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Final CED Project

Accessing Information

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Project dues March 1st, 1999

Accessing Information

Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Problem Statement	2
Goal of the Project	3
The Process	
Interview Community Leaders	4
Impacts of Welfare Reform Focus Group	7
The NAFEA'98 National Conference	9
Vietnamese American Forum	9
Lessons Learned	11
Project Outcomes	12

- 1) A Self-Training Manual for Vietnamese Parents
 the U.S. Public Schools System
- 2) A Self-Training Manual for Vietnamese
 the U.S. Non-Profit Sector & Neighborhood Civic
 Associations
- 3) A Self-Training Manual for Vietnamese Americans
 the U.S. Government Structure

Attachments

The Process

Full Text of Translations of Interview Community Leaders
Full Text of Translation of the Welfare Reform Focus Group

Vietnamese Community in the United States

The First Wave: the 1975, Vietnamese Refugees
The Second Wave: the "Boat People"
The Third Wave: the Amerasians
The Fourth Wave: the Political Detainees

Support Materials from the Vietnamese American Forum

Introduction

In 1980, I and my younger brother resettled in the United States from Vietnam and neither of us spoke one word of English. After four years of learning how to speak English in high school I was able to communicate with my school mates on things that I wanted to discuss. Today after almost twenty years living and studying in the United States I am still speaking English with an accent and sometimes I have difficulty to express my view. Having said that, it is a long process for refugees and immigrants in the U.S. to adjust and adapt to the new live. Especially, it is a challenge for those refugees and immigrants in the U.S. to over come language barriers and culture differences. At the same time for those that have lower level of education, social and economic level. These are the refugees and immigrants that need our help.

It is right that many refugees and immigrants resettle in the U.S. don't actively participate in their civic duties because they are overwhelm with their basic and immediate needs to re-build their new lives in the U.S. I believe that with the support of the community programs these will help the refugees and immigrants to participate in their civic duties and I believe that if we provide them with the right tools they will participate.

Problem Statement

Generally, the level of civic participation of the Boston and other Vietnamese American community is a low level of participation. Many Vietnamese parents do not involve with their children schools, such as attending parent meetings or teacher and parent conferences. Many Vietnamese do not participate with their local non-profit community organizations or neighborhood civic associations. And mostly, there is a low level of participation of Vietnamese Americans with the United States government and the American political system.

Goal of the Project

The project goal is to increase the level of civic participation of the Boston and other Vietnamese American community in the United States by providing them with information resources.

The Process

Interview Community Leaders

(Please see attachments for full translation of interviews)

In the Fall of 1997, I started out to interview a number of community leaders both from the Vietnamese and the Chinese American community leaders and the purposes of the interviews were: to listen to their views and to find out what are the issues that relate to the Vietnamese American community development.

Those included: 1) a talk by Mr. An Ton-That at a press conference for the Vietnamese American Community Center Project to Vietnamese media, he is the Director of the Refugee and Immigrant Health, Bureau of Family and Community Health, Massachusetts Department of Public Health; 2) an interview with Father Chinh Nguyen, he is the Vietnamese catholic priest at the Vietnamese catholic community at the Saint William's Church, Dorchester; and 3) an interview with Professor Andrew Leong, he teaches the Law Center, College of Public Community and Service, University of Massachusetts Boston.

Mr. An Ton-That:

In September 1997, at a Vietnamese press conference for a Vietnamese American community center, Mr. Ton-That spoke about the Vietnamese resettlement and its community formation in Massachusetts since 1975. He spoke on the need to have social support services for the Vietnamese elderly and the youths and on the Vietnamese community needs to build a community center.

According to Mr. Ton-That estimated in 1997, the Massachusetts Vietnamese population was about 45,000 people with 30,000 Vietnamese live in the Greater Boston and 10,000 Vietnamese live in Dorchester a neighborhood of Boston. There are also pockets of Vietnamese population in Massachusetts such areas are: Worcester, Lawrence, Springfield, West Springfield, and Northampton. The Boston office of the United States Catholic Charities have resettled many Vietnamese refugees and immigrants to the Boston area from the first wave of Vietnamese refugees in 1975 and to the second wave of the Vietnamese "Boat People" in the late 1970's to the early 1980's. One of the main reasons why today Dorchester is a largest concentration of Vietnamese in Massachusetts because it was the availability of low cost housing in the earlier years of Vietnamese refugee and immigrant resettlements. Today Dorchester is home for many young and old Vietnamese and it is where one would see a community of Vietnamese people.

Through Mr. Ton-That experiences of doing resettlement for many years at the International Institute of Boston, he indicated that "where there is a concentration of Vietnamese people that where will be needs of many of the every day live such as Vietnamese foods, social support services, and medical and dental doctors". It is generally, Vietnamese refugees and immigrants would try very hard to adjust and to integrate into the American "mainstream society" but after the first two years of many successful resettlement of refugee and immigrant stories it shows the need for mental health services. It is similarly today, "young Vietnamese want to go back to Vietnam to search for their identity which they did not find in the U.S."

One of a great needs of the Boston Vietnamese community is a need to have a community center for Vietnamese according to Mr. Ton-That. A center that would give the Vietnamese elderly hope for longer lives and a sense of closure with their lives. A center that would give the young Vietnamese a sense of their identity that this is home. Finally, a center that would give the Vietnamese community a sense of unity.

Father Chinh Nguyen:

It is a must for the Saint William Vietnamese catholic community to identify themselves apart with the larger Dorchester Vietnamese American community. Father Nguyen believes that the Dorchester Vietnamese community needs to identify themselves apart with the Dorchester "mainstream" community.

Father Nguyen indicated at the interview that it is an individual responsibility to do his/her civic duties and it is a community responsibility to assist its community members to participate in the civic process. It is a challenge for the Vietnamese to fully participate in their civic activities when they do not understand the English language. This is when members of the Vietnamese community need the help of the "mainstream" communities to assist them to understand and to participate in the civic duties. He talked on the needs to have members of the Vietnamese community to be more involved with the local churches, schools, neighborhood councils, and the political activities.

Professor Andrew Leong:

Professor Leong teaches at the Law Center, the College Public Community and Service at the University of Massachusetts Boston and he is a long time Boston Chinese American community activist. He indicated at the interview that "having people to participate in the civic activities, it is a long process and it takes a long time". In community organizing, "the organizer has to be able to make the connection of organizing for the people to see why there is a need to organize and the people have to take the ownership of organizing". This is the same in working to have people to participate in the civic activities. Community people need to see the benefits and the reasons why they need to participate in their civic duties. The question here is in community organizing the community members will ask "what's in it for me?" and if we can't answer that question then there is no need to organize.

Professor Leong said, the today Boston Vietnamese American community is dealing with the same issues that the Chinese American community has dealt with in 1960's and 70's. According to him, when the immigration laws changed in 1965, the laws opened up the immigration gate for many of the Chinese to reunify with their family members in the U.S. It was a time that the Boston Chinese community experienced a positive growth of the Chinese population and it was continued to grow through out 1970's and 80's. In 1970's because of the growth of the Boston Chinese American community and in responses to the growth there were a number of community based organizations established such as the South Cove Community Health Center, the Chinese American Civic Association today is the Asian American Civic Association, and the Quincy School Community Council today is the Boston Neighborhood Community Center to meet the demand of the Chinese community with bilingual and bilculture services. That was also the time that the Chinese community formulated itself as the Boston Chinese American community and a community that still needs to be politically active.

Impacts of Welfare Reform Focus Group March 12, 1998

(Please see attachments for a full translation of the focus group)

In the Spring of 1998, the Physicians For Human Rights sponsored a project to study the impacts of the welfare reform in the refugee and immigrant communities in the country. The project conducted a number of focus groups in a number of cities that has concentration of the refugee and immigrant populations. Boston was a site for the Vietnamese refugees and immigrants and I had the opportunity to facilitate the focus group. The focus group took place at the Dorchester House and it is a community health and multi-social service center. There were 13 Vietnamese participated at the focus group and they all resettled in the U.S. within the last six months to two years.

At the beginning of the focus group Mr. Chuigyn Chui is an ethnic Vietnamese from Central of Vietnam said in Vietnamese with an angry voice that "in Vietnam I had the land, a home and I was able to work and earned the living on my own and today I am here in the U.S. without the land, a home or any thing and now the government talks about cutting back my benefits". Mr. Chui is in his 50's and said at the focus group that "at one point in life, I was some-one today I am no-one and powerless." He continued to say with his loud voice to express the un-fairness of the welfare reform policies. He said "during the Vietnam War, I was young and served in the South Vietnamese military for many years, the military that the United States supported. After the war, I still was young and I was in prison by the North Vietnamese Communist for many years and now I am here and older and this is how the U.S. government treats me."

At the focus group, I was facilitating and listening to the participants and I realized that these Vietnamese refugees and immigrants have scarified too much to come to America and to begin to re-build their new lives with nothing. Many of the focus group participants were in the U.S. when the Congress debated of the welfare reform bill and they weren't aware or weren't apart of the whole welfare reform debates. This shows that even the issues are most impacted their lives and they weren't apart of the debates. I asked, were you aware of the debates? One responded, "the new life in America is not an easy life and I was busy to get our life together and making sure that the children get fed and be in school each day and I didn't know English enough, how could I participate." At this point I am sure that those newly arrived Vietnamese refugees and immigrants aren't thinking about civic participation. But what I have learned that if at the time of the welfare reform debates that they have the access to information and in the language that they understand best then they will participate. They might thought of themselves differently and they would re-acted positively to the debates. From the focus group, I concluded that language and access to information are the barriers for Vietnamese refugees and immigrants not to participate in their civic duties. If the training materials are available to them and in the language that they understand these would help the Vietnamese to participate in their civic duties.

The NAFEA'98 National Conference Houston, Texas

In May 1998, there was a three days national conference on education that sponsored by the National Association for the Education and Advancement of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans (NAFEA) in Houston, Texas. At this national conference, I presented at one of the workshops my assessment of the Vietnamese parent needs and how to enable them actively involve with their children schools. There was a dozen of school teachers, administrators, and Vietnamese community people at the workshop. I presented the frame work of developing a self-training manual for Vietnamese parents about the U.S. public schools to my workshop participants. They responded very positively that the manual would be the right tool to empower Vietnamese parents to work with the public schools. One said, she hasn't seen any self-training manual about public schools for Vietnamese parents in Vietnamese and she would definitely support the development of the manual.

Vietnamese American Forum October 24, 1998

In a big new effort of the Institute for Asian American Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston and the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants, I worked with a committee of about twenty Vietnamese American community leaders to plan on a community forum on health, human services, and community development. The committee represented a diverse make-up of the Vietnamese American community, included about 20 leaders from social services, health, mental health, economic development, businesses, education, political, and religion. The purposes of the forum were: 1) to listen to community members with their issues of community development; 2) to give them opportunities to raise their issues and concerns with community development; 3) to have them solve their issues and concerns; and 4) to give community members their voices in building their community.

After many meetings of the planning committee for the Vietnamese American Forum, the forum was finally held on Saturday, October 24, 1998 at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The forum was a first of its kind to bring in a large number of Vietnamese to talk about their issues and concerns of community development. There were over 150 community members attended the forum. After a day long forum, I and members of the planning committee learned that the community members want to have more of the open community forums in the future. Forums that they could raise their issues and they themselves solve their issues. Also, the forum participants indicated that they didn't have access to information that directly impact their every day live in the community. One indicated at the forum that "I learned so much out of a day by attended the forum."

Lessons Learned

After a community process for about over year, I am convinced that in order to increase the level of civic participation of the Boston and other areas Vietnamese American community in the U.S. This project needs to provide the community people training materials that they could help themselves to understand of their rights and enable them to participate in the civic process.

The hope of the project is to develop a set of three self-training manuals for Vietnamese parents and they are:

- 1) a training manual that would empower Vietnamese parents to better serve their children in the U.S. public schools;
- 2) a training manual that would help Vietnamese to better organize themselves as a community to serve the their needs; and
- 3) a training manual that would help them to know of their rights and actively to participate with the U.S. government system to voice their voices.

Project Outcomes

A set of three self-training manual for Vietnamese:

- 1) A Self-Training Manual
for Vietnamese Parents
the U.S. Public Schools System

The goal of the manual is to help Vietnamese parents to understand of the U.S. public schools system and to enable them to actively involve with their children schools.

- 2) A Self-Training Manual
for Vietnamese
the U.S. Non-Profit Sector
&
Neighborhood Civic Associations

The goal of the manual is to help Vietnamese to understand of the U.S. non-profit sector and neighborhood civic associations and to enable them actively participate and organize with their local community non-profit organizations.

- 3) A Self-Training Manual
for Vietnamese Americans
the U.S. Government Structure

The goal of the manual is to help Vietnamese Americans to understand the basic of the U.S. federal, state, and local government structure and know of their rights as citizen to participate in the United States government system.

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Self-Training Manual
for Vietnamese Parents
the U.S. Public Schools System

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Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Goal of the Manual	2
School Committee/Board of Education	3
Superintendent of Schools	5
Public Schools Resources	6
City/Town Resources	6
State Resources	7
Federal Resources	8
Private Resources	8
Clusters/School Districts	10
A Public School	11
Resources	13
Programs & Services	14
Special Education	15
Bilingual Education	15
Vocational/Technical Education	16
Gifted and Talented Program	16
Parents' Rights and Responsibilities	17
Students' Rights	19
References	21

Introduction

It is often for any refugee and immigrant community to resettle in the United States that they would feel overwhelm with their basic and immediate needs to re-build their new lives. The needs such as are: to learn how to speak a new language; to adjust and adapt to a new culture; to learn new skills in-order to have good jobs; to have their children to the right schools; and many other responsibilities as citizen of a new land. It is often that newly arrived refugees and immigrants in the U.S. do not fully participate in the U.S. public schools. Even that they understand by involving it would help to improve their children education but in many cases that they decided not to participate because of their language barriers, culture differences and not knowing about the school structure. In-order for them to participate they need to have access to the right information about school and in the language that they best understand.

With the hope of this self-training manual it will provide to the Vietnamese parents the basic information about the U.S. public schools. The manual will be translated into Vietnamese which the language that the first generation of Vietnamese understand best. By providing them with the right tool it will help Vietnamese parents to be more comfortable to participate in their children schools.

Goal of the Manual

The goal of the manual is to help Vietnamese parents to understand the basic of the U.S. public schools system and to enable them actively involve with their children schools.

School Committee/Board of Education

Question: What is the school committee?

Answer: The school committee is an over see body of a city/town public schools.

Remember:

- A school committee is the same with a school board of education.

Question: How many members are on a school committee?

Answer: The number of members are usually from 6 to 12 members.

Remember:

- The number of members are vary from school committee to school committee and some school committees are larger than others.

For Example:

- The School Committee of the City of Boston composes of seven members.

Question: What are the governing positions of a school committee?

Answer: The governing positions usually include:

- Chair or President;
- Vice Chair or Vice President;
- Secretary; and
- Committee members.

Remember:

- The governing positions are vary from school committee to school committee.

For Example:

- The School Committee of the City of Boston only requires to have two governing positions and they are:
 - a Chairperson
- and
- a Vice Chairperson.

Question: How do school committee members become committee members?

Answer: Generally, there are two ways:

- 1) They are appointed by the city mayor
- and
- 2) They are elected by the people in the city/town.

For Example:

- The School Committee members of the City of Boston are appointed by the city mayor.

Question: Who do school committee members report to?

Answer: Generally, they report to the city mayor or some other governing body within the city/town.

Remember:

- If the committee members are elected by the people from the city/town then they have to report to the people in the city/town.

Superintendent of Schools

Question: How does the superintendent of schools get his/her job?

Answer: Generally, the city/town mayor hires the superintendent of schools with or without the support of the school committee members.

Remember:

- If the school committee members are elected by the people in the city/town then the school committee hires the superintendent of schools.

Question: What is a main responsibility of the superintendent of schools?

Answer: His/her main responsibility is to over see all public schools in the city/town.

Question: Who does the superintendent of schools report to?

Answer: The superintendent reports to the school committee.

Question: How does the superintendent of schools position affect your children education?

Answer:

Question:

Answer:

Public Schools Resources

Remember:

- Public schools are your schools and public schools are there to serve your children.

Question: Where do public schools get their resources?

Answer: The resources come from:

- City/town;
- State;
- Federal; and
- Private resources.

City/Town Resources

Remember:

- One of the most important functions of local government is administering the public schools.

and

- The local governments refer to as:
 - City government;
 - Town government;
 - County government; and
 - Village government.

Question: Where does the city/town get its resources for public schools?

Answer: The city/town gets its resources from the city/town's real estate taxes.

Remember:

- If you own a house in your city/town and you pay for your real estate tax and generally this tax goes toward paying for the local public schools.
- Most of the public schools resources come from the city/town's real estate taxes.

State Resources

Question: Where does the state get its resources?

Answer: Generally, from the state taxes, such as from your income tax.

Remember:

- Some states do not collect from your income tax.

For Example:

- The state of New Hampshire, there is no state income tax collected.

Question: Does the state provide resources to support the state public schools?

Answer: Yes, the state provides its resources to support the state public schools.

Remember:

- Most of the public schools funding comes from your city/town.

Federal Resources

Question: Where does the federal government get its resources?

Answer: Generally, from the federal income taxes, such as from your income tax and other taxes.

Question: Does the federal government provide its resources to support the local public schools?

Answer: Yes, the federal government provides its resources to support the local public schools.

Remember:

- The federal funding usually comes down to the local public schools for specific programs and initiatives.

Private Resources

Question: Does the private sector provide its resources to support the local public schools?

Answer: Yes, the private sector provides its resources to support the local public schools.

Remember:

- The private sector generally supports the local public schools through grants for specific programs and initiatives.

Question: What are the top five expenses on a public school budget?

Answer: In most public schools, the top five are:

- 1) Salaries, to pay for all school personnel;
- 2) Benefits, to pay for the school personnel benefits;
- 3) Purchased services, to pay for school program services;
- 4) Transportation, to pay for school buses and vans; and
- 5) Property services, to pay for school building services.

Remember:

- Every year the schools expenses are vary but most resources would go to pay for school salaries and benefits.

Question: Is public school budget information available to the public?

Answer: Yes, all budgeting information is available to the public.

Remember:

- You could request budgeting information of any public school or of the whole city/town public school system by contacting the school or the city/town schools department.

Clusters/School Districts

Question: What is a school cluster?

Answer: Some cities their school departments are big and they divide the school department into smaller clusters.

Remember:

- A school cluster is the same with a school district.

Question: Why the school department divide their schools into clusters?

Answer: The main reason why because it is to manage with smaller clusters.

Question:

Answer:

A Public School

Remember:

- Public schools are your schools and the people who work at the public schools are there to serve your children.

Question: Who work at public schools?

Answer: They are:

- Principle;
- Teachers;
- Counselors; and
- Other school personnel.

Remember:

- Public schools are your schools.

Question: What are the responsibilities of a principal at a public school?

Answer: The principal responsibilities are to over see the school operation.

For Example:

- 1) Supervises all teachers and school personnel and
- 2) Implements of all school policies and programs.

Remember:

- The school principal is the highest authority position in a school.
- If you have concerns about your child safety or education you should request a meeting with your child school principal.

Question: Who are the teachers at your child school?

Answer: In most cases, they are:

- Regular classroom teachers;
- Teacher aides; and
- Bilingual teachers,

Question: What are the school teachers responsibilities?

Answer: The teachers responsibilities are:

- 1) Regular classroom teachers;
Their main responsibility is to teach your children.
- 2) Teacher aides; and
Their main responsibility is to provide support to regular classroom teachers.
- 3) Bilingual teachers.
Their main responsibility is to teach in bilingual classroom.

Remember:

- As parent, you should request meeting to meet with your child teacher at time a convenience time about your child education.

Question: What is the main responsibility of the school counselor?

Answer: The school counselor main responsibility is to provide counseling to your children when it is necessary.

Question: Who are other school personnel?

Answer: Some of them are:

- School nurse;
- Cafeteria staff; and
- School keeping staff.

Resources

Remember:

- One of the most important functions of local government is administering the public schools.
- and
- The local governments refer to as:
 - City government;
 - Town government;
 - County government; and
 - Village government.

Question: Where does the school get its resources?

Answer: The school get its resources from:

- City/town;
- State;
- Federal; and
- Private resources.

Remember:

- The public school get most of its resources from the city/town.

Question: What are top three expenses on a school budget?

Answer: Generally, the top three are:

- 1) Salaries, to pay for all school personnel;
- 2) Benefits, to pay for the school personnel benefits; and
- 3) Purchased services, to pay for school program services.

Question: Can you find out what the school expenses are?

Answer: Yes, you can find out the school expenses by contacting the school principal office or the city/town school department.

Remember:

- All operating information of public schools is public information and you have the rights to have access to.

Programs & Services

Question: How do you find out your child school programs and services?

Answer: You could find out by contacting the parent center or directly your child school.

Question: How do you know your child's educational is the right education?

Answer: If you don't think your child receives an appropriate education, you should look into it.

Remember:

- You have the rights to choose the most appropriate education for your child.

Question: What are some of the school programs and services?

Answer: Some of the school programs and services are:

- Special Education;
- Bilingual Education;
- Vocational/Technical Education; and
- Gifted and Talented Program.

Special Education

Question:

Answer:

Bilingual Education

Question: What is a Bilingual Education?

Answer: Bilingual Education is educational programs to assist children to learn in two languages - in English and the child's native language.

Remember:

- In 1973, the United States Supreme Court ruled that public schools in the U.S. must make sure that non-English speaking students have the same educational opportunity to participate in a public school.

Question: What are the forms of Bilingual Education?

Answer: There are many forms of Bilingual Education and it is vary from state to state and public school to public school.

Vocational/Technical Education

Question:

Answer:

Gifted and Talented Program

Question: What is the Gifted and Talented Program?

Answer: It is a program for students that they excel in some areas, such as math and science.

Question:

Answer:

Parents' Rights & Responsibilities

Question: What are your rights as parents?

Answer: Your rights are:

- To have a free public education for your child
- and
- To have an appropriate education for your child.

Question: Have you ever asked yourself, the education that your child receives is the right education?

Answer: You should often ask yourself this question.

Remember:

- You have the rights to choose the most appropriate education for your child.
- It is the parent responsibility to look the most appropriate education for your child.

Question: What are the school activities that you as a parent should come?

Answer: The school activities that you should come:

- Parent meetings;
- Parent/Teacher conference;
- School open house/school night; and
- Other school activities that your child participates.

Remember:

- It is best for your child's education when you participate in your child's school activities.

Question: How do you know when are the parent meetings?

Answer: There should be notices of all parent meetings.

Remember:

- It is often that your child brings home parent meeting notices.

Question: How do you deal with the language barriers at your child school parent meetings?

Answer: There are two ways:

- 1) You could bring in your own translator
- and
- 2) You could request a translator from the school.

Remember:

- If you need a translator at the school parent meetings the school has the responsibility to provide one for you.

Students' Rights

Remember:

- 1982, the United States Supreme Court ruled that all children living in the U.S. including the children of undocumented non-citizens, have a constitutional right to a public school education.

Question: What does a public school mean?

Answer: A public school means that its education is free to your child.

Question: What does the law require children to be in school?

Answer: The law requires all children between the age of 6 and 16 to attend school.

Remember:

- The law says that if your child is in between the age of 6 and 16 you have the responsibility to have your child be in school.

Question: What does your child entitle to?

Answer: Your child entitle to:

These are entitlements that the National Coalitions of Advocates for Students believes that all students are entitled to:

Entitlement #1: *Children are entitled to have parents, advocates, and concerned educators involved in all decisions affecting their education.*

Entitlement #2: *Children are entitled to learn in an integrated, heterogeneous setting responsive to different learning styles and abilities.*

- Entitlement #3:** *Children are entitled to comprehensible, culturally supportive and developmentally appropriate curriculum and teaching strategies.*
- Entitlement #4:** *Children are entitled to access to a common body of knowledge and the opportunity to acquire higher order skills.*
- Entitlement #5:** *Children are entitled to a broadly-based assessment of their academic progress and grading structures that enhance individual strengths and potential.*
- Entitlement #6:** *Children are entitled to a broad range of support services that address individual needs.*
- Entitlement #7:** *Children are entitled to attend schools that are safe, attractive, and free from prejudice.*
- Entitlement #8:** *Children are entitled to attend schools unless they pose a danger to other children or school staff.*
- Entitlement #9:** *Children are entitled to instruction by teachers who hold high expectations for all students and who are fully prepared to meet the challenges of diverse classrooms.*
- Entitlement #10:** *Children are entitled to an equal educational opportunity supported by the provision of greater resources to schools serving students most vulnerable to school failure.*

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National Coalition of Advocates for Students

Student and Family Education Rights and School Advocacy Skill Strategies

National Asian Family/School Partnership Project (Phase II)

National Coalition of Advocates for Students

The Good Common School:

Making the Vision Work for All Children

National Coalition of Advocates for Students

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Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Goal of the Manual	2
The U.S. Non-Profit Organizations	3
Incorporating a Corporation	7
Articles of Organization	8
By-laws	8
Corporation	9
Directors	9
Member	10
Public Charity	11
Federal Tax Identification	12
Becoming a 501 (c) (3) Organization	13
Types of Giving & Grantmaking	14
Private Independent Foundations	15
Bank Trusts	16
Public Charitable Trusts	16
Operating Foundations	17
Public Charities	17
Community Foundations	18
Company-Sponsored Foundations	18
Corporate Grantmaking Programs	19
Church-Sponsored Grantmaking Programs	19
Funder Collaboratives	20
Governments	20
Organizations in the Vietnamese Community	21
Neighborhood Civic Associations	23
References	25

Introduction

It is often for any refugee and immigrant community to resettle in the United States that they would feel overwhelm with their basic and immediate needs to re-build their new lives. The needs such as are: to learn how to speak a new language; to adjust and adapt to a new culture; to learn new skills in-order to have good jobs; to have their children to the right schools; and many other responsibilities as citizen of a new land. It is often that newly arrived refugees and immigrants in the U.S. do not fully participate in the U.S. non-profit community organizations. Even that they understand by involving it would help to improve their new lives but in many cases they decided not to participate because of their language barriers, culture differences and not knowing about the sector. In-order for them to participate they need to have access to the right information about the sector and in the language that they best understand.

With the hope of this self-training manual it will provide to the Vietnamese refugees and immigrants the basic information about the U.S. non-profit sector and the local community organizations. The manual will be translated into Vietnamese which the language that the first generation of Vietnamese in the U.S. understand best. By providing them with the right tool it will help the Vietnamese to be more comfortable to participate in their local community non-profit organizations.

Goal of the Manual

The goal of the manual is to help Vietnamese to understand of the U.S. non-profit sector and neighborhood civic associations and to enable them actively participate with their local community non-profit organizations and their neighborhood civic associations.

The U.S. Non-Profit Organizations

Question: What is a non-profit organization?

Answer: A non-profit organization is an organization that is organized and operated for a purpose other than the economic advancement of those who provide its capital.

Remember:

- A non-profit organization does not mean that the organization can not make a profit.

Question: What does a non-profit mean to the federal government?

Answer: It means a "tax-exempt status".

Remember:

- Not all non-profit organizations are tax-exempt organizations.

Question: What does "tax-exempt status" mean?

Answer: Generally, it means that the organization is not liable for federal income tax on its net income.

Remember:

- It is only if the organization fits within one of numerous categories of special purpose organizations granted favorable treatment under the federal tax laws, so-called "Section 501" organizations.

Question: Why does the government grant tax-exempt status to certain organizations?

Answer: Because of the government policy made the judgment that the government can conserve its resources by encouraging private organizations to provide certain activities that benefit the public.

Remember:

..... - It is historically for organizations those provide "charitable" activities.

Question: How the government encourages organizations to provide charitable activities?

Answer: The government encourages in two ways:

- 1) To say to the organizations that the government is not going to assess any tax on the organization's revenues
- and
- 2) To say to the donors that the government will allow the donors to deduct on your taxes.

Question: What is the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

Answer: It is a department of the United States federal government to collect taxes.

Question: What is a 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code?

Answer: 501(a) is a section of the Internal Revenue Code and the code states: "An organization described in subsection (c) ... shall be exempt from taxation...." Organizations "organized and operated exclusively for ... charitable ... purposes" are described in subsection (c) (3). So-called Section 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt organizations.

Remember:

- If an organization is a 501 (c) (3) status it means that the organization has a tax-exempt status with governments.

Question: What are the organizations that describe in subsection (c) in the Internal Revenue Service code?

Answer: The organizations are:

- 1) Civic organizations;
- 2) Social welfare organizations;
- 3) Labor organizations;
- 4) Agricultural organizations;
- 5) Horticultural organizations;
- 6) Business leagues;
- 7) Social clubs;

and

15 additional categories.

Question: What are activities that the 501 (c) (3) organizations can not do?

Answer: These are the activities:

- 1) The organizations can not support political candidates;
- 2) The organizations can not oppose political candidates; and
- 3) The organizations can not support partisan political campaign activities.

Remember:

- The 501 (c) (3) organizations can do a "minimal" political activities

or

- The organizations can say that they are non-partisan organizations.

For Example:

The Vietnamese American Initiative for Development
(Viet-AID)

1452 Dorchester Ave., 3rd Fl.
Dorchester, MA 02122

Viet-AID is a 501 (c) (3) and a tax-exempt organization. The Viet-AID's mission is:

The Vietnamese American Initiative for Development (Viet-AID) was founded in 1994 by a group of community activists. Our mission is to build a strong Vietnamese American community in Boston through a holistic approach to foster civic participation and to reduce poverty. To accomplish this mission, Viet-AID engages the community in strategies that promote: 1) Neighborhood and community development; 2) Economic development; 3) Affordable housing creation; and 4) Youth leadership development.

Incorporating a Corporation

Remember:

- The law as to non-profit organizations is state law but the law as to tax-exempt organizations is federal law.
- A corporation is a legal term and generally the community refers it as an organization.

Question: What are the requirements to incorporate a corporation in Massachusetts?

Answer: The requirements are:

- 1) "Articles of organization";
- 2) "By-laws";
- 3) "Corporation";
- 4) "Directors";
- 5) "Member"; and
- 6) "Public charity".

Remember:

- The requirements to incorporate a corporation in Massachusetts are the requirements for most states in the United States. You should check with your state, office of Secretary of State.
- To incorporate a corporation, you should work with a lawyer to make-sure meeting the state requirements.

Articles of Organization

Question: What are the articles of organization?

Answer: They are articles of organization of a corporation. They include any special acts, as from time to time restated or amended and include articles of merger or consolidation of a corporation.

Remember:

- You should check with your state for further details of the state laws.

By-laws

Question: What are the by-laws of an organization?

Answer: They are code or codes of rules adopted for the regulation or management of the affairs of the corporation irrespective of the name or names by which such rules are designated.

Corporation

Question: What is a corporation?

Answer: It is an organization doing its businesses within the country.

Remember:

- You should check with your state for further details of the state laws.

Directors

Question: What are directors?

Answer: They are members that govern the corporation.

Remember:

- Directors and board of directors are the same and in some cases they called as board of trustees.

Question: How do people become directors?

Answer: It depends on each of the corporation's by-laws stated members of the corporation can become directors.

Remember:

- Some corporations appoint their members to become the corporation directors.
- Some corporations elect their directors.

Tips:

- If you want to become a director of an organization. These are things you should do:
 - 1) Become its member and
 - 2) Check its by-laws to see its requirements to become a director.

Member

Question: What is a member?

Answer: The one that has the membership rights.

Remember:

- Generally, all corporations have membership of some forms and each corporation have its requirements for membership.
- For the non-profit community organizations, generally anyone is over a determined age could become the organizations members.

Tip:

- If you want to become a member of an organization, check its by-laws.

Public Charity

Question: What is a public charity?

Answer: It is a corporation holding funds that subjects to serve the public.

Remember:

- You should check with your state for further details of the state laws.

Federal Tax Identification

Remember:

- The law as to non-profit organizations is state law but the law as to tax-exempt organizations is federal law.

Question: What are the steps to get the federal tax identification?

Answer: There is only one step which is to incorporate the corporation with the state and the federal government will give the corporation a federal tax identification.

Remember:

- At this step, when the corporation receives its federal tax identification it is not necessary a tax-exempt status organization.

Tip:

- In Massachusetts and it is the same for most states in the U.S. to incorporate a corporation you need to fill out the Form "D" and there is a fee.

Becoming a 501 (c) (3) organization

Remember:

- A non-profit organization does not mean that the organization can not make a profit.

Question: When a corporation become a 501 (c) (3) organization?

Answer: It is when the corporation qualify under state law as a non-profit organization then the corporation qualify under federal law as a tax-exempt organization.

Remember:

- The organization has to qualify as a non-profit organization in order to qualify for a tax-exempt status organization.
- A 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code is a tax-exempt status.

Tips:

- The step when you incorporate a corporation with state it is a most important step because if the first step is qualified then the second step is also qualified.
- You should work with a lawyer when you incorporate a corporation.

Types of Giving & Grantmaking

Remember:

- Before these organizations do their businesses they need to incorporate as corporations and the process is the same for all corporations.

Question: What are the types of giving and grantmaking in the U.S.?

Answer: Generally, the types are:

- Private Independent Foundations;
- Bank Trusts;
- Public Charitable Trusts;
- Operating Foundations;
- Public Charities;
- Community Foundations;
- Company-Sponsored Foundation or Corporate Foundations;
- Corporate Grantmaking Programs;
- Church-Sponsored Grantmaking Programs;
- Funder Collaboratives; and
- Governments.

Remember:

- Studies show that most of giving are individuals giving, people like yourself.

Question: What is a foundation?

Answer: It is an endowment that individuals commit their resources to benefit the public and generally in areas of social, education, charitable or religious activities.

Remember:

- Foundations, funds, or trusts have similar meaning and they are depended on when they were first established.

Private Independent Foundations

Question: What are private independent foundations?

Answer: They are individuals that they create their private independent foundations as non-profit organizations with the purpose of supporting social, educational, charitable or religious activities.

or

They are private non-profit organizations that give resources to benefit the public.

For Example:

In Boston, Massachusetts: the Hyams Foundation is a private, non-profit family foundation.

Tip:

- The private independent foundations are established to benefit the public.

Bank Trusts

Question: What are bank trusts?

Answer: They are private independent foundations whose assets and grantmaking are managed by the trust departments of financial institutions, such as banks.

Remember:

- Bank representatives are usually designated as trustees of these funds, in conjunction with other individuals.
- The fund trustees decide what and who to give.

Public Charitable Trusts

Question: What are public charitable trusts?

Answer: They are funds that individuals donate to a municipality, typically managed by a city/town trust office. These funds are generally to be used for charitable purposes within that community.

Remember:

- Trustees of these funds may include municipal employees, elected officials, and/or community members.

Operating Foundations

Question: What are operating foundations?

Answer: These foundations are classified by the IRS as private foundations which do not generally award grants to community, but use their charitable income to support their own programs, research, or operations.

Public Charities

Question: What are public charities?

Answer: They are private, non-profit, tax-exempt organizations that their purposes to provide social, educational, charitable, or religious services.

Remember:

- Some of the public charity organizations do provide financial support to other organizations or to individuals as a means to fulfilling their goals.

Community Foundations

Question: What are community foundations?

Answer: They are publicly supported organizations and they are 501 (c) (3) organizations which they are tax-exempt organizations.

Remember:

- Community foundations do make grants to support community organizations in a specific community or region.
- Their decisions made by committees representing the diversity of that community.
- Their funding comes from individuals, corporations, and other foundations.

For Example:

In Boston, Massachusetts: the Boston Foundation is a community foundation, a non-profit and tax-exempt organization.

Tip:

- The community foundations are there to serve the community.

Company-Sponsored Foundations

Question: What are company-sponsored foundations?

Answer: They are separately incorporated tax-exempt organizations established by corporations to administer all or part of their charitable contributions programs.

Remember:

- Generally, the company may make an annual grant to the foundation or the company may give to the foundation's endowment and the foundation will use the income from the endowment.
- Company-sponsored foundations are the same with corporate foundations.

Corporate Grantmaking Programs

Question: What are corporate grantmaking programs?

Answer: They are voluntary contributions programs established and administered within for-profit companies.

Church-Sponsored Grantmaking Programs

Question: What are church-sponsored grantmaking programs?

Answer: Programs sponsored by churches and resources are generally from the religious institutions to address community needs.

Funder Collaboratives

Question: What are funder collaboratives?

Answer: They are a pool of funds from a number of public and/or private funding sources to address specific geographic or programmatic issues.

Remember:

- These funding are typically made by committees.

Governments

Question: What are the government funds?

Answer: Generally, government funds are:

- 1) Federal funds;
- 2) State funds; and
- 3) City/town funds.

Question: Where are the governments funds come from?

Answer: The governments funds come from taxes and these funds go back to support services and programs in the community.

Remember:

- Studies show that most of giving are individuals giving, people like yourself.

Organizations in the Vietnamese Community

Question: What are type of organizations in the Vietnamese community?

Answer: Generally, Vietnamese community organizations are group into three types and they are:

- 1) Organizations that incorporated with state and they are non-profit and tax-exempt organizations;
- 2) Organizations that incorporated with state but they are not tax-exempt organizations; and
- 3) Organizations that do not incorporate with state and they are not tax-exempt organizations.

Remember:

- The first amendment of the United States Constitution guarantees your rights of freedom of speech, press, religion, peaceable assembly and requesting change of the government.

Tip:

- If you want to form your own organization, you have the rights to do so in a peaceful way.

Question: How do you know the organization status?

Answer: There are two ways:

- 1) To contact the organization that you want to find out
and
- 2) The state office of secretary of state does have a complete list of all incorporated organizations in the state and their status.

Remember:

- Information about the organization status is public information.
- The non-profit and tax-exempt organizations they generally advertise or do inform the public about their non-profit and tax-exempt status.

Question: Where does a non-profit and tax-exempt organization get its resources for its programs and services?

Answer: The organization gets its resources from governments, foundations, corporations and individuals.

Remember:

- In order to receive resources from governments, foundations and corporations the organization has to incorporate as a corporation with a tax status. And generally the corporation has to be a non-profit and tax-exempt organization.
- Studies show that most of giving are individuals giving, people like yourself.

Question: Where does an organization that is not a tax-exempt get its resources?

Answer: In most cases the organization get its resources from individuals.

Remember:

- If an individual contribute to an organization that is not a tax-exempt organization, the individual can not report on their tax deductions.

Neighborhood Civic Associations

Question: What are the neighborhood civic associations?

Answer: They are neighborhood associations and civic groups that have a specific interest in their local communities.

Question: Where are the neighborhood civic associations?

Answer: In every community there are neighborhood associations, civic groups, and interested groups.

Remember:

- Talk to your neighbors or people that you know to find out about your area neighborhood civic associations.

Question: Do the neighborhood civic associations incorporate as corporations?

Answer: Generally, they do not incorporate as corporations and they do not have a tax status.

Question: Where do the neighborhood civic associations get their resources?

Answer: Most neighborhood civic associations do not have any resources. They are all volunteer people from the community.

Question: What is a neighborhood/civic association governing structure?

Answer: In most cases, the association has its by-laws and governing rules

For Example:

The association by-laws and governing rules would include:

- The president/chair of the association and how to elect the person
- The vice president/vice chair and how to elect the person.
- How to conduct its business?

Remember:

- The first amendment of the United States Constitution guarantees your rights of freedom of speech, press, religion, peaceable assembly and requesting change of the government.

Tip:

- If you want to form your own association you have the rights to do so in a peaceful way.

Question: What are types of neighborhood civic associations?

Answer: There are many types of associations.

For Example:

The most common one:

- An area neighborhood association;
- A specific interested association or group; and
- A neighborhood crime watch group.

Question: What are the issues that neighborhood civic associations discuss at their meetings?

Answer: Generally, they discuss issues that affect their neighborhoods.

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Final Project

Self-Training Manual
for Vietnamese Americans
the United States Government Structure

Project dues March 1st, 1999

Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Goal of the Manual	2
The United States Government Structure	3
The Executive Branch	3
The Legislative Branch	7
The Senate	9
The House of Representatives	10
The Judicial Branch	10
The Federal Elections	13
Election for the President	14
Elections for the Senators	15
Elections for the House of Representatives	17
State Government Structure	19
The State Executive Branch	19
The State Legislative Branch	21
The State Judicial Branch	22
State Elections	24
Election for State Governor	25
Local Government Structure	26
United States Citizenship	29
Becoming a U.S. Citizen	31
Step one: To submit your application	31
Step two: The fingerprints	32
Step three: Your interview	33
Step four: Your swearing-in	36
References	37

Introduction

It is often for any refugee and immigrant community to resettle in the United States that they would feel overwhelm with their basic and immediate needs to re-build their new lives. The needs such as are: to learn how to speak a new language; to adjust and adapt to a new culture; to learn new skills in-order to have good jobs; to have their children to the right schools; and many other responsibilities as citizen of a new land. It is often that newly arrived refugees and immigrants in the U.S. do not fully participate in the U.S. government system. Even that they understand by involving it would help to improve their new lives but in many cases they decided not to participate because of their language barriers, culture differences and not knowing about the system. In-order for them to participate they need to have access to the right information about the system and in the language that they best understand.

With the hope of this self-training manual it will provide to the Vietnamese Americans the basic information about the U.S. government structure. The manual will be translated into Vietnamese which the language that the first generation of Vietnamese in the U.S. understand best. By providing them with the right tool it will help the Vietnamese Americans to be more comfortable to participate in the U.S. government system.

Goal of the Manual

The goal of the manual is to help Vietnamese Americans to understand the basic of the United States federal, state, and local government structure; and to know of their rights as U.S. citizen in order to fully participate in the United States government system.

The United States Government Structure

Remember:

- The United States government refers to as the federal government.

Question: How the federal government is divided it out?

Answer: The federal government is divided into three branches and the three branches are:

- 1) The Executive branch;
 - 2) The Legislative branch;
- and
- 3) The Judicial branch.

The Executive Branch

Question: What the Executive branch includes?

Answer: The Executive branch includes:

- President,
- Vice President,
- Departments, and
- Independent agencies.

Question: What is the power of the Executive branch?

Answer: The Executive branch provides leadership and enforces laws.

Question: According to the United States Constitution the President must be?

Answer: The President must be:

- 1) Be a natural-born citizen of the United States;
- 2) Be at least 35 years old by the time he/she will serve; and
- 3) Have lived in the United States at least 14 years.

Remember:

- The Presidency is the highest office in the country.

Question: According to the United States Constitution the Vice President must be?

Answer: The Vice President must be:

- 1) Be a natural-born citizen of the United States;
- 2) Be at least 35 years old by the time he/she will serve; and
- 3) Have lived in the United States at least 14 years.

Remember:

- The Vice-Presidency is the second highest office in the country, next to the Presidency.
- If the President dies, leaves office, or cannot perform his/her duties, the Vice President becomes President.

Question: What are the duties and responsibilities of the President?

Answer: The President has many duties and responsibilities, most of which are listed in the Constitution and the main ones are:

- to enforce laws and treaties of the United States;
- to conduct foreign policy (subject to certain limits placed by Congress and the Constitution);
- to serve as Commander in Chief of the armed forces;
- to approve or veto the bills which Congress passes;
- when appropriate, to pardon people found guilty of breaking federal law;
- to appoint people to certain positions, subject to Senate approval:
 - heads of executive departments, or Cabinet members;
 - heads of independent executive agencies;
 - Supreme Court justices and judges of other federal courts; and
- to advise Congress on his/her perception of the nation's needs.

Question: What are the duties and responsibilities of the Vice President?

Answer: The Vice President has many duties and responsibilities, most of which are listed in the Constitution and the main ones are:

- to serve as Acting President if the President is disabled;

For Example:

- If the President has an operation.
- to preside over the Senate, and vote in case of a tie;
- to act as a link between the President and the Senate;
- to participate in Cabinet meetings; and
- to serve as a member of the National Security Council.

Remember:

- The Vice-Presidency is the second highest office in the country, next to the Presidency.
- If the President dies, leaves office, or cannot perform his/her duties, the Vice President becomes President.

Question: What are the departments?

Answer: The departments are:

- Department of State,
- Department of the Treasury,
- Department of Defense,
- Department of Justice,
- Department of the Interior,
- Department of Agriculture,
- Department of Commerce,
- Department of Labor,
- Department of Health and Human Services,
- Department of Housing and Urban Development,
- Department of Transportation,
- Department of Education, and
- Department of Energy.

Question: What are the independent agencies?

Answer: The independent agencies are:

- Commission of Civil Rights,
- Consumer Product Safety Commission,
- Environmental Protection Agency,
- Federal Deposit Insurance Company (FDIC),
- Federal Election Commission (FEC),
- Federal Reserve Board,
- Federal Trade Commission (FTC),
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA),
- National Labor Relations Board,
- Small Business Administration (SBA),
- United States Information Agency (USIA),
- United States Postal Service, and
- Veterans Administration (VA),

The Legislative Branch

Question: What the Legislative branch includes?

Answer: The Legislative branch includes Congress and the Congress is divided into two houses:

- The Senate
- and
- The House of Representatives.

Question: What is the power of the Legislative branch?

Answer: The power is to make or pass laws.

Question: What are the shared duties and responsibilities of the Senate and the House of Representatives?

Answer: As written in the United States Constitution the shared duties and responsibilities are:

- + regulating money and trade, including:
 - printing or coining of money,
 - borrowing of money by the government,
 - levying and collecting taxes, and
 - regulating commerce between states and with foreign countries;
- + provide for the national defense, including:
 - maintaining the Army, Navy and Air Force, and
 - declaring war;
- + making laws regarding naturalization of persons seeking citizenship;
- + establishing post offices;
- + regulating the system of weights and measures; and
- + passing laws to govern the District of Columbia, the national's capital.

Remember:

- The Senate and the House are shared some of their duties and responsibilities and they also have their separate responsibilities as written in the Constitution.

Remember:

As written in the Constitution a list of things that Congress may never do:

- taxes exports;
- pass trade laws which do not treat all states equally;
- spend tax money without a law to authorize it;
- authorize any title of nobility;
- pass a law to punish someone for an act which was legal when the person did it; and
- pass any law which deprives a person of his/her right to a trial in court.

The Senate

Question: According to the United States Constitution the Senator must be?

Answer: The Senator must be:

- 1) Be at least 30 years old,
- 2) Be a U.S. citizen at least nine years, and
- 3) Be a resident of the state he/she represents.

Question: What are the Senate separate responsibilities?

Answer: The responsibilities are:

- determining if impeached officials are innocent or guilty,
- confirming Presidential appointments, and
- ratifying treaties between the U.S. and other governments.

The House of Representatives

Question: According to the United States Constitution the Representative of the House of Representatives must be?

Answer: The Representative must be:

- 1) Be at least 25 years old,
- 2) Be a U.S. citizen at least seven years, and
- 3) Be a resident of the state he/she represents.

Question: What are the House separate responsibilities?

Answer: The responsibilities are:

- introducing bills dealing with the budget or taxes and
- impeaching officials

The Judicial Branch

Remember:

- One of the most important rights in the United States is the right to a fair trial. This means, the appeals process is set up to help ensure that people have as fair a trial as possible.

Question: What the Judicial branch includes?

Answer: The Judicial branch includes:

- The Supreme Court
- and
- The Lower Courts.

Question: What is the power of the Judicial branch?

Answer: The power is to explain and interpret laws and settle lawsuits.

Question: What is the Supreme Court?

Answer: It is the highest court in the country.

Remember:

- There are nine judges who sit on the Supreme Court and their terms are a life-term.

Question: What are the Lower Courts?

Answer: There are two types of the Lower Courts and they are:

- The Circuit Courts of Appeals
- and
- The District Courts.

Question: What are the Circuit Courts of Appeals?

Answer: They are the second highest courts, a step below the Supreme Court.

Remember:

- There are 11 Circuit Courts in the United States.

Question: What are the District Courts?

Answer: They are the lowest level of federal courts.

Remember:

- As of 1987, there were 94 district courts in the United States.

Question: What are the special courts the Congress has set up?

Answer: The special courts are:

- The Court of Claims,
- The Customs Court,
- The Court of Customs and Patent Appeals, and
- The Court of Military Appeals.

Remember:

- These courts are special courts and they are under the Supreme Court. But they are higher than the Circuit Courts of Appeals and the Federal District Courts.

The Federal Elections

Question: What is a political party?

Answer: A political party is a group of people who have similar ideas about how the government should be run.

Question: How many political parties are there?

Answer: There are many political parties but the

Democratic party
and
Republican party
are the two largest parties in the United States.

Remember:

- There are many smaller political parties in the United States.

Question: What are the federal elections?

Answer: There are:

- 1) Election for the President;
- 2) Election for the Senators; and
- 3) Election for the House of Representatives.

Election for the President

Question: According to the United States Constitution what the President must be?

Answer: The President must be:

- 1) Be a natural-born citizen of the United States;
- 2) Be at least 35 years old by the time he/she will serve; and
- 3) Have lived in the United States at least 14 years.

Remember:

- The Presidency is the highest office in the country.

Question: According to the United States Constitution what the Vice President must be?

Answer: The Vice President must be:

- 1) Be a natural-born citizen of the United States;
- 2) Be at least 35 years old by the time he/she will serve; and
- 3) Have lived in the United States at least 14 years.

Remember:

- The Vice-Presidency is the second highest office in the country, next to the Presidency.
- If the President dies, leaves office, or cannot perform his/her duties, the Vice President becomes President.

Question: How often is the general election for the President?

Answer: The general election for the President is every four years.

Remember:

- The election for the President is every four years this also means that a term for the President is four years.

Question: When is the general election for the President?

Answer: The general election for the President is always held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

Remember:

- The President chooses the Vice President as a running mate and they run together in the general election.

Question: How many term the President can serve as the President of the United States of America ?

Answer: The President may only serve for two terms as the President of the United States of America.

Elections for the Senators

Question: According to the United States Constitution What the Senator must be?

Answer: The Senator must be:

- 1) Be at least 30 years old,
- 2) Be a U.S. citizen at least nine years, and
- 3) Be a resident of the state he/she represents.

Question: How many Senators are in the Senate?

Answer: There are 100 Senators in the Senate.

Remember:

- There are 50 states in the United States of America.
- There are two Senators from each of the state
and
- Each Senator represents the whole state.

Question: How often are elections for the Senate?

Answer: The Senate elections are every two years.

Remember:

- Only one-third of the Senate seats are elected every two years.

Question: How long is a term for the Senators?

Answer: A term for a Senator is a six years term.

Question: Is there a term limit for Senators?

Answer: There is no term limit of how many times a Senator may be re-elected.

Elections for the House of Representatives

Question: According to the United States Constitution what the Representative of the House of Representatives must be?

Answer: The Representative must be:

- 1) Be at least 25 years old,
- 2) Be a U.S. citizen at least seven years, and
- 3) Be a resident of the state he/she represents.

Question: How many House of Representatives are in the House?

Answer: There are 435 Representatives in the House of Representatives.

Remember:

- The number of Representatives from each state varies because the number is based on the population of the state.
- Each state has at least one Representative.
- The District of Columbia has one non-voting Representative.

Question: How the Representatives are represent the people?

Answer: Most states are divided into districts and each district has a Representative for that district.

Question: How often are elections for the Representatives?

Answer: The elections are every two years for the Representatives.

Question: How long is a term for the Representatives?

Answer: A term for the Representatives is a two years term.

Question: Is there a term limit for Representatives?

Answer: There is no term limit of how many times a Representative may be re-elected.

Question: Who is the Speaker of the House?

Answer: The Speaker of the House is the chair of the House of Representatives.

Question: How the Speaker of the House be elected?

Answer: The Speaker of the House be elected by other Representatives.

Remember:

- The Speaker of the House is usually a member of the majority party.
- In the event that both the President and the Vice President are unable to serve, the Speaker of the House becomes President.

State Government Structure

Remember:

- There are 50 states in the United States of America.

Question: How the state government is divided it out?

Answer: The state government is divided into three branches and the three branches are:

- 1) The state Executive branch;
 - 2) The state Legislative branch;
- and
- 3) The state Judicial branch.

Remember:

- Most states are divided their state governments just like the federal government.

The State Executive Branch

Question: What the state Executive branch includes?

Answer: The state Executive branch includes:

- Governor,
- Lieutenant Governor,
- Governor's cabinet members, and
- Appointed executive positions

Remember:

- The governor's cabinet members are just like the President's Cabinet members or departments.
- In many states the cabinet members are called commissioners.

Question: What is the power of the governor?

Answer: The governor and his/her cabinet members not just execute the laws passed by the state legislature, but also propose new legislation.

Remember:

- Governors often are elected on a specific platform and try to get the legislature to pass their new proposals.
- The governor's office is the highest office in the state.

Question: What are some of the duties and responsibilities of the governor?

Answer: The main responsibilities are:

- to enforce laws;
- to advise the state legislature on the laws needed;
- to call special sessions of the state legislature;
- to serve as head of the state's National Guard; and
- to pardon or decrease sentences of people convicted in state courts when appropriate.

Remember:

- The above responsibilities are the same for all states.
- If the governor dies or is unable to serve, the lieutenant governor becomes governor.

The State Legislative Branch

Question: What the state Legislative branch includes?

Answer: The state Legislature branch includes two houses. The two houses are:

- The house of representatives
- and
- The senate.

Remember:

- There are 49 states that have the two houses, excepts the state of Nebraska. Nebraska has only one house.

Question: What are the purposes of the state Legislative?

Answer: The purposes are and for all states:

- to make laws about the state matters, and
- to represent the interests of its citizens.

Remember:

- The procedure for making laws is similar to the procedure followed in the federal government.

Question: How the state legislative divides their districting?

Answer: It is different for state to state.

For Example:

- For some states have a set number of representatives for a set geographic area, such as one representative for every 10 square miles.
- For some states have representation based on population, such as one representative for every 20,000 people.
- For some states have representatives *at-large* and all voters elect all representatives.

The State Judicial Branch

Question: What the state Judicial branch includes?

Answer: The state Judicial branch includes:

- The State Supreme Court;
- The Intermediate Appellate Court;
(not in all states)
- The Trial Courts of Original Jurisdiction;
(such as District, Circuit, Superior or Common Pleas Courts)
- The Courts of Limited Jurisdiction; and
("minor" or "lower" courts)
- The Justices of Peace, Special, Municipal, or County Courts.

Remember:

- The state courts have a hierarchy which is similar to the federal system.

Question: What is power of the state Judicial branch?

Answer: The power of the state courts only hear cases that involve state or local laws.

Question: What are the state courts duties?

Answer: Some of the duties are:

- to explain state laws;
- to tell how state laws apply;
- to settle disagreements between citizens in a state;
- to decide guilt or innocence of breaking a state law; and
- to decide if state laws are unconstitutional.

State Elections

Question: What are state elections?

Answer: The state elections are varies from state to state. But these generally are the positions:

- Election for state Governor;
- Election for state Lieutenant Governor;
- Election for state Senators;
- Election for state Representatives;
- Election for state Secretary of State;
- Election for state Attorney General;
- Election for state Treasurer;
- Election for state Auditor/Comptroller;

and

- For some states there may be other positions.

For Example

- For the Commonwealth of Massachusetts these positions are elected positions: Governor; Lieutenant Governor; Senators; Representatives; Secretary of State; Attorney General; Treasurer; and Auditor.

Remember:

- Be sure to check with your state office of the Secretary of State for your state election laws.

Election for State Governor

Remember:

- All 50 states in the United States elect their state governors.

Question: What the Governor must be?

Answer: The Governor must be is vary from state to state and generally a state Governor must be:

- A citizen of the United States;
- At a certain age (usually more than 30 years old); and
- Have lived in the state a certain period of time (often 5 years).

Remember:

- The governor's office is the highest office in the state.

Question: What is the governor term in office?

Answer: The term for the state governor is vary from state to state but it is usually either a two years or four years term.

For Example:

- The Massachusetts Governor's term is four years term and he/she may only serve for two terms.

Remember:

- In some states, there is a limit to the number of times the governor can serve.

Local Government Structure

Question: What are the local governments?

Answer: They are:

- City;
- County;
- Town; and
- Village.

Question: What are the most common forms of city government?

Answer: Generally, city government has one of three forms of government.
The three forms are:

- 1) Most cities have an elected mayor who is the chief executive, and an elected city council, which is similar to a legislature;

Remember:

- In this form of government, the mayor and council work together to pass ordinances to govern the city.

- 2) Some cities have a council-city manager form of government. A small group of elected representatives hires one person to manage the city;

Remember:

- In this form of government the council-city functions in the same way as in the council-mayor form of government.

and

- 3) Some cities have an elected commission.

Remember:

- In this form of government the commission performs both legislative and executive functions because there is no executive.

For Example:

- The City of Boston elects its city mayor, its city councilors, and its city councilor *at-large*.

Question: What is the most common form of county government?

Answer: Generally, county government has an elected board of commissioners or supervisors.

Remember:

- There are also various county officials, such as sheriff, who are either elected or appointed.
- Some counties also have a county manager, who is similar to a city manager.

Question: What is the power of local government?

Answer: The local government has power to:

- to raise taxes;
- to try people accused of breaking local laws or ordinances; and
- to administer local programs within its boundaries.

Question: What are services that local government generally provide?

Answer: Generally, there are two types of services. The services are:

- 1) Services needed only by the local area, such as building schools and
- 2) Provide protective services, such as police and fire protection.

Question: What are some primary local services that local governments provide?

Answer: Some of the services are:

- insuring that drinking water is safe;
- protecting health and safety by inspecting, like restaurants, building construction, etc.;
- building and repairing local roads and streets;
- providing police and fire protection;
- collecting garbage;
- maintaining schools;
- running or helping to run elections;
- maintaining courts, courthouses, and jails;
- collecting taxes for local and state governments; and
- keeping official record, such as marriage, birth and death.

Remember:

- Many of the services above local governments receive financial aid from state and federal governments in providing the local needs?
- One of the most important functions of local government is administering the public schools.

United States Citizenship

Question: Are you a United States citizen?

Answer: You are a United States citizen:

- if you were born in the United States
- or
- if you are a United States citizen by naturalization.

Question: Who can become a U.S. citizen?

Answer: If you are at least eighteen years old and
you have been a lawful permanent resident (this means, you have
a green card for at least five years)..

Question: What are the benefits when you become a U.S. citizen?

Answer: There are a number of benefits:

- 1) A citizen can vote in all elections;
- 2) A citizen can run for public office;
- 3) A citizen can travel outside the United States for as long as he or she wants;
- 4) A citizen can sponsor close family members to become lawful permanent residents (to obtain a green card). Close family members such are: husbands, wives, sons, daughters, parents, brothers, and sisters;
- 5) In many cases, the waiting period for a green card is shorter if the family sponsor is a U.S. citizen, rather than a lawful permanent resident;

- 6) A citizen can hold federal government jobs;
- 7) A citizen can use more government services and programs than a lawful permanent resident; and
- 8) A citizen may not be deported.

Becoming a U.S. Citizen

Question: What the INS stands for?

Answer: The Immigration Naturalization Service (INS).

Question: What are the steps to become a U.S. citizen?

Answer: There are mainly four steps:

- Step one: To submit your application
- Step two: The fingerprints and the exams
- Step three: Your interview
- Step four: Your swearing-in

Step One: To submit your application

Question: What application that you need to fill out?

Answer: You need to fill out the application form (N-400).

Question: What else do you need beside the application form (N-400)?

Answer: You need to have:

- 1) A copy of your green card;
- 2) Three photos of yourself; and
- 3) A check or money order made out to INS.

Remember:

- You need to check the fee with the INS when you submit your application.
- If you are disabled you may request to be excused from the English exam, or the U.S. history and government exam, or both. In this case you need to fill out the application form (N-648) and sometimes called the Disability Waiver form.

Step two: The fingerprints and the exams

Question: Where can you have your fingerprints?

Answer: You will go to an INS office to have your fingerprints.

Remember:

- The INS will send you a letter to tell you where and when to go to have your fingerprints.

Question: Do you need to take the exams?

Answer: Yes, you will need to take the exams in written English and U.S. history and government.

Remember:

- You need to make sure that you go to a testing service that is approved by the INS for your exams.
- There is information available that could help you to study for your exams.

For Example:

100 Top Questions on U.S. History and Government
by the FannieMae Foundation and
the National Immigration Forum

Step three: Your interview

(in some cases you might need a second interview)

Question: What you should bring with you to your interview?

Answer: These are things that you should bring to your interview:

- 1) Your green card;
- 2) Your passport and other travel documents;
- 3) Your marriage certificate;
- 4) Your income tax returns;
- 5) Child support receipts;
- 6) Military and Selective Service records;
(if you are a man)
- 7) Your criminal records; and
(you should bring a lawyer with you to your interview)
- 8) A original proof of passing your English and U.S. history and
government exams.

Remember:

- If you are disabled or very sick, you have these rights at your
interview:

- 1) To have the interview in a building that is easy to enter
with a wheelchair;
- 2) To have the interview at your home, hospital, or nursing
home;

- 3) To have a sign language interpreter at your interview;
- 4) To have an application form and test materials in Braille or large print;
- 5) To have any other reasonable accommodation that will enable you to show that you are qualified to become a citizen; and
- 6) You can bring with you a family member, a social worker, or a legal guardian to the interview.

Question: What are questions that the INS officer may ask you?

Answer: The INS officer may ask you:

- 1) Questions about your N-400 application form;
- 2) If you have traveled outside of the United States;
- 3) About your income tax returns;
- 4) About your child support payments;
- 5) Whether you registered for the Selective Service;
(if you are a man)
- 6) Whether you have been arrested or convicted of any crimes;
- 7) To show that you can speak and understand basic English and that you can read and write simple English; and
- 8) Questions about U.S. history and government.

Question: What are the questions that you may ask the INS officer?

Answer: You may ask:

- 1) His or her name and title;
- 2) To repeat any questions that you do not understand; and
- 3) To speak to a supervisor, if you think that the officer is not being fair.

Remember:

- You have the right to bring a lawyer to your interview.

Question: What are the cases that you may need a second interview?

Answer: When you are:

- 1) You do not pass the English exam or the U.S. history and government exam;

or

- 2) The INS asks you for more information.

Remember:

- If you need a second interview these are your rights:
 - 1) Your second interview must take place within 90 days after your first interview;
 - 2) The INS must tell you in writing what information to bring to your second interview; and
 - 3) The INS must give you at least 60 days to get the information they need.
- The INS must approve or deny your case within 120 days of your interview.
- After 120 days, if the INS does not decide on your case, you may take your case to Federal District Court for a decision.

Question: What are your rights if your case is denied by the INS?

Answer: These are your rights:

- 1) The INS must tell you why your case was denied in writing;
- 2) You may ask for a new interview by a different INS officer. You have 30 days to make the request and you must use Form N-336; and
- 3) The INS must give you a new interview within 180 days of your request.

Remember:

- If the INS denies your case again after your new interview, you may go to the Federal District Court for another hearing. You have 120 days to go to the Federal District Court;

or

- If the INS denies your case, you should talk with an immigration lawyer immediately. A lawyer can help you to ask for a new interview, to prepare for your new interview, to go to the Federal District Court.

Step four: Your swearing-in

Question: What happens when your application is approved?

Answer: You must be sworn in to become a citizen.

Question: What is the swearing-in to become a citizen?

Answer: It is when you take an oath of loyalty to the United States.

Question: What happens after your oath?

Answer: You receive your certificate of naturalization of the United States citizen.

Remember:

- If you are disabled or very sick, you can take the oath at home, or in a hospital or a nursing home.

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