



Transcript of Podcast with Nancy Snow

Sheryl: Hello this is Sheryl Gross-Glaser today. I am in contact with Nancy Snow. Nancy is the mobility manager at the transit authority of River City, which is referred to as TARC in Louisville Kentucky. Nancy is going to talk today about travel training for refugees. Okay Nancy why don't you tell me a little bit about what was happening when you came to TARC and what developed after that in terms of working with the refugee population?

Nancy: Okay great, I started in at talk in 2006 as mobility manager and the agency was already involved and worked with migration and refugee clients or several agencies in town. A couple there actually did the resettlement programs and community center that mostly catered to that population. Also when I started TARC was just slowly kicking off the travel training program that mostly was for groups that wanted to learn how to ride the bus.

So at a certain point one of the large agencies that worked with migration and refugee services is Catholic Charities and they contacted us and we went out. There were two trainers to work with ... English is their second language. The class which turned out to be about 70 people and they had 5 or 6 different language groups there and each group had an interpreter. We were used to working with groups of about maybe average of 20 and all English language learners and speakers.

So this is a new experience and we had a 10-minute video that we always used to show and then we would show how to read schedules and maps. We started out trying to use the video and quickly realized it was too much information too fast. The interpreters really couldn't work with in the format we were trying to present it so we just took a step back and we gave the information in small tidbits. Little sections kept it basic would say a little bit.

The interpreters were each sitting at a round table with their group of whatever language group and then they would interpret and we would go on. Then we showed schedules and maps and very slowly explained how to read them; and use them. And then when we were done with the major presentation the two of us just went table to table where we could point out how to use the tools and answer questions through the interpreter. He would ask; we would answer; so that is how it pretty much got started. Do you want me to go on Sheryl from there?

Sheryl: Well I have a question.

Nancy: Okay.

Sheryl: So you had this one almost traumatic experience the first time being that it is very different working with people who speak different languages and maybe have different cultures than working with people who are here already and you can assume a lot.

Nancy: It actually was pretty exciting to do it. It was different and it quickly landed on your feet but they are so interesting to see that what they were going to have to cope with to learn how to do all the things

that we take for granted here. So it was really pretty rewarding to do it. It was kind of exhausting because we didn't know what we were getting into, but it was fun and felt like it was worthwhile to do it.

So it all was and always was good experience and then we learned how to get better from that and the things we could do differently.

Sheryl: And that is what I was going to ask after that first experience where it seemed like you growing so much in a short time, how did the travel training evolve after that for these groups?

Nancy: From there the next ... there is another smaller agency Kentucky Refugee Ministry. It does similar work with Catholic Charities and we got in touch with those groups and offered to do train the trainer sessions for them. And it was up to them who they want to decide – whether its classroom teachers or the professional staff or the translators; I think a couple sent interns.

But they all spoke English well even though it was their second language. They were able to understand very well what we were trying to convey to them. So we did a little bit more in depth travel training; then we worked for just any normal groups so that we made sure that they were comfortable to give the information either to other staff members that their agencies or to work with their clients on ongoing basis.

So that was good for that and we have done several other things as well and we have done English as second language classes for adult learners in Jefferson County Public School System. Probably just one experience with that but there were no translators. So we need to go with lots of visual aids and point and talk and one class had some English and so they pretty clearly were able to absorb some of what we were trying to share with them.

The other class had almost no English and they were very pleasant and appreciative and applauded and smiled, but I truthfully don't know how much that they picked up but again just lots of visual aids and varied short direct transmitter of information for those. Then we did another kind of group: it was travel training for an outers program that was part of Kentucky refugee ministries and for that group we knew well and up ahead what we were doing and who was going and so we had a basic guide providing TARC brochure that is always available in English and Spanish.

We also had it translated for them into Vietnamese, Arabic and Nepali because those were populations that would be there. We had tried Google translate but the interpreters had said it was missing parts and some of it wasn't completely accurate. So we actually had translations done into those other languages. We worked with them, showed them the video, but it had been broken down by their professional person into smaller chunks and comments that they felt that the translator could work with.

We also took them on a bus ride so they could see how to get on and off, and that it was accessible with ramps and space for wheelchairs because it was an older adult group. Then how to pull the cord to ask the driver to let them out. It was great they absolutely loved it. So those are the main categories of types of work that was done here with those populations.

Sheryl: Okay and I assume that those populations have their differences between them and what did you notice about some of the populations that really need more assistance in terms of learning how to use public transit?

Nancy: Well we haven't broken them down to follow them by type of group. We can't do that when they are using the bus out in the public, but I didn't know from the welcome at the agencies that some of these folks come here directly from refugee camps – very rural areas and have never seen a city bus maybe never seen a car. So it really has been a very new cultural shock to them, but by the time we would have them in the class they probably at least were in the bus from where they lived to their class.

So this is giving them a chance to go beyond that. Others are from more urbanized areas and they know how to ride the bus; they just need to kind of understand our system. Or they have at least seen a bus; it's not such a shock to them. They know culturally it's not quite so different. Our agency also supports the agencies through other ways. Our executive directors have been on the board of a couple of the agencies and if they have an event or a program we try to have a booth or provide them information.

If we have service changes that we expect with their clients live or where the classes are we are always in communication with the professionals of those agencies.

Sheryl: Okay and if you could just give a few helpful hints to that things that you are saying that are really important when working with refugee population or populations that don't speak English or don't speak it well what would your suggestions be in terms of doing travel training?

Nancy: The big thing is to provide information in small simple doses. You don't want to get too technical or too detailed. It helps immensely if you know that you are going to go work with the group if you can ask if they have an interpreter, whether they do or don't do visual aids are really helpful. And for us just do the limited manpower and sometimes you may have a constant rotating influx of different clients of these agencies.

If you can get them to agree to a train the trainer session then that really it helps them and it helps the transit agency as well because they are able to impart information to these people that they see every week or everyday in class. So that works well and then just be available for them to support them as needed

Sheryl: Okay, well thank you very much.

Nancy: You are welcome; my pleasure.

Sheryl: Okay all right I am sure this will be helpful to a lot of other people in mobility management and I really appreciate you agreeing to come on and talk to us today.

Nancy: Well it was my pleasure and thanks for asking.