



Holidays are often seen as a time for family, warmth, and togetherness. For many people, holidays provide an opportunity to reconnect with loved ones and enjoy traditions that bring comfort.

However, for many migratory youth and their families, holiday seasons may be difficult. Some of the youth we work with may not have family support nearby, and for those without a comforting presence of relatives, the holidays may feel especially lonely. This disconnect can be compounded by feelings of homesickness, isolation, and confusion about their place in this culture.



The challenges of being without family support are hard enough to navigate, but other factors may also come into play:

- Migratory youth might struggle to fully engage with local holiday traditions if they are unfamiliar or different from those of their home country and culture. There can also be a sense of not quite fitting in with peers who are spending time with their families.
- When language is a barrier, connecting with others over the holidays can become more challenging. Many migratory youths are still learning the language of their new home and may feel self-conscious or excluded in social situations.
- The cost of travel, gifts, and holiday celebrations may be out of reach for migratory youth. This can add to the sense of not being able to fully participate in festivities.

In partnership with local resources, let's take an active role in providing emotional support, fostering a sense of belonging, and creating opportunities for these young people to feel included. By offering a network of care and understanding, we can ensure that they feel valued and empowered during what can be an incredibly challenging time.



There is a pressing need to ensure that our migratory program participants feel seen, heard, and supported during the holiday season. Whether they are living independently, in group homes or housing, providing a supportive environment is crucial for their mental and emotional well-being. Here are a few ways that you can help:

#### 1. Community-Based Support

You, along with your network of local community resources, can play a pivotal role in creating a sense of belonging for migratory youth. Consider providing holiday meals, a "community dinner" or activities, and events where migratory youth can meet others in similar situations and create new traditions. These events can offer safe spaces where young people can make connections and feel part of a larger network of care and support.

#### 2. Mentors and Peer Support

Mentors and peer support can also ensure that migratory youth have someone to turn to during the holiday season. They can offer emotional support; help navigate the complexities of the holidays in a new country and serve as a source of guidance. Peer groups of other migratory youth or those in similar circumstances can also create a sense of solidarity and understanding, reducing feelings of isolation.

#### 3. Social Services and Advocacy

Social service agencies and advocacy groups that work with migratory populations often provide assistance that can be crucial during the holidays. These services might include holiday gift programs, access to food, or emotional support and counseling. Be sure to assess each outreach opportunity to make sure they are culturally competent and sensitive to cultural backgrounds.

#### 4. Online Communities and Virtual Support

Video calls with family back home or connecting with other migratory friends through social media can help bridge the gap. Organizations that focus on supporting migratory youth may also offer online resources, workshops, and forums where young people can find a sense of community without leaving their homes.

#### 5. Educational Institutions as Safe Spaces

Schools, colleges, and universities can serve as a crucial support system for migratory youth during the holiday season. Many educational institutions offer holiday programs, food drives, or accommodations for international students who are unable to travel home. Teachers, counselors, and administrators can be key figures in offering support and reassurance to youth who might be feeling especially vulnerable or isolated during this time.