the primary form of communication in this community, so current or former clients are your best advertisement.

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