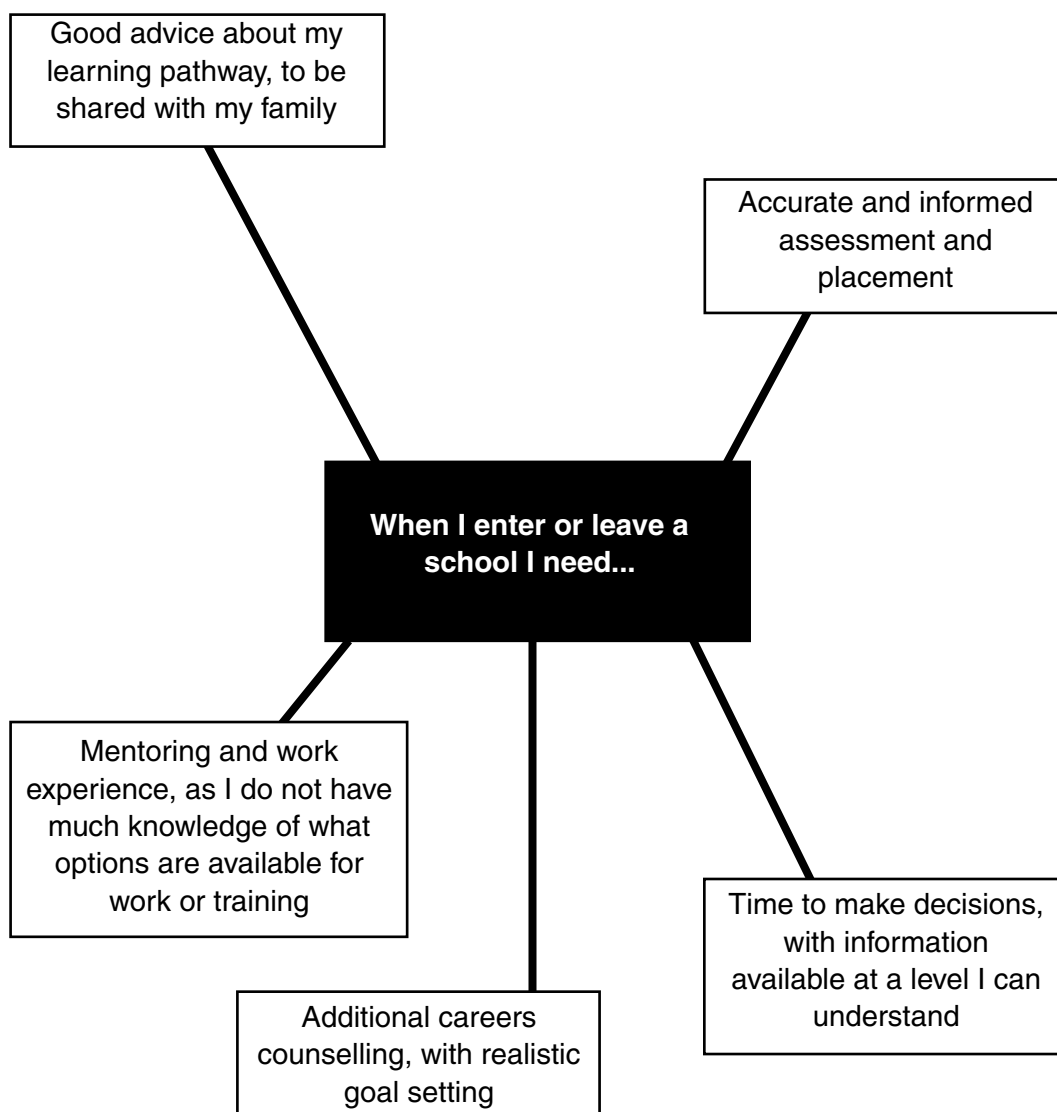


Section 5: Planning for transition from school



Transition points – Pathway planning – Leaving school

There are several points of transition for students from refugee backgrounds. These are:

initial entry to school

This may be as a new entrant five year old, when they will still need additional support, or as an older student beginning school in New Zealand for the first time. *Families Learning Together*, the Ministry of Education publication, is a useful resource to help families understand the school system. Other types of support have been referred to in other sections of this handbook.

change of school during the year

Many students also move schools several times, as accommodation or circumstances dictate. These students will also need careful assessment and monitoring, as evidence suggests that students who are transitory are at higher risk of educational failure. Schools will need to take extra care to ensure that the fundamentals of literacy and numeracy have been established, (see Section 3) and that each student's individual programme plan addresses his or her particular needs.

primary to intermediate or intermediate to secondary

Almost all students moving from one level to another experience anxiety as they enter an unfamiliar environment. Many studies suggest that moving from primary to intermediate (Year 6 to 7) and from intermediate to secondary (Year 8 to 9) poses risks for a number of students. As the students move up these year levels, the systems become more complex. Risk factors for students may include:

- students having to deal with a number of different teachers during the day
- communication systems in the school becoming more complex, so important information about the learner may not reach all teachers
- students having to make choices about which subjects/options to take
- less flexibility in the system to recognise and allow for learning delays and more pressure to cope in the mainstream with inadequate support
- fragmentation of learning and long gaps during the week between classes in each subject, with few opportunities for recapitulation

Schools need to take extra time to ensure that students understand new systems and that families are included in the information sharing.

moving into senior secondary school

Students from refugee backgrounds will often need much more support when choosing subjects for senior school qualifications. They are likely to need careful direction and guidance about the long term effects of choices made in Year 11 (the first year of NCEA). Many students may need an additional year to gain credits (unit standards or achievement standards) at each level. Careers advisers, deans and other personnel who provide this advice and guidance need the knowledge about the learner and the skills and perception to find the right balance between realistic and unrealistic expectations of the students. Choices about training and education need to reflect the capability and potential of the student.

leaving school

Many students from refugee backgrounds leave school for further study or training. It is very important that they receive good advice about their entitlements so that they do not enrol in expensive private courses with few real prospects of successful completion or of gaining employment.

career planning

Schools will benefit their students from refugee backgrounds by liaising with the local Refugee Education Co-ordinator from the Ministry of Education for information on supporting career and pathway planning.

Issues in careers guidance

How do we identify students from refugee backgrounds who need help and assess what level of direction is appropriate?

These students may need:

- more seeking out (i.e. more encouragement and time to see the careers adviser)
- greater direction in making choices, as many are not used to choosing for themselves
- extra help to go to interviews, reminders to send in information by due dates, help with covering letters and filling in other forms, managing student loans and eligibility for allowances

How do we create time for individual and group careers counselling and for building student profiles and for coordinated monitoring of school programme choices to ensure coherent pathways are followed?

Advisers need to:

- coordinate and monitor subject choices and pathways for students and review these regularly in conjunction with IPPs (individual programme/career plans)
- ensure that there are personnel available to explain careers databases and jobsearches on line as these are difficult to access and comprehend for students with low levels of literacy
- create regular opportunities for small group discussion and information sharing on what type of jobs are available and how to train for them – in conjunction with a bilingual support worker or tutor

How do we involve the caregivers and families?

Families/caregivers need:

- comprehensible information about training/education options, with access to information through their first language
- alternatives to conventional careers evenings – may be able to support adult community as same time as student community through community meetings, or translation of information into community languages

How do we help students to develop the interpersonal skills needed for employment?

These students often have few interactions with the wider community outside school and may need additional support through:

- social skills training for interpersonal interactions and building up cultural knowledge to support acculturation
- quite explicit modelling and access to training videos or CD ROMS for workplace oracy and literacy (For information on these resources, contact the ESOL adviser at the College/School of Education)

How do we access useful networks and additional support?

There are many options for setting up mentoring systems, and for approaching service agencies for sponsorship and support. These include those such as Rotary, Zonta, BPW, Lions, Federation of University Women, ethnic community networks, community grants etc. Setting up a local data base to be shared by a cluster of schools is useful.

Hopes and dreams

There are many additional difficulties and demands facing students from refugee backgrounds. Decision making itself can be stressful for them and their families as they seek to establish their futures. Moreover, as many of the adults are unlikely to find full time permanent work, the students carry the burden of the hopes and expectations for the next generation and the responsibility of future for their parents' generation.

Advisers need to be aware of the typical psychological cycle for those seeking education and employment in a new country.

Typical stages in exploring education, training and employment options

Fantasy – unrealistic hopes/expectations based on lack of information about educational pathways or the job market or entry criteria, or over-confidence in own skills.

Tentative – based on experiences of others and the beginnings of understanding training requirements and careers possibilities in specific fields.

Realistic – based on taking into account own skills/attributes, job market.

Advisers need also to be aware of possible barriers to training and employment for both students and their parents, so that these can be anticipated and addressed through careers education and counselling and informal support if possible.

Barriers to training and employment:

- low educational levels, low English levels
- lack of accurate information about possibilities/options
- inadequate job search skills
- lack of knowledge about the workplace
- psychological factors and personality factors
- course costs and travel and living costs while training

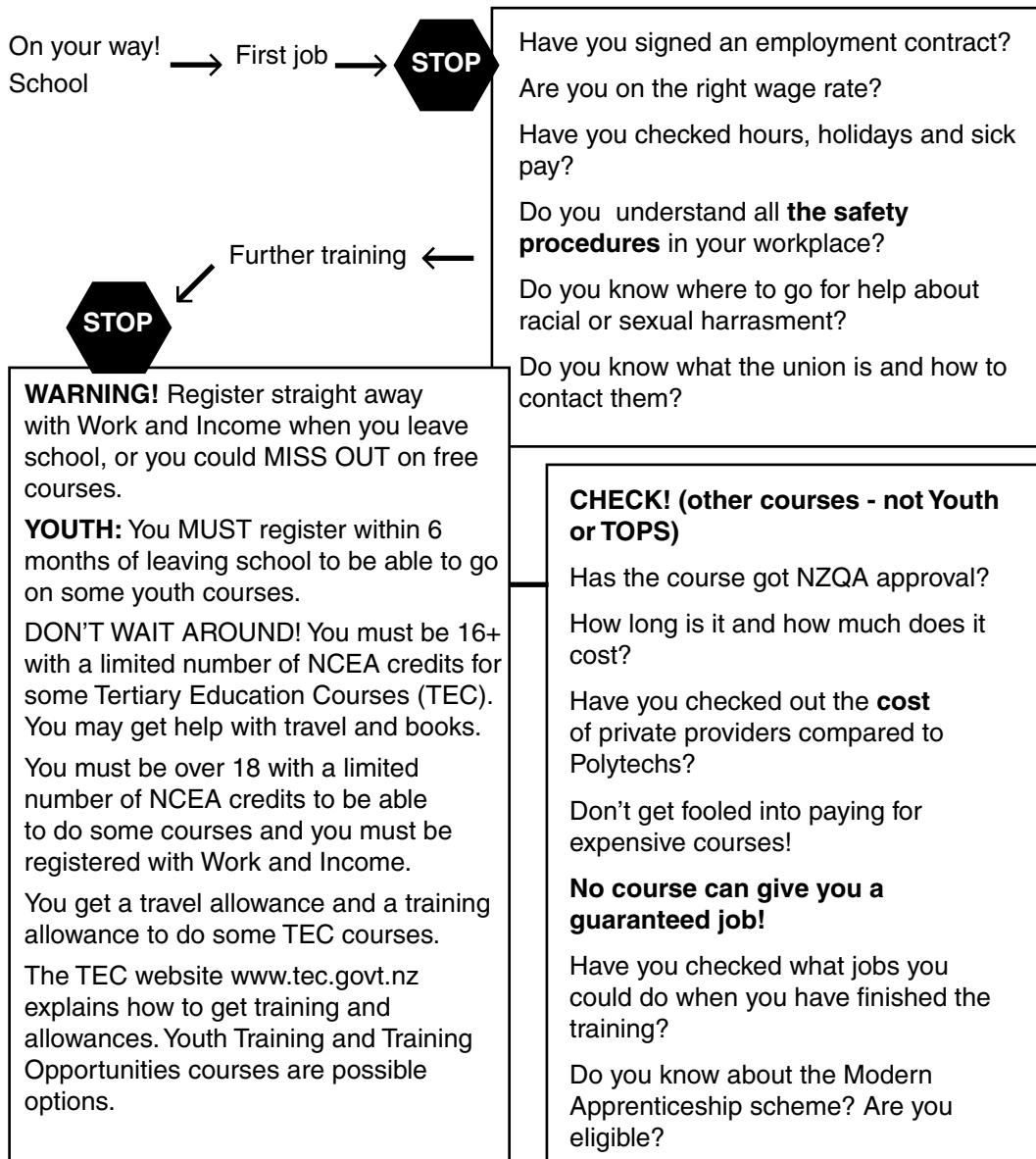
In addition adults may also experience:

- despair and guilt, uncertainty, depression, low self esteem mixed with hope and determination to create a future for their children
- greatly reduced job status and forced adjustment of expectations
- on-going stresses of cultural adjustment, language challenges, family tension, financial hardships
- resistance, rejection and hostility from the host society, lack of adequate support structures

Monitoring progress.

It is useful for schools to get students' permission to keep records of their progress after leaving school. This sort of data can be very helpful for policy planning, at local, regional or national level to see what sorts of support have worked best for which students, and which training and educational pathways have been most successful.

Checklist for students to complete with a careers adviser before enrolling in a course or starting a job (Details may change with policy changes from year to year or in different regions of New Zealand)



REMEMBER!

You might have to do more than one training course.
 You need good English for most jobs in New Zealand.
 Maths skills are needed for many jobs.

Student loans must be paid back when you begin to earn over a certain amount of money.

You might be eligible for (= able to get) a living allowance while you study. If your family earns under a certain amount of money you will not have to pay back the living allowance.

You need to think about many different job possibilities before you decide what course to go on.

Case studies of successful school leavers from refugee backgrounds

These three case studies show that it is possible for motivated and determined students from refugee backgrounds to be successful, given sufficient time and support.

S arrived in New Zealand in March 1993 at the age of 12 with her grandmother, aunt, 1 sister, and 2 cousins from a refugee camp in Kenya. She had minimum formal education. She enrolled at a local intermediate school in Wellington and found difficulties in adjusting to the school environment in the beginning. She moved to a high school in Auckland in 1995 and scored 100 in the ESOL assessment (after being 2 years in the system) and scored 120 in the next ESOL assessment the following year (1996). With a very supportive family (mother) and volunteer tutors she made huge progress and left with Higher School Certificate in 1998. She enrolled at Auckland University of Technology in 1999 and did a foundation course in the first year with English for academic purposes. She kept getting extra support in most subjects. She graduated from Auckland University of Technology in 2002 with a Bachelor's degree in Science, then progressed to a Masters in Audiology and gained employment as an audiologist in 2005.

A arrived in New Zealand in 1999 as an unaccompanied minor. He came from a multicultural, multilingual background and was able to speak 5 languages. He was literate in the language of last country of asylum before coming to New Zealand which was different from his own native language. He stayed with a foster family and immediately enrolled in a high school in Christchurch. He experienced teasing and bullying from other students in school which caused some social difficulties for him. He focussed on improving English and establishing strong academic foundations while the integration process was taking place. After 2 years of being in school his English was up to a level which allowed him to do mainstream subjects. He intends to enrol in tertiary education.

J arrived in 1996 from a refugee situation with her older sister and her family and came with a good educational background. She immediately enrolled in a college in Auckland. Her family provided a very supportive and caring home environment and the college provided an understanding and supportive learning environment. She did ESOL and 6th Form Certificate in 1997. She integrated well into school life and made friends from different backgrounds and cultures and was involved in school activities. She left college with Bursary in 3 subjects in 1998 and enrolled in the Engineering School in Canterbury University in Christchurch in 1999. She successfully graduated in 2002 with a Bachelor of Engineering with second class honours.