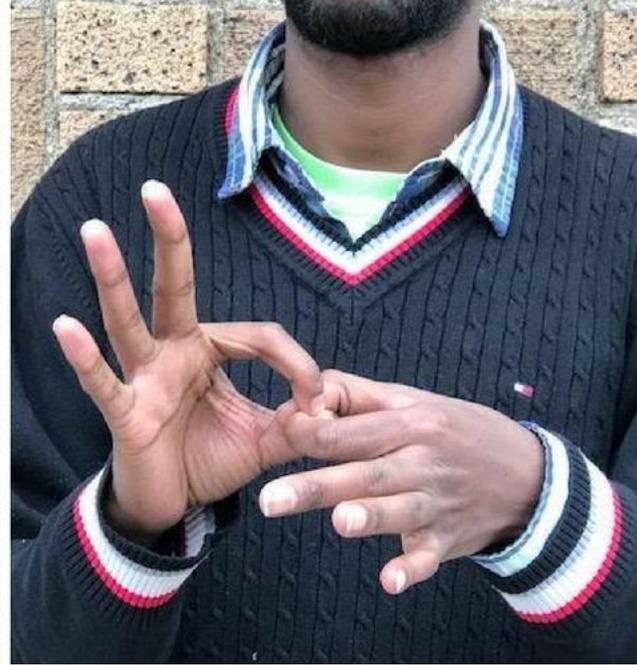

Supporting Deaf, DeafBlind and hard of hearing immigrants and refugees experiencing interpersonal violence & exploitation

May 16th, 2019

A decorative graphic at the bottom left of the slide, consisting of overlapping, semi-transparent shapes in shades of red, orange, and green, resembling a stylized landscape or abstract design.



ThinkSelf's mission is to offer resources, education & support to Minnesota Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing adults seeking full access to options for learning, safety, justice, employment skills, and community.

English

It's up to you.

It's your choice.

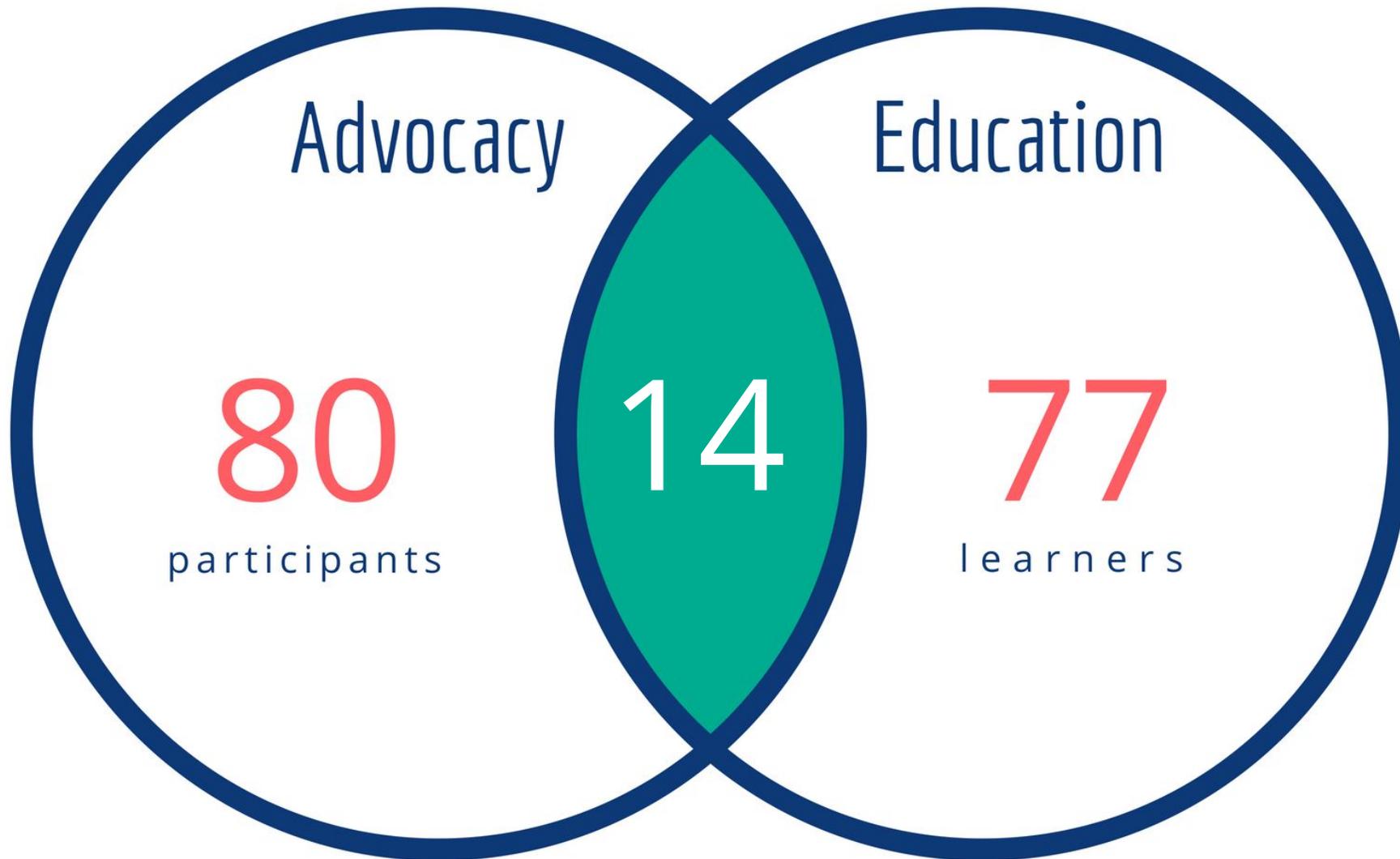
You have options.



It's time to start thinking about what YOU want.



ASL

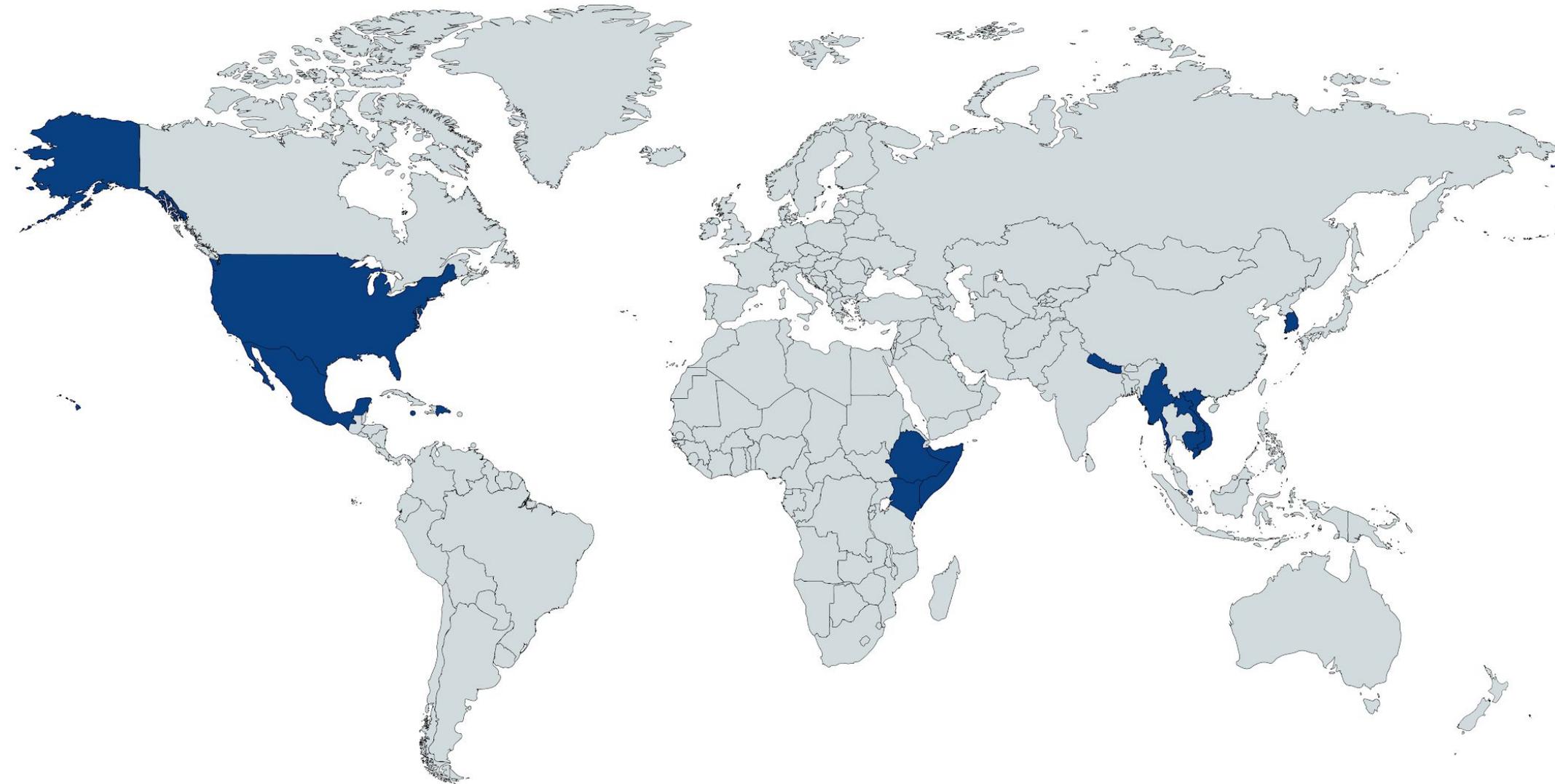


Largest immigrant/refugee communities in MN

1 Mexico	67,371	6 Thailand	17,406
2 India	28,622	7 Ethiopia	17,121
3 Somalia	25,668	8 China	15,837
4 Laos	25,516	9 Korea	14,113
5 Vietnam	19,789	10 Canada	12,142



Countries Represented at ThinkSelf



- United States
- Somalia
- Mexico
- Myanmar
- Laos
- Ethiopia
- Nepal
- Singapore
- Jamaica
- Kenya
- Vietnam
- Cambodia
- Dominican Republic
- South Korea



Some of our **current** advocacy participants hail from....

- Somalia
- Romania
- Ethiopia
- Vietnam
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Honduras
- Laos
- Mexico
- Nepal

11 participants did not disclose



Why would people leave their homes and families to come to the U.S.?

Safety: War, crime, abuse

Love: Reunite with their families or get married

Faith: Religious freedom, church sponsorship

Opportunity: Education, employment, language

Empowerment: Better access, increased services and more protection for Deaf, DeafBlind and hard of hearing individuals





Experiences of abuse & trauma

A study (Admire & Ramirez, 2017) involving 60 Deaf or hard of hearing U.S. immigrants (primarily from Mexico plus several from Guatemala, Lebanon, and El Salvador):

- **Devaluation within family systems**

- 18 participants described violence or abuse by an immediate or extended family member including violence that was limited only to deaf members of the family

- **Devaluation by systems including educational and criminal justice**

- “If I used sign [language], the teachers would hit my hand with a horse whip....To punish me, they would make me stand up, and I would have to hold 3 bricks in each hand for 10 minutes. I would cry; it was so heavy. I got two bricks put on once, and one of them fell, so I got beat with a horse whip on my behind.”
- In an instance where a neighbor raped his deaf sister...“The police came, and they had a meeting with [my] father . . . and the neighbor, and the police said, “It was meant in fun . . . it’s okay.” My father tried to pay to prosecute the guy for raping my deaf sister. But he lost the money and the case because no one cared about the rape of a deaf girl.”



Language Deprivation

- Lack of full access to a natural language during the critical period of language acquisition (<5 years); <8% deaf children receive regular access to sign language in the home (i.e., fluent, bidirectional conversations)
- No formal DHH education in developing countries
- Significant variability in cochlear implant-related outcomes when sign language is not used

[Source: Hall, W C, et al. "Language Deprivation Syndrome: a Possible Neurodevelopmental Disorder with Sociocultural Origins."](#)



Impact of Language Deprivation

- 50% of Deaf adults read below a 4th grade reading level
- Higher prevalence of behavioral health concerns than the general population
- Fund of knowledge deficits (lack of access to incidental learning via media such as radio, newspapers, TV, and word of mouth)
- Higher rates of abuse, trauma, sexual/physical violence

[Source: Hall, W C, et al. "Language Deprivation Syndrome: a Possible Neurodevelopmental Disorder with Sociocultural Origins."](#)

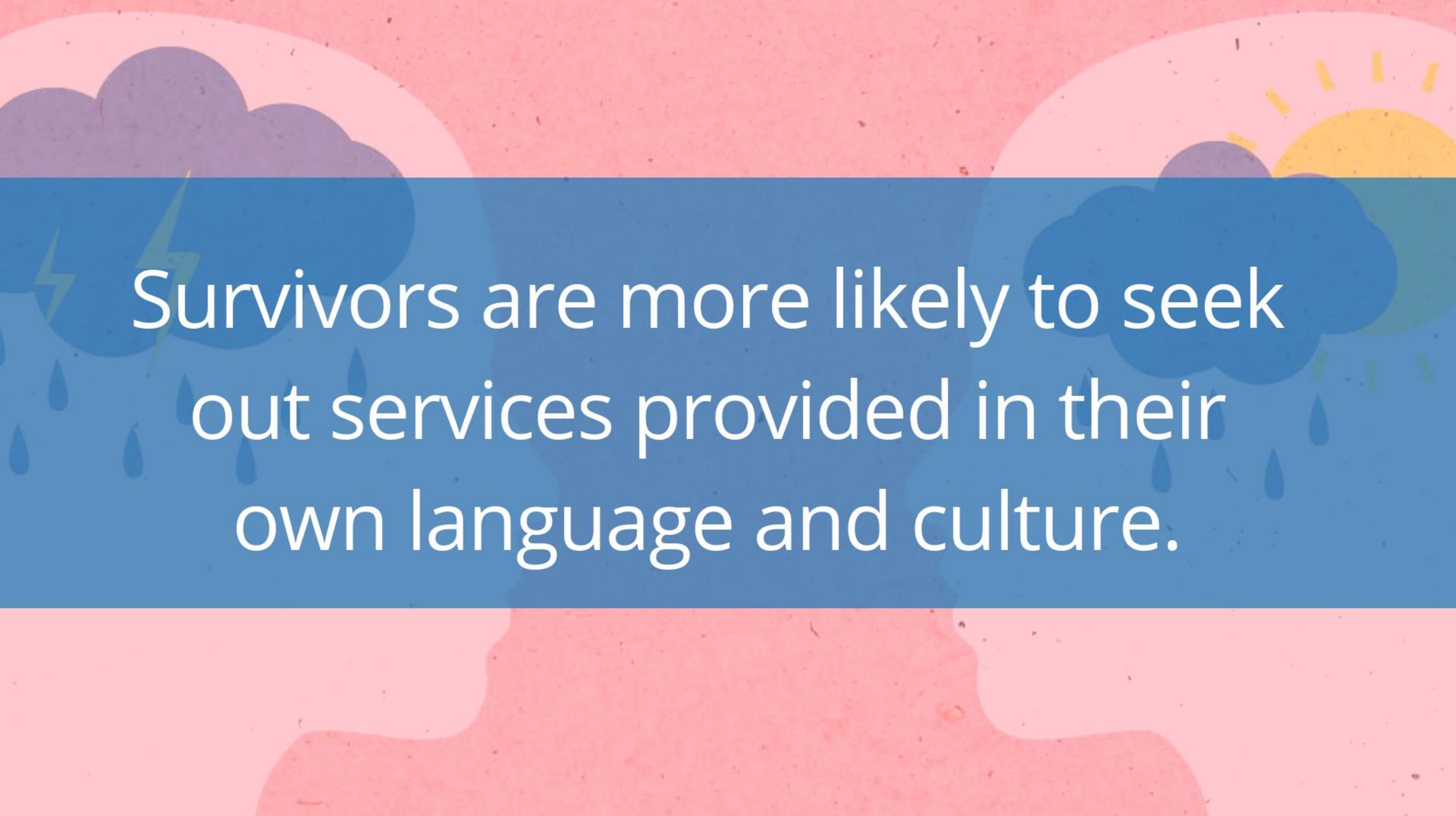




Language access planning



Because it's the right thing to do.



Survivors are more likely to seek out services provided in their own language and culture.

Federal Law

Title VI of the Civil Rights
Act of 1964

Omnibus Crime Control & Safe Streets
Act of 1968

Re: Language Access for LEP persons, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 prohibit any agency receiving federal funds from discriminating on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

To be subject to Title VI, a program must constitute a “program” under Section 606 of Title VI, and also must receive federal financial assistance, which typically is construed as the **receipt of grants or monetary awards.**



Federal Law

Americans with Disabilities Act

Deaf and hard of hearing individuals accessing district courts throughout the state are federally protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The ADA mandates that all district courts provide reasonable accommodations to court users.

Therefore, auxiliary aids and services, including (but not limited to) sign language interpreters when appropriate, must be provided to all deaf and hard of hearing court users in compliance with the ADA.



Minnesota Law

Minn. Stat. § 611.30

Minn. Stat. § 611.30 states it is “the policy of this state that the constitutional rights of persons disabled in communication cannot be fully protected unless qualified interpreters are available to assist them in legal proceedings.”



Minnesota Law

Minn. Stat. §§ 611.32-611.33

LEP and deaf or hard of hearing defendants and witnesses have the right to a court-appointed interpreter at no cost during a criminal case proceeding.



Four Factor Test

In 2002, the DOJ issued this guidance in assessing a recipient's compliance with Title VI's prohibitions

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons served or encountered in the eligible service population;
2. The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program;
3. The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the program; and
4. The resources available to the recipient and costs.



Most frequently requested interpreter languages in MN Courts

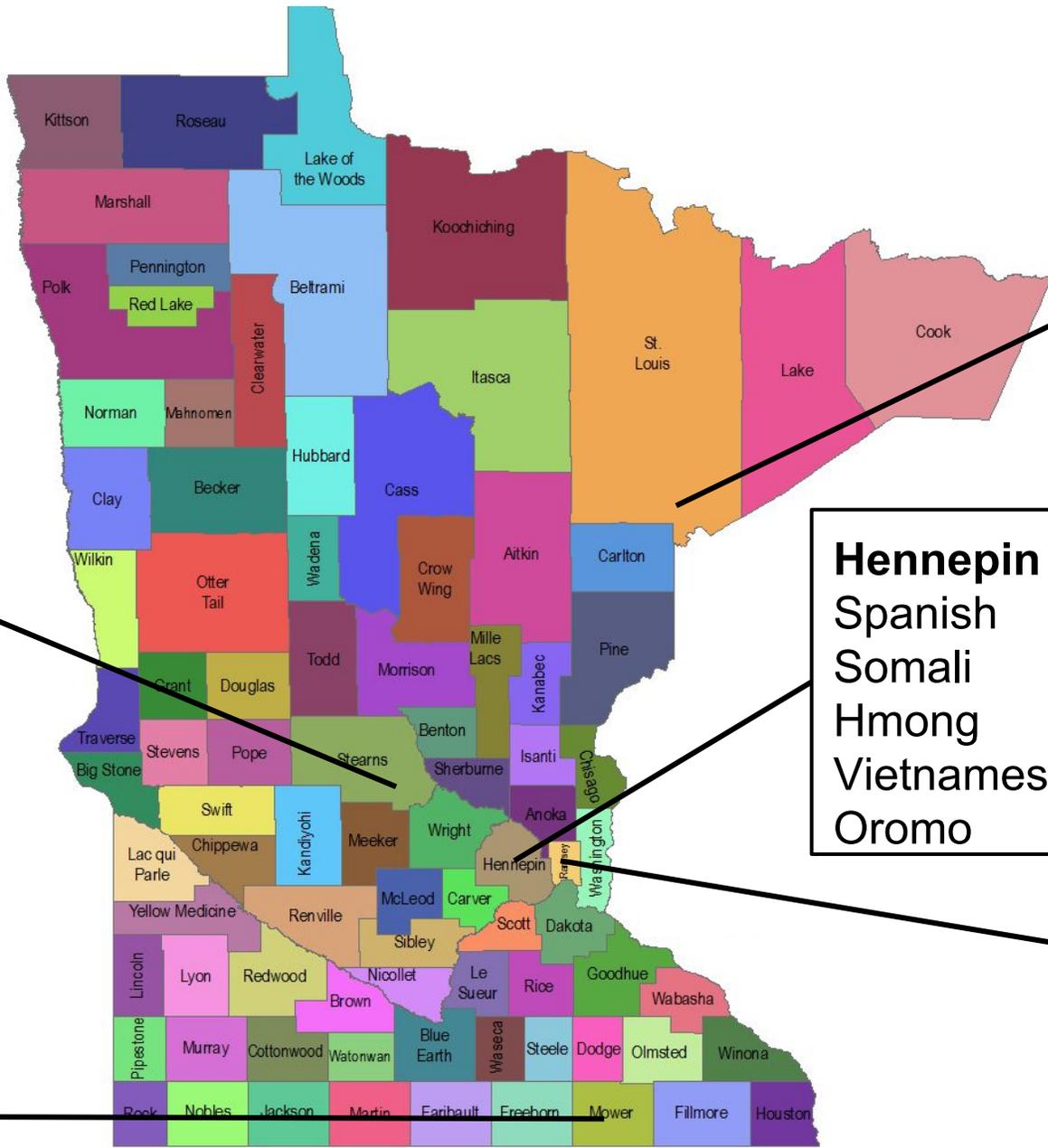
Stearns
 Somali
 Spanish
 Nuer
 ASL
 Arabic

St. Louis
 ASL
 Lao
 Bosnian

Hennepin
 Spanish
 Somali
 Hmong
 Vietnamese
 Oromo

Mower
 Spanish
 Anuak
 Nuer
 Arabic
 Vietnamese

Ramsey
 Spanish
 Hmong
 Somali
 Amharic
 Karen



Language access and cultural sensitivity goes both ways

Struggling to hire staff and administration from immigrant communities?

Ensure your budget considers:

- Spoken language interpreters
- Document and media translations
- Stipends/contracts for community liaisons, training and consultation
- Artwork

What else?

Don't forget that VRS also has a Spanish to ASL option. Use it!



Case Studies

Where do we get referrals from?

- Court
- Police
- Social worker
- Hospital/doctor's office
- Our partnered agencies
- Other agencies that we made connection
 - e.g. the county offices
- Some deaf community members are involved with deaf refugees/immigrant refer them to us.
- The ABE program
 - Program overlaps...how?
 - Students expressed stories, teachers refer them to us, the advocacy program



Oftentime, we don't find out all the details of a story until later on. It's like a puzzle.



Why it like a puzzle?

Many reasons this may be happening....

- 1. Trust needs to be built between the participant and advocate/organization.**
- 2. Language Deprivation/lack of education about laws and protections in USA**
 - *Parents/family takes their paycheck benefits without their consent. This may be normal in culture/family or necessary to cover rent/food/etc., but is done without consent or understanding.*
 - *With no formal language or incidental learning, they may not know the procedures or actualities involved in divorcing or leaving a spouse in a culturally-appropriate way.*
- 3. Trauma**
 - *Impact on memory, recollection/understanding of timelines.*
- 4. Cultural norms**
 - *DVSA may be normalized by culture, e.g., Hmong culture, man are dominant. If woman is harmed, it's her fault or part of normal "discipline" of a wife. Family does not want to be responsible for them if their husband is no longer their caretaker. If she wants to get a divorce, her fault and community will judge her & reject her because "she doesn't please her husband enough."*



Chesa

Birthplace: Burma

Culture: Karen

War refugee

Married mother of 6 living in a 2 bedroom apartment (2 born in USA)

- Referred by Public Health Nurse who had been working with her along with a CDI/Interpreter team for over a year. No literacy or formal language skills but communicates well with her older children (via subtle facial expressions and gestures).
- Husband arrested for DV due to serious interpretation errors via unqualified CDI; PHN made a vulnerable adult report that resulted in husband being arrested for domestic assault.
- During 1:1, Deaf advocate realized how serious the interpretation errors were. Chesa deeply loves and depends on her husband; she was 8 months pregnant and refused to eat for weeks while he was in jail. Deaf advocate brought in new interpreting team. Chesa's self-expression changed dramatically with a more effective interpreting team; she is bright, funny and smart.
- Deaf advocate assisted Chesa in writing a civil OFP that would allow her husband to move back home and met with prosecutor to relay Chesa's wishes. Prosecutor did not believe the denials of abuse but accepted her statement and acknowledged the OFP. During sentencing the court planned to enforce a DANCO (judge-ordered domestic assault no contact order). Prosecution did inform the court there was a civil OFP in place and court agreed to drop the DANCO. Husband was released on probation and returned home.



Liya

Birthplace: Ethiopia

Muslim

Married, two children born in USA

Immigrant

- Referred to ThinkSelf by a friend in the local Muslim community.
- Wanted husband removed from home due to verbal abuse from husband and mother in law, as well as disagreements on child discipline.
- Did not qualify for a DV shelter; had to go into a family homeless shelter (in Minnesota, the only way to get homeless services is if you're in a shelter for at least two weeks); received a housing voucher but no support from shelter staff in finding a place.
- No job, does not qualify for SSI or government assistance other than assistance for her children.
- Interpreter issues in court; both parties require a team with CDI.
- Very independent and private; tends to approach advocate only when in serious crisis.



Rossy

Birthplace: Honduras

Single, transition student

Immigrant seeking asylum

- Parents left her in Honduras with her grandma to go to the USA when she was a toddler. She then left Honduras at 16 with her cousins to escape extreme street violence and possibly other forms of violence she has not expressed; experiences effects of serious trauma.
- Arrested in Texas after crossing the border; went to court to request asylum. The judge granted asylum and allowed her to join her parents on the condition she would attend a Deaf school
- Asylum expired when she turned 18.
- Court pending for possible deportation. Many communication issues with her attorney.
- Experiences language deprivation but very bright and has goals; wants to work for father's painting business. Parents are undocumented but work, pay taxes, etc.; parents cannot sponsor her, support her with legal proceedings or attend court.



Andrei & Elena

Birthplace: Romania

Married

Immigrants

- From Romania; highly fluent in Romanian sign language and good language foundation to learn/comprehend English and ASL.
- Adult daughter sponsored them to move here on a work visa, helped them find employment and home.
- After three years, got laid off and lost his home. Does not want to return to Romania; more opportunity here for Deaf people. Daughter refused to provide any further support and was verbally abusive.
- Other agencies would not provide him services or financial assistance due to immigration status. Came to ThinkSelf for help; self referred, or referred by friend.
- Deaf advocate searched and supported him in securing employment within local Deaf social networks that includes housing!



How can Deaf agencies better connect with immigrant/refugee communities?

- **Be humble and learn the appropriate way to show and accept gratitude. Remember that *verbal commitments = written contracts in many cultures.***
- Collaborate and cross-train with culturally specific DV/SA and advocacy organizations; create formal agreements, meet regularly, make connections.
- Attend events, learn about cultures, build genuine friendships. Be respectfully curious.
- Safety planning:
 - Consider ICE; subscribe to social media tags that alert to increased LE activity
 - Carry documents all the time
 - Offer to hold copies/scans of their documents
 - Cultural considerations for safety: cultural vs. legal divorces and marriages? Child custody? etc.; work with culture-specific agency to navigate and empower.



Tips for how to better serve immigrant communities

- Ensure your agency policies and communications allow for undocumented individuals to feel safe to approach you for support.
- Connect with immigration resource centers for support in processing visa applications and ensuring all requirements of current visa are being met.
- Google is your friend! Always research visa types, requirements, etc. Assume nothing; get a second, third, fourth opinion until you find a solution.
- Stay updated on current laws and legislation- Federal definitions may change and impact applications.





Questions?