



Clarkston, Georgia

# Getting Immigrant Youth Ready

*Leaders collaborate to create a web of supports in a community where refugees settle.*



**W**hen people flee wars in Liberia and Sudan or escape poverty in Togo and the Philippines, many land in Clarkston, Ga. – a city outside Atlanta where some estimates say refugees account for half the 7,500 residents. So while many communities face the challenge of helping immigrant youth succeed, few places face it more than Clarkston.

Community leaders just launched an initiative to meet that challenge by creating a web of services and supports for young people from foreign lands, using Ready by 21 strategies to help develop their plan.

The project – PHLOTES (Primary Home Language Other than English) to the Top – is a collective impact initiative that seeks to concentrate educational, social and workforce services on needy students and their families to order to increase literacy, graduation rates, job readiness and home ownership.

Last month, more than 50 representatives from government, education and community services throughout DeKalb County gathered to review the plan and determine how they can work together to carry it out. (DeKalb, where Clarkston sits, is part

of the federal Refugee Resettlement Program.) The United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta – which spearheads the Ready by 21 initiative in the region – recognized that Ready by 21 tools and strategies could help this process succeed.

## The group used tools like mapping moving trains and the Stakeholders Wheel to develop an initial matrix of services for youth and families

Two staffers from the Forum for Youth Investment – Larry Pasti and Kiley Bednar – led the group in brainstorming about which stakeholders need to be included in the project, and which initiatives and coalitions need to be connected to it. In order to visualize their resources, connections and gaps, the group used tools like mapping moving trains and the Stakeholders

Wheel to develop an initial matrix of services for youth and families, a map of services along the Insulated Education Pipeline and a map of coalitions serving the target community.

The group brainstorm identified 25 additional stakeholders, including faith-based institutions serving refugees, and more than 10 potential coalitions, including the Atlanta Refugee Youth Network and a bicycle advocacy group called PATH. (Bicycles are a common means of transportation for refugees.)



## The process offers a good example of how Ready by 21 can be quickly applied to on-the-ground initiatives

The project includes literacy and computer instruction in partnership with higher education institutions; a “job ready” program for older students and a “career training center” for parents, both geared toward providing skills needed by county employers; customized help in finding housing; financial management instruction; and transportation services – including volunteer drivers and bus passes – to get participants to and from these services and supports.

The Higher Education Advisory Council, which oversees the initiative, folded that input into the plan, which was publicly unveiled last month by the county’s chief executive officer.

The process offers a good example of how Ready by 21 can be quickly applied to on-the-ground initiatives in specific communities. Atlanta’s Ready by 21 Leadership Council committed itself to aligning its state and regional work with action in specific neighborhoods. The Leadership Council designated Clarkston as one of those neighborhoods, and was therefore part of the PHLOTES to the Top project and brought in Ready by 21.

PHLOTES to the Top begins operating this fall through extended day programs for both students and families in one cluster of schools, with plans to expand. Pasti, the Forum’s director of field services, said the Forum “will provide continuing support and technical assistance to help this collaborative effort succeed.”

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**For more information, visit [www.readyby21.org](http://www.readyby21.org)**