

MRCI EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST RECEIVES OUTSTANDING REFUGEE AWARD

In 1990, the Somali government was overthrown by militants through a devastating war. These militant groups did not prepare or have a strategy in place for dealing with the aftermath. Since these militants were no longer managed or suppressed by the government, they started looting and killing innocent people for revenge or other reasons. Unfortunately, the situation deteriorated and continued to spiral out of the hand. The resulting fear instigated the "neighbor killing neighbor" mentality. Somalia was drawn into a civil war forcing many to flee to their neighboring country: Kenya. Mohamed Abdulkadir was among them.

"For the first time in my life, I become a refugee," explains Mohamed. "I stood in a line to get food, water, and medicine. I was totally vulnerable and unable to truly help my family. In the refugee camp, life was dreadfully tough, and safety unpredictable. Hope drained from people's spirits as the days continued."

Mohamed didn't lose hope, though, and came to the United States as a refugee in 1994. Now, he is using his experience to bring hope to others. A mission he fulfills through his work at MRCI.



"I am a Refugee Employment Specialist," he says. "I fill many roles. I help solve clients' needs with the county workers and visa versa. I build good relationships with employers and employees. I am actively involved in job placement services, help clients file their job application, accompany them to job interview as needed. I provide support to the companies who hire immigrants. I also do recruitment, train them in culturally sensitive topics and troubleshoot issues at the workplace. I refer our clients to support services agencies such as free legal aid, school resources, and I communicate to landlords to rent units or if there are issues with tenants, resolve them. I just help out where I can, so they know they are not alone in this new home."

After almost a decade with MRCI, Mohamed's efforts are gaining state recognition. He is the winner of the Outstanding Refugee Award from the Resettlement Programs office of the Department of Human Services. The award is recognition for individuals who have had refugee status and have demonstrated leadership to positively impact their community and the state.

Over the years Mohamed has played a crucial role in numerous partnerships developed with some of the region's major businesses and has been responsible for placing over 200 individuals from the area in those companies resulting in opening doors and inroads for the refugee and immigrant workers access to jobs with sustainable wages. He has assisted employers in the development of culturally sensitive policies and procedures, provided consultation and dispute resolution services to the business and overall has been a valuable instrument in the success of the workers and the businesses in integrating workers from various cultures. But despite all the good he has done, Mohamed will tell you, he is not done yet.

"This award has motivated me. I feel appreciated and very happy. I believe this award is a symbol of appreciation and respect towards me and all other immigrants who are working in different fields and levels. I would like to say thank you for this award and I wish everyone the same experience I have had in my career."

