



CWS

Community Sponsorship Manual



Community sponsorship is when a community group works together to welcome refugees by assisting in the process of resettlement and integration. These groups may be called co-sponsors, welcome teams or other names. This manual is to help your group welcome refugees into your community.

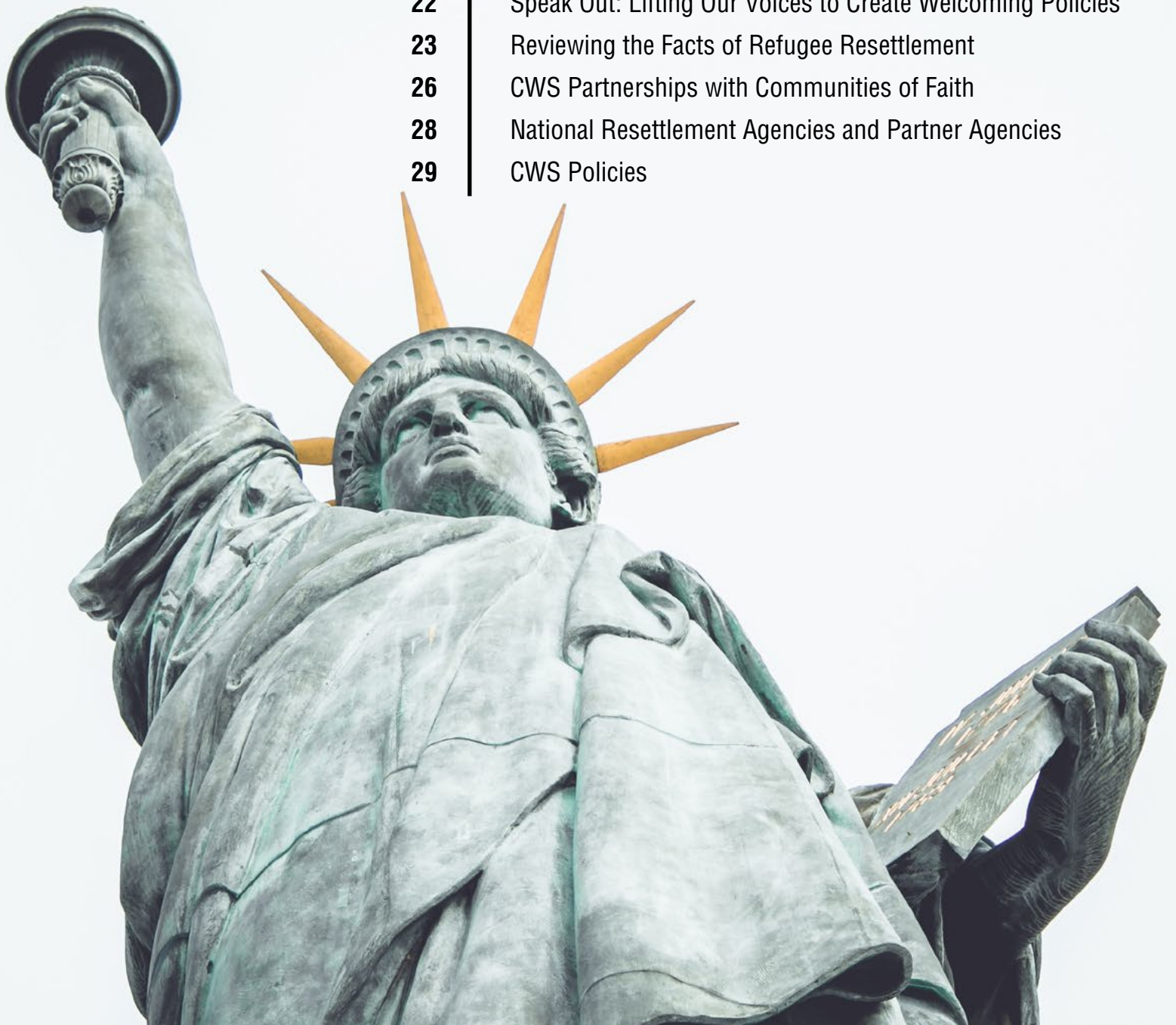
As a community member welcoming refugees, your role is an important one! Volunteering with refugees requires thoughtful engagement. This manual is designed to give an overview of the resettlement process and to guide you in defining and implementing your role. We recommend that you revisit this manual frequently throughout your volunteer experience.

This resource was created for communities working with Church World Service local and affiliate offices to welcome refugees resettled in the United States. Portions might be useful in work with other newcomer immigrants and asylum seekers; however, it is important to note that the content was designed for working with the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. Although much of the information laid out in this manual will be applicable throughout all community sponsorship work, it is important to always follow the guidance of local agency with the understanding that the work may look different according to local context.



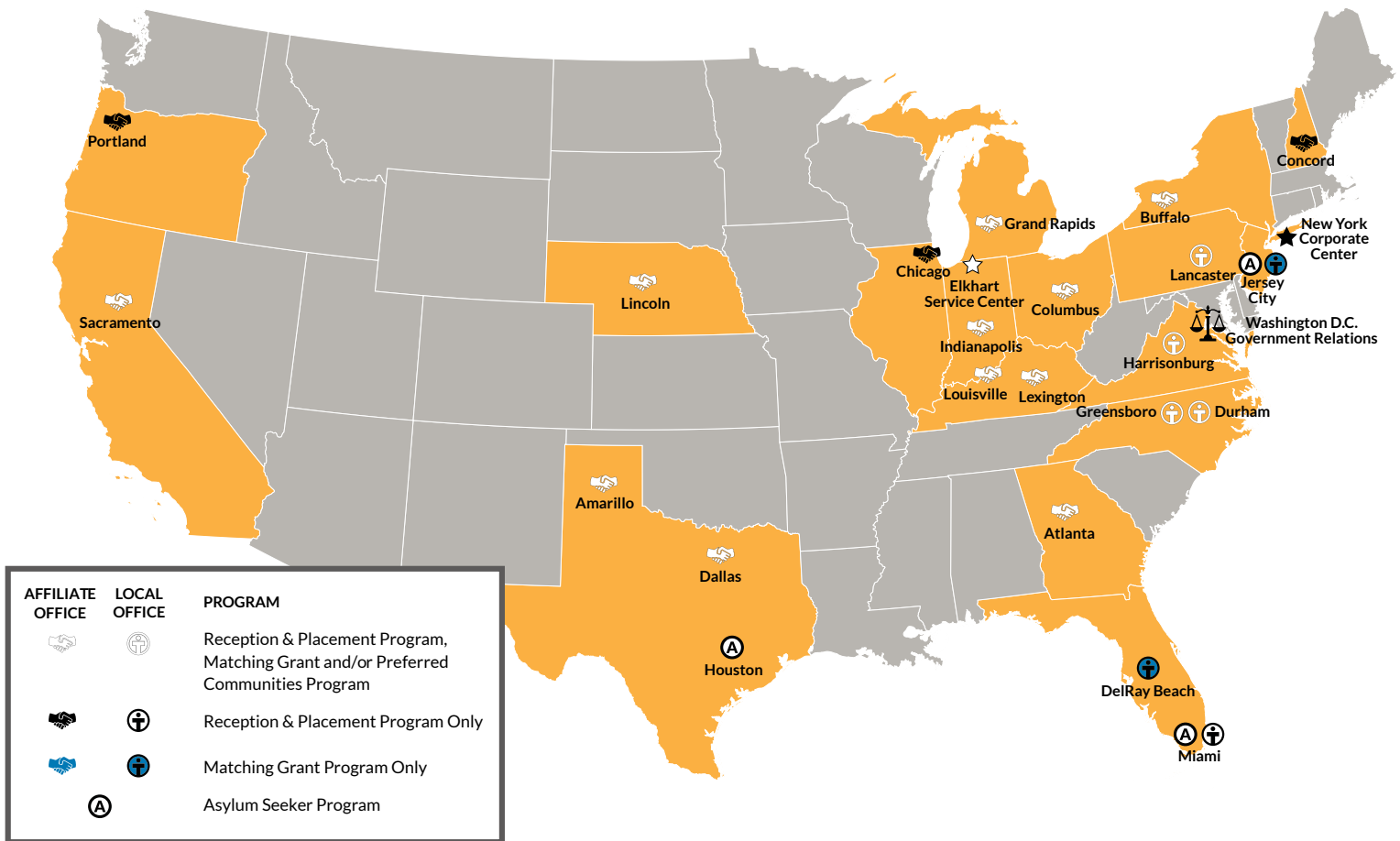
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The CWS Network

Church World Service resettles refugees through a network of 19 offices across the United States. Five of these local offices are part of CWS, and 14 are independent nonprofit organizations who are affiliates of CWS.



CWS Durham
Durham, NC
www.cwsrdu.org

CWS Greensboro
Greensboro, NC
www.cwsgreensboro.org

CWS Harrisonburg
Harrisonburg, VA
www.cwsharrisonburg.org

CWS Jersey City
Jersey City, NJ
www.cwsjerseycity.org

CWS Lancaster
Lancaster, PA
www.cwslancaster.org

CWS South Florida
Miami, Broward and Palm Beach, FL
www.cwssouthflorida.org

Our Affiliates

We are pleased to work with the following agencies as affiliate offices of Church World Service:



CALIFORNIA
Opening Doors, Inc.
Sacramento, CA
www.openingdoorsinc.com



NEBRASKA
Lutheran Family Services of NE
Lincoln, NE
www.lfsneb.org



GEORGIA
New American Pathways
Atlanta, GA
www.newamericanpathways.org



NEW HAMPSHIRE
Ascentria
Concord, NH
www.ascentria.org



ILLINOIS
RefugeeOne
Chicago, IL
www.refugeeone.org



NEW YORK
Journey's End Refugee Services
Buffalo, NY
www.jersbuffalo.org



INDIANA
Exodus Refugee/Immigration, Inc
Indianapolis, IN
www.exodusrefugee.org



OHIO
Community Refugee and Immigration Services (CRIS)
Columbus, OH
www.cris-ohio.com



KENTUCKY
Kentucky Refugee Ministries, Inc.
Louisville, KY
www.kyrm.org



OREGON
Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees
Portland, OR
<https://emoregon.org/soar/>



Kentucky Refugee Ministries, Inc.
Lexington, KY
www.kyrm.org



TEXAS
Refugee Services of Texas, Inc
Dallas, TX
www.rstx.org

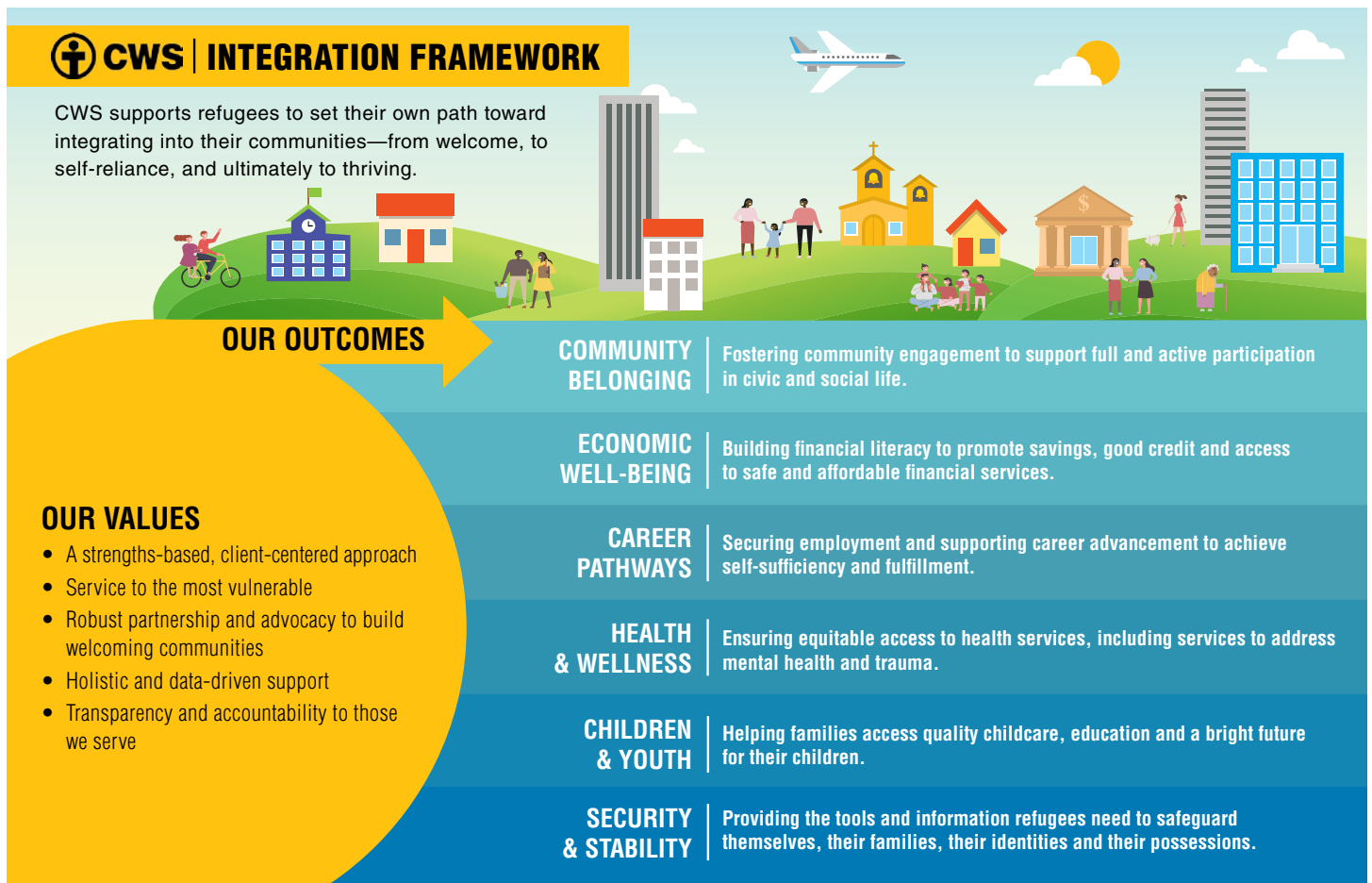


MICHIGAN
Bethany Christian Services
Grand Rapids, MI
www.bethany.org/get-help/refugees



Refugee Services of Texas, Inc.
Amarillo, TX
www.rstx.org

CWS Integration Framework



The CWS Integration Framework demonstrates how CWS works with its local partners to support refugees as they progress through their integration process: from their initial welcome to the United States, to self-reliance and ultimately to thriving. These outcomes are achieved by a combination of efforts by CWS, local offices, other local community organizations and refugees themselves.

- The welcome period typically takes place during refugees' first three to six months in the U.S. This is a time when refugees are becoming acclimated to their new environment, making their first connections with members of the community and finding their first job.
- Self-reliance is achieved when individuals no longer rely on the local resettlement agency or co-sponsor for support in accessing basic needs and liaising with other community organizations, service providers and institutions to meet urgent needs.
- CWS does not stop its work until refugees are thriving in their new environments. At this time, refugees may become naturalized citizens of the United States, are actively engaged in community life, are achieving their professional goals and are financially stable. Their children are succeeding in school, planning for college and looking toward their future careers.

Each refugee's path is unique, and their progression from welcome to thriving may not be linear. Goals and circumstances often change over time. CWS and the communities in which we work are here to walk with refugees each step of their journey.

CWS pursues six goal areas based on research defining indicators of successful integration, variables that support subjective well-being/happiness and features that characterize “the American dream.”



Security and Stability: In order for refugees to achieve their personal goals and effectively integrate into their community, they must achieve security and stability in their living environment and legal status. Refugees need to know basic information about how to keep themselves, their families, their identities and their possessions safe, and require assistance in the event of natural or manmade disasters.



Health and Wellness: The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is a humanitarian program that offers refuge to some of the most vulnerable refugees in the world. In recent years, 45% of refugees resettled by CWS had a medical or mental health condition that required follow up after their arrival. Access to adequate health care and wellness are necessary for success and engagement in other areas of life. CWS ensures that refugees have equitable access to health services within the community/affiliate network and that refugees learn how to independently navigate health and wellness systems to improve long-term success.



Community Belonging: Integration is a reciprocal process through which refugees and their host communities enrich one another and find a mutual sense of belonging. Integration requires neither party to give up their history, culture or identity but to respect one another. CWS creates bridges and linkages between refugees and their new communities that become lasting social bonds, support systems and friendships. Refugees are empowered to become actively engaged in civic and social life and equipped to become leaders within the broader community.



Career Pathways: The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is designed with the goal that each refugee will achieve self-sufficiency through employment as quickly as possible. Refugees must become employed swiftly in order to assume their expenses when limited resettlement assistance funds are exhausted. CWS assists refugees to get their first “survival” job as well as obtain job upgrades to secure a living wage. Establishment of a career pathway is the ultimate goal. CWS helps refugees with professional backgrounds to reenter their field and offers career counseling to refugees without a professional background in order to identify and achieve their goals.



Economic Well-being: Many refugees come to the United States unfamiliar with American banking norms and complex financial systems. It is not enough to earn a good income here; one needs to have the financial capability to make money management decisions that promote savings, good credit and access to safe and affordable financial services.



Children and Youth: Children and youth thrive when refugee parents are actively engaged in their children’s education and refugee children have a sense of belonging at school and perform at grade level over time. CWS believes that older students should have a pathway to graduation and a career. Small children should receive quality childcare and be prepared to enter kindergarten school-ready. Schools should communicate with parents in their native language, have culturally competent staff and work in partnership with resettlement agencies and families to support success.

Planning and Organizing for Welcome

Getting Started

Once your community group has decided to welcome a refugee family, it is time to organize. Organization for community sponsorship starts with gathering information from your local resettlement agency. Reach out to the office to request information on their co-sponsorship program.

Note: Co-sponsorship might also be called welcome team, good neighbor teams, circle of welcome or another name depending on your local agency.

Each resettlement office might have a different onboarding processes for teams of volunteers. Typically, you will find these four steps:

1. **Gathering information**
2. **Host an information session to learn about the resettlement agency, who refugees are and how they arrive to the United States**
3. **Hold a community sponsorship orientation to learn about best practices**
4. **Arrival and period of committed involvement with refugee family**

Background Checks

It is important for each group member to submit background checks to the resettlement agency they are working with. Some states have strict guidelines for volunteers of nonprofits. Make sure to check-in with your point person at the agency to ensure each member has the correct paperwork on file.

Point Person

In order to maintain good communication with the resettlement agency and keep the group on task, it is important to identify a point person. The point person's role is to keep communication flowing from the sponsorship team to the resettlement agency. The role of the point person is not to shoulder the responsibility to complete each task. It is imperative that this person can set healthy boundaries, understands the groups limitations and knows how to delegate responsibilities.

Committees/Roles

Organizing your group into committees is not required but may provide a helpful way to divide tasks and keep the goal of respectful accompaniment. Committees could include:

Housing: Assists in securing a home, gathering household and furniture items and setting up the house.

Transportation: Coordinates the transportation needs and driving lessons of the family.

Health: Assists the family in coordinating follow-up medical and dental appointments.

Cultural Adjustment: Assists the family in understanding the community (finding the grocery store, library, parks etc.) Teaches the family elements of American culture and life that they might need help with (appliances, caring for the home etc.).

Schooling: Assists parents/guardians in understanding the school system.

Jobs and Finance: Collaborate with employable individuals and the family's case worker to understand budgets and network for employment.

Activities and Engagement

Core Resettlement Activities

This timeline serves as an idea of the tasks that you and your group might engage in. Each resettlement agency has a specific way of delegating tasks to community sponsors. For example, one location might have a policy stating that only staff members are to assist with Social Security appointments, while another location might rely on volunteer support to complete this task.

Please be flexible to the needs of your local resettlement agency. This timeline is a starting point for you to understand how you might be invited to partner.

Team Management

- Attend sponsorship group orientations
- Sign volunteer commitment forms and submit background checks
- Set-up a team calendar (google docs/calendar/communities have been helpful for past groups)
- Make a photobook for the family with key team members' pictures and names (teams have also put pictures of their organization/place of worship on the cover)

The following activities are divided by suggested committees:

Housing

Pre-Arrival

- Collaborate with the resettlement agency to secure housing
- Collect household items— see household supply list
- Organize set-up day at the house

Post-Arrival

- Assist the family to understand how to contact their landlord for maintenance requests
- Assist the family to understand small household care items (in collaboration with cultural adjustment committee)
 - Changing batteries in smoke alarms
 - Taking the trash/recycling out
 - Mowing the grass or shoveling snow

Transportation

Pre-Arrival

- Create a sign-up system to easily post and track transportation needs
- Start recruiting transportation volunteers
- Start familiarizing committee with local public transportation maps/routes

Post-Arrival

- Likely transportation needs after arrival
 - Initial health screening
 - Local Social Security office
 - To resettlement agency office for Employment Orientation
 - To resettlement agency office for Cultural Orientation
 - Clothing bank to ensure that the family has enough seasonal clothes. This can be from a local clothing bank, thrift store or through clothing donations from the community sponsor.
- Ongoing transportation assistance
 - Are bikes appropriate for their location? If so, see if there is a bike that can be donated
 - Practice taking the bus/public transport with family members
 - Walk to places that are within walking distance
 - Share information about how to study for the drivers permit test
 - Download the practice test app on the family's phone



STRENGTHS-BASED REMINDER

Driving the family to appointments is necessary in the first month, however, remember that the goal is to ensure the family knows how to transport themselves to important locations/appointments. There will be a time when it is most appropriate for you not to drive the family to where they need to go.

Health

Post-Arrival

- Assist with transportation to the initial health screening
 - For your reference to understand the visit, see the screening guidelines that practitioners receive from the Office of Refugee Resettlement from the State Department
- Teach basic health practices in the United States
 - When to go to the ER or urgent care and when to schedule an appointment with a primary care physician
 - Locating first aid items in grocery stores and understanding how to use them
 - Storage of medicine and care for kids with fevers/colds
- Tutor basic nutrition in the United States
- Assist the family in setting up a calendar for health appointments



STRENGTHS-BASED REMINDER

Medical facilities use interpreters and translated materials when necessary. All communication from a health provider should be directly to the family instead of to volunteers on behalf of the family.

Cultural Adjustment

Pre-Arrival

- Find tutors who may like to help the family with specific items (laundry, grocery store, household chores)

Post-Arrival

- Give a 'welcome to the community' tour, pointing out local landmarks and places you can explore together in the coming weeks/months
- Walk through the family's home with them asking if they need any items or appliances explained to them
- Visit the closest supermarket
- Schedule a fun trip for the first month (visit a farm outside of the city, movie night, potluck etc.)

Schooling

Pre-Arrival

- Find tutors to partner with the children/parents in studying

Post-Arrival

- Assist with transportation to school enrollment with the children
- Make sure the kids are outfitted for school (clothes, backpack, supplies)
- Establish homework helpers to assist with tutoring
- Assist the adults in finding an English as a Second Language (ESL) class
- Practice English with the family using language based on their current needs (such as medical words before a doctor visit) or reinforcing lessons taught at ESL class
- Advocate for the parents/guardians as they learn the school system



STRENGTHS-BASED REMINDER

Always guide school staff/teachers to speak with the parents/guardians regarding schooling concerns instead of to volunteers.

Jobs and Finance

Pre-Arrival

- Organize volunteers to tutor budgeting and personal finance skills
- Research costs of living for your community and consult with housing committee to determine appropriate rent ceiling

Post-Arrival

- Share a simple budget sheet with the family to assist them with budgeting and tracking their expenses
- Work alongside of the Employment Specialist in building a resume for the employable adults and locating possible employers.
- Did the adults have a profession that they are interested in working towards? Perhaps they hold a degree overseas and wish to work towards becoming certified here in the United States. Take some steps towards showing them what some steps are that they could take to work back to that career (study English, take some classes, etc.)

Social Activities: The Warmth of Welcome

Many times, this transition to a new culture and community can be one of loneliness and isolation for refugees. They have lost not only their homes, but their family, friends and community. The welcoming work of Co-Sponsors and Welcome Teams does not solely exist to teach and assist with the tasks of transition but also to provide a social support to newly arrived families.

It can be easy to overlook the importance of social activities during the first months of accompaniment with a refugee. Check in with the family who you are partnered with to see when they would like you to visit. With the language barrier, you might feel uncomfortable making social visits without a firm 'task' to accomplish. Push yourself to reach outside of your comfort zone! Below is a list of ideas of what you could focus on during social visits.

seasonal ACTIVITIES

- The 3 'Ss' of Snow! – Sledding, Snowmen and Shoveling
- Visit a local orchard in the fall
- Visit a local park
- Free swim days at the local pools
- Carve pumpkins
- Share culture with one another during a holiday
- Fourth of July picnics, hanging festive lights in December, etc.
- Learn about and celebrate a holiday that's special to the refugee family

community ACTIVITIES

- Visit a local farmers market
- Walk to the closest grocery store
- Visit the library (free events typically take place for members throughout the year)
- Walk to the closest park with the family
- Pay attention to free local events and attend together
- Visit a museum or zoo
- Attend a sporting event
- Go for a walk around the neighborhood

home visit ACTIVITIES

- Make a craft together (artwork/sewing/simple kids crafts/color with sidewalk chalk)
- Color together with the younger family members and practice simple English words as well as words from their native language
- Eat a meal together, share how to make a traditional American dish (chocolate chip cookies etc.), ask to learn how to make a traditional dish from the family's country of origin
- Sit and share an update from your life. Show pictures from a recent family gathering/birthday party/school field trip you just took. (Be mindful of displaying wealth, such as large homes or expensive vacations)
- Figure out which children's games are universal across borders! Tic-tac-toe, hopscotch, jacks, Uno and jump rope are played around the world.
- Stop in and just say 'hello!' and visit for some time
- Create a vegetable garden together (check with landlord before changing any landscaping)
- Listen to each other's favorite type of music



PHOTOS: SHANE NELSON PHOTO

Roles and Expectations

The Role of Resettlement Agencies

Resettlement agencies serve as integration concierges, advising refugees over time on steps they can take to achieve their goals and ensuring that refugees are aware of resources that can help them on their journey. Resettlement agencies do this through intensive case management, cultural and community orientation and a range of integration services and community referrals depending on location programming.

Each resettlement community possesses programs, supports and welcoming attitudes that lead to successful integration. It is the resettlement agency's role to nurture relationships with community partners, develop new ones and ensure that they can serve refugees with cultural competence and compassion. In partnership with refugees, resettlement agencies are a leader, convener and educator for the community's efforts toward refugee integration.

Role of Community

As a community partner, your role is vital to the integration of newly arrived refugees. You are a bridge builder to the community at large and an ambassador of welcome for your city.

It is important for volunteers to consider their boundaries and their role when interacting with newly arrived refugees. As a volunteer, your job is not to solve every problem or to do for others what they can do for themselves. Your role is to equip, educate and guide—to empower! As you navigate your role as a volunteer, you must remember to set boundaries for yourself.

You Are

An ambassador for your community, a friendly neighbor and a part of a refugee's growing social capital in a new place.

The Goal

To work yourself out of the role of a volunteer and into the role of a neighbor as you 'teach to' instead of 'do for.'

Remember

You are not alone in your welcome of newcomers. You cannot be/do everything and must know when to refer questions to local professionals in your community and when to communicate items to the local resettlement agency.



PHOTOS: PAUL JEFFREY

Healthy Boundary Tips

- Do not borrow from or lend money to the refugee family.
- When sponsorship groups assist a family financially, please be in contact with your local resettlement agency for guidance to help ensure that this financial gift is in the best interest of the family.
- Do not feel like you need to give out your home phone number or address.
- If the refugee requests your help for a future need, first think through three items:
 - Is this something that the individual can try themselves this time (even if it will be a challenge for them)?
 - Is it appropriate for me to be the person to assist with this task? Does the individual have a family member who should be assisting instead?
 - Are other people needing to know of this need? Ex. Is this needing to be reported back to the resettlement agency?
- Know when to say 'no' regarding a task that you do not feel equipped for, or when that task has already been taught.
- Know when to ask for help. When in doubt, ask!

Expectations

It is important to acknowledge the expectations that you come to this work with. Perhaps you have welcomed refugees before and expect this new volunteer experience to mirror the past. Perhaps you expect to develop friendships, or to share the skills you have learned throughout your career.

Volunteer work is often unpredictable instead of straightforward. How one family transitions to their new community might look quite different from another, and you shouldn't expect to duplicate a previous experience shared with one family.

Our ideas about what newcomer families need are influenced by our own culture and upbringing, and they may be different from what the newcomer family desires. Donated items may not be cared for as you would like or might be sold instead of kept. Keep in mind, your lifestyle will be different than the lifestyle of the family you are in partnership with.



PHOTO: SHANE NELSON PHOTO



PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

Teaching vs. Doing

Accompanying a newly arrived refugee to self-sufficiency is the goal of the resettlement program. Self-sufficiency means that one has the skills, knowledge and resources to navigate daily life.

As a volunteer, your goal should be to gradually become less task-oriented and more of a friendly, community neighbor. This takes a high level of intentionality as the ways we typically think of helping people tend to be rooted in activities and accomplishing tasks. Additionally, it can take far longer to teach someone to do something for themselves than it does to just do it for them.

It is not inherently bad to help someone by doing a task for them. However, the goal of resettlement is to ensure that refugees can navigate the community and their needs themselves.

HELPING // DOING FOR

Driving someone to all their appointments



EMPOWERING // TEACHING TO

Taking the bus together as a mutual learning experience, teaching them how to buy a ticket and read the bus map. Or walking together...even though the walk might be 25 minutes and a drive 5 minutes.

Calling the doctor/case worker/teacher/ to make an appointment for the family



Teaching the family how to call to make appointments on their own (even if they do not speak English). Perhaps you could practice through role playing telephone calls or write out note cards using key words or pictures. Many places have access to phone interpretation. Knowing how to say in English 'I need interpretation' is important.

Sorting through the family's mail, tossing away the unimportant things and keeping important bills.



Make a list with the family of what items are important to keep (with samples and pictures of company logo) e.g. utility bill, letter from USCIS, letter from school.

GRACE TO YOURSELF AND GRACE TO OTHERS

Being an empowering force in other's lives is difficult. You, other volunteers and resettlement agency staff members will not always get this right. You must extend grace to yourself and grace to others around you in this work of welcome. There will be times when you 'do for' instead of 'teach to.' It happens!

Part of being intentional and thoughtful in this work is being willing to grow. Thoughtful engagement in volunteering is a difficult and continual process. However, it is essential in being a healthy volunteer and promoting integration of newly arrived refugees.

Strengths-Based and Empowerment Models of Resettlement

Amongst the refugees we serve there are ample illustrations of resilience in the face of extraordinary challenges. Rather than approaching refugees as traumatized victims, strength-based practitioners acknowledge the tremendous strength refugees have demonstrated to cope.

Believing in People

Strength-based practitioners hold the fundamental assumption that people can improve the quality of their lives. That means believing in the potential of every person and trusting that they, along with their families and communities, hold the answers to the challenges they face. Even in the most trying of circumstances, every refugee that comes through a resettlement agency has shown remarkable strength in one way or another. As helpers, we can remind refugees of their resilience in the way we view them, the language we use and with respectful, empowering approaches to practice.

There are always “likeable” individuals who make it easy to believe in people’s strengths and trust their ability to solve their own problems. This respectful and hopeful attitude can be much more difficult to maintain with other people in other situations when solutions seem nonexistent without our “expert opinion.” Those are the times when it becomes especially important to consult with staff at the resettlement agency in order to ensure that actions taken remain focused on long-term empowerment.

The Empowerment-Based Service Model

Definition of empowerment: “The process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.”

Basic Tenants of Empowerment Model

- Refugees are individuals who demand respect and autonomy. Their lives, decisions and personal information are theirs alone.
- All services are tied to self-sufficiency; they are deliberate and progressive.
- Always follow the least intrusive path to service delivery.

The goal of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and of each of our staff, our clients and the community members who support them is self-sufficiency. Simply stated, a person who is self-sufficient can provide for themselves without the help of others. For newcomers to the United States, this goal is both incredibly difficult and necessary.

Self-sufficiency in the holistic sense signifies much more than being able to pay the rent and put food on the table without handouts. It means that one has the skills, knowledge and resources to navigate daily life (including knowing who to turn to for help when those resources or skills are lacking). The acquisition of these skills and knowledge base is the first and most important step in a refugee’s path to rebuilding their lives.

The empowerment model of service is based on the concept that everyone has the potential to succeed and it is our role to help build the foundation for them to do this.

Our staff and volunteers are asked to be aware and deliberate in their service. To ask themselves at each step: How does my action help this person become more self-sufficient? How can I change this from a favor into a lesson? How can I take steps so that next time this person will have the skills to do this task on their own or without any assistance?

Considerations when Working in Resettlement

Power, Culture and Diversity

Cultural differences and similarities exist between newcomer refugees and the receiving community. Our culture influences our behaviors, values and ways in which we learn and process the world around us. Please value and recognize the importance of your own culture, while at the same time valuing diversity. Honor the similarities that you share with newcomers while also honoring those differences that you do not identify with.

Power

Many volunteers speak the dominate language (English) and are a part of the dominate culture of the United States. When you work with a newcomer, it is important to understand that your relationship is one of unequal power, as you are in a position of greater power. In order to work in partnership with the refugee we ask that you acknowledge your power and enter this work thoughtfully.

'Power Over' and 'Power With'

'Teaching to' and 'doing for' can be explored through the lens of 'power over' and 'power with.' In the context of working with newly arrived refugees, 'power over' means that between the two of you, you hold the knowledge of how to navigate the systems and structures in your community. 'Power with,' is the process of working to balance that power through teaching. When you show someone how to care for a need themselves, you are giving away some of the power that you held over them and leveling your relationship.

Take, for example, navigating public benefits and filling out reporting forms for local government offices. Finding the answers for the refugee and telling them which forms to sign is power over. Going with them to the office and teaching them how to connect with a case manager there to assist with forms is 'power with.'

Acknowledging Your Power

There are many ways in which your 'power over' another might impact the way that they interact with you. Be aware that it might be hard for the refugee you are accompanying to say 'no' to you. If you extend an invitation to your place of worship or to another event, the refugee might feel like they must attend because you are assisting them.

Similarly, your 'power over' can influence how the refugee responds to questions you might ask. At the start of your partnership, please refrain from asking questions about their past experiences. If you ask to hear their story, they might feel obligated to tell you. Understand that some refugees are very willing to share their story of fleeing and how they arrived in the United States, while others might never wish to.

Perceptions of Success

The decisions that refugees make in creating their lives here in America are their own, and we must encourage their autonomy in doing so.

It is easy to apply your own definition of success onto a newcomer and worry that they are not 'doing well' or 'succeeding' in their acclimation to a new community.

Consider the act of parenting school-aged children. Your version of successfully engaging in this time of life might be to enroll your children in after-school activities and attend them out of support for your child. Another family might choose to not support extracurriculars. This does not denote a lack of success. Newly arrived refugee families typically work hard and long shifts in order to provide for themselves. Because a refugee does not make the same choices as you in their lives does not diminish their success.

Paternalism

An imbalance of power can contribute to paternalism in this partnership. Paternalism is when you limit someone's autonomy based on what you think is for their own good.

It is easier to make decisions for someone than you might think. It is not so easy to see someone make decisions that you feel are 'bad,' 'unnecessary' or are simply different than those you would make.

Imagine this initial transition to a new culture and community as a river that newcomers must cross. The role of 'teacher' that you and the resettlement agency play is to point out the steppingstones across the river. Your role is not to choose the path, carry across or hide the paths that you would not utilize yourself.

Religion

Although it is natural to share what is important to you with others, we require that our partners not engage in proselytism. Many refugees have spent years fleeing persecution because of their faith, and this may be their first chance to live without fear that someone has an agenda to change them in some way. Proselytizing is defined as inducing someone to convert to one's own religion.

In all that you do, make sure the refugees understand that your help is not contingent on their participation in your church or religion; we do not want them to feel they have to become like us in order to receive our care and assistance.

LGBTQIA+ Refugees

Refugees who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex may have faced many unique challenges and be reluctant to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to affiliate staff or their own family members. It is critical that LGBTQIA+ refugees are aware of support networks available to them to ensure they do not face isolation within their own ethnic or national communities here in the United States.

Trauma-Informed Care

Trauma-Informed Care is a framework which focuses on positives and strength-based approaches in order to empower an individual and prevent re-traumatization.

It is important for us to recognize that things we may view as character flaws might be coping mechanisms as reaction to trauma. These might be:

- Being late to meetings/appointments
- Not answering phone calls
- Asking multiple people for help on the same problem
- Holding information back from someone trying to help

Continued Education

[TED Talk: "The danger of a single story"- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichi](#)
["Dignity"- Donna Hicks](#)

Language and (Mis)Communication

The language that we use in everyday life has power. Avoid possessive language when working with refugees, such as 'adoption' or 'our family.' These possessive words can inadvertently signal paternalism and 'power over.' Instead, ensure that the language that you use is mirroring your empowering actions. 'The family,' 'The (surname) family,' 'our group is accompanying a refugee,' 'we are welcoming a refugee family,' 'the refugee we are partnered with,' are all good ways to speak of this engagement.

Miscommunication

There are many people, organizations and structures involved in a newly arrived refugee's life. A few might include the resettlement agency, a volunteer team, the government benefits office, the doctor's office, the Department of Health and the school district. Each organization might then connect the family to more local agencies who have specialized programs. Those could be childhood development specialists, counselors, after-school programs, women's/men's/youth groups, cultural agencies and support groups. A newly arrived refugee's life is full of people and agencies! This increases the chances of miscommunication between those serving the family.

When Miscommunication Happens

- Reach back out to the resettlement agency for guidance
- Work with the refugee/family in order to make a clear 'map' of the agencies working with them

At times, you might be welcoming a family who speaks very limited English. They might know who called them and why, but not know the English to confidently relay the information to you. This is okay and preferable to you receiving calls for the family and then finding interpretation to relay messages along. The family must remain in control of managing their lives.

Communicating Across Language Barriers

Communicating with one another across a language barrier is challenging. Interpreters are not always going to be available to assist, and this can lead to miscommunications and frustrations, particularly at the start of your volunteering.

You may find yourself surprised after weeks or months that you and the refugee/family find ways to communicate beyond fluent spoken language. Your friendship might be built less upon shared conversations and more upon shared experiences while teaching how to navigate the community.

Communication Tips

- Speak clearly, not louder.
- If you are not understood, try to use different words.
- Use your phone to show pictures. For example, pull up photos of a grocery store when asking if the family would like to go.
- Be aware that phone translation apps are not perfect and can sometimes be confusing.
- Write messages down-- many newly arrived refugees have friends or relatives in the community who will help translate for them later.
- Know if the person you are speaking with has a relative or friend who you can call for assistance when you MUST have interpretation.
 - Be mindful that this is a labor for the person you are asking.
 - Be mindful to not ask a child to interpret

Working with the Resettlement Agency

As you know, resettlement agencies are nonprofits whose work is to welcome refugees through a contract with the U.S. State Department. These agencies are staffed with passionate members of your community who, many times, started off as resettled refugees or volunteers themselves.

You will find that resettlement agencies have a variety of staff who you might find yourself working with. Program services may range from three months all the way to five years after arrival and beyond. It is important to understand the variety of programming support that an office has as well as how to effectively partner together in welcoming refugees.

Keep in Mind

- Resettlement agencies are monitored quite closely by the State Department as well as Church World Service headquarters.
- The resettlement agency might not be doing a task for the refugee because they are encouraging the individual to accomplish the task themselves.
- Sometimes, a refugee will ask multiple people for assistance with the same problem. Asking many people might be their way of assuring that the task is helped with.
- You might hear of a concern from the family that the resettlement agency already knows about. The agency might already have made plans to fix the concern.
- Case managers are frequently managing multiple family cases at one time and are often away from their desks on home visits.
- If a refugee says that they can't get in touch with their case manager, it might be because they are visiting the office in person without an appointment. Encourage the refugee/family you are partnered with to call their case manager and leave a voice message.



PHOTOS: LEFT + BOTTOM RIGHT - SHANE NELSON PHOTO, TOP RIGHT: DAVID MUTUA

Speaking Out: Lifting Our Voices to Create Welcoming Policies

Advocacy

As a welcome team or co-sponsor, it is important that you are walking in solidarity with refugees by educating and advocating for welcoming policies at the local, state and federal levels. Make sure to engage the voices, stories and leadership of refugees in all your advocacy and community organizing activities. Always nurture authentic relationships with refugees that foster the goal of self-sufficiency ensuring there is clear communication and transparency about how to engage in storytelling, advocacy or public events. Together we can help influence the public narrative on how the resiliency of refugees benefits your community through the following activities:

Amplify Stories to Influence the Public Narrative

- Tell your story of the transformative experience of welcoming refugees by posting on social media, writing an opinion editorial or contributing an article to your congregational or community newsletter.
- Find opportunities for refugees who would like to tell their stories to shape the broader public narrative. Invite refugees to speak at your local congregational or community events. Keep in mind that many refugees may not wish to share their stories publicly.

Contact Your Policy Makers

- Lawmakers need to hear your voice! See CWS updated statements and action alerts at cwsglobal.org and Refugee Council USA statements and action alerts at <https://rcusa.org>.
- Write, call or tweet your legislators and meet with them in-district during recess periods. We want to ensure the federal government consistently gives robust support to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.
- Join annual state advocacy days to promote policies that support refugees and immigrants, and call state legislators.
- Join town halls and meet with your city council and/or mayor to ensure your city and/or county welcomes immigrants and refugees.

Public Events

- Hold a press conference or vigil in response to news that impacts refugees, asylum seekers or immigrants.
- Bring together community members for the annual World Refugee Day on June 20th.
- Engage refugees in regular public events that are part of your congregation or community.
- Invite the media to your event and ensure that refugee voices and stories are uplifted.



PHOTO: SHANE NELSON PHOTO

Reviewing the Facts of Refugee Resettlement

Who are Refugees?

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.

Under the United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, eligibility for refugee protection requires a current or future fear of persecution. However, 'persecution' is not defined as a concept; rather it is inferred as a threat to life or physical freedom. A person may qualify for refugee status under its terms only if they fear persecution on one or more of the following grounds:

- Race
- Religion
- Nationality
- Membership of a particular social group
- Political opinion

A person is deemed undeserving of refugee protection if they have committed a crime against peace, a war crime, a crime against humanity, a serious non-political crime outside the country of refuge prior to their admission to the country of refuge, or is guilty of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Durable Solutions

Most refugees register with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the country to which they have fled. UNHCR is mandated to provide international protection to refugees and works to secure the best possible durable solution for each refugee. There are three durable solutions available to refugees:

- Voluntary Repatriation: refugees return in safety and with dignity to their country of origin
- Local Integration: refugees legally, economically and socially integrate in the host country
- Resettlement: refugees are transferred from a country in which they have sought protection to a third country which has agreed to admit them as refugees

Only a small fraction, less than 1%, of the refugee population is referred for resettlement, and being referred by the UNHCR does not guarantee that a refugee will be resettled; the decision to accept a refugee remains with the resettlement country.¹

United States Refugee Admissions Program

Historically resettlement was led by faith organizations, but now many other community groups are also part of welcoming and sponsoring refugees. The United States has a public and private partnership among the government and non-profit agencies. The U.S. refugee program was enshrined into law in the Refugee Act of 1980. The United States has been the largest refugee resettlement country in the world, admitting approximately two-thirds of all refugee resettlement referrals worldwide each year. Over the last forty years, the average number of refugees admitted to the United States has been 95,000 individuals--- move down to PD section.

1. UNHCR. 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/resettlement.html>

Special Immigrant Visa

Afghan and Iraqi nationals who supported the U.S. Armed Forces or Chief of Mission authority as translators or interpreters or were/are employed by or on behalf of the U.S. Government in Afghanistan or Iraq may be eligible for Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) processing. The SIV program is separate and distinct from the U.S. Resettlement program, but SIV recipients are eligible for the same resettlement assistance as refugees.

History of the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP)

Following World War II, the United States admitted hundreds of thousands of displaced Europeans. In 1975, the United States again resettled hundreds of thousands of refugees—this time from Southeast Asia. Congress passed the Refugee Act of 1980, which standardized the resettlement services for all refugees admitted to the United States.

The Refugee Act now provides the legal basis for the USRAP that is administered by the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migrations in the Department of State in conjunction with the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Department of Health and Human Services and offices in the Department of Homeland Security.

Presidential Determination

Each fiscal year, the president of the United States releases a Presidential Determination which determines the processing priorities, designated nationalities and number of refugees approved for arrival through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

To access the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Meet the definition of a refugee
- Be of special humanitarian concern to the United States (determined by the president)
- Be otherwise admissible under U.S. law
- Not be firmly resettled in any foreign country

Background checks

Refugees undergo extensive biographic and biometric evaluations conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services and the Department of State.

For further information, see the flow chart on the following page.

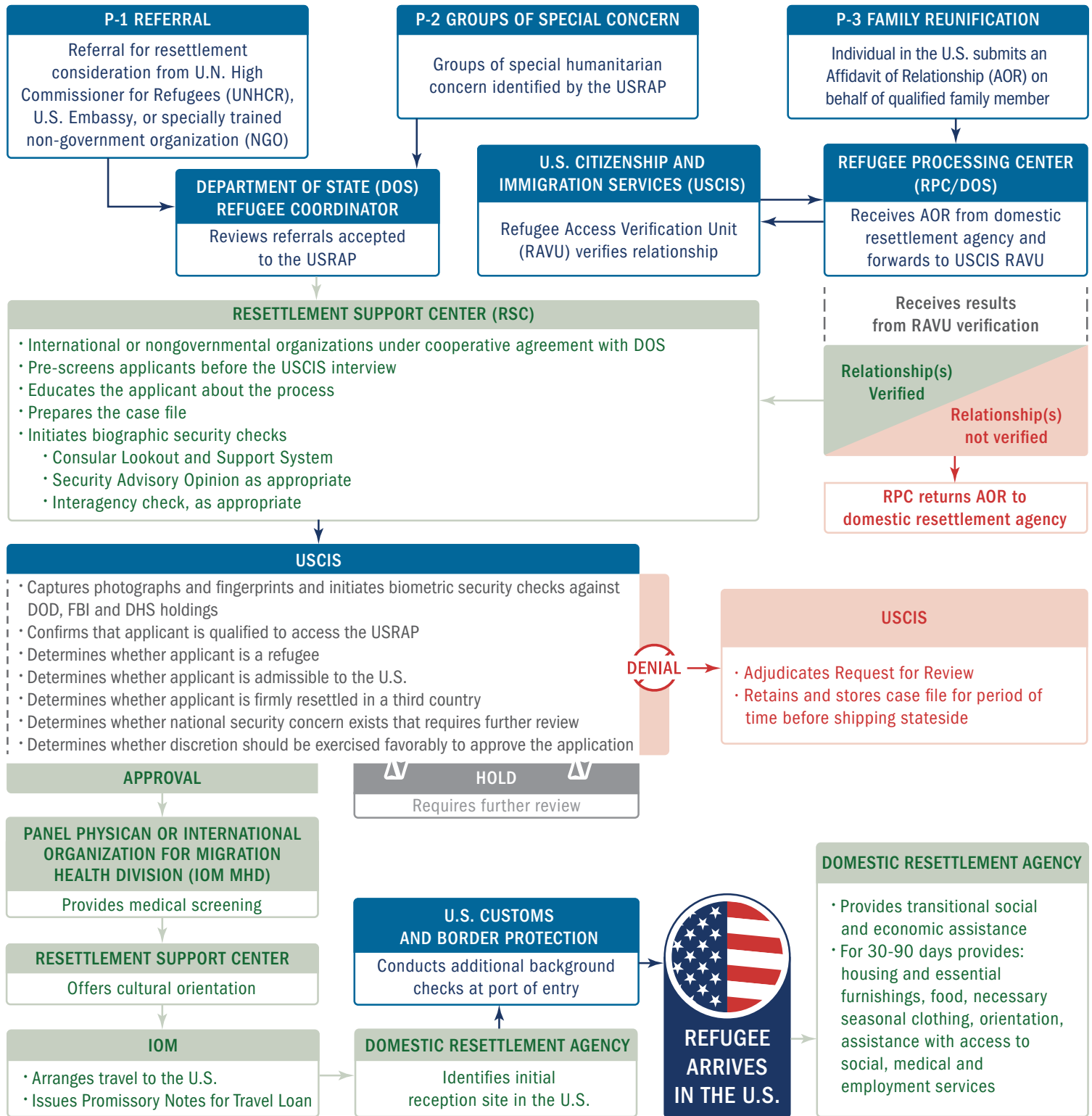


PHOTOS: LEFT + RIGHT-SEAN HAWKEY, CENTER-DAVID MUTUA

UNITED STATES REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROGRAM (USRAP)



REFUGEE IS OVERSEAS AND MUST BE IN ONE OF 3 CATEGORIES:



CWS Partnership with Communities of Faith

Member Communions

Church World Service was formed in 1946, in the aftermath of World War II. Seventeen denominations came together to create an agency “to do in partnership what none of us could hope to do as well alone.” The mission: Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, comfort the aged, shelter the homeless. Seventy years later, CWS remains a faith-based organization transforming communities around the globe through just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement and disaster.

CWS now partners with 37 Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, Peace and Historic Black member communions that encompass a diversity of denominations, traditions, histories and cultures, and represent some 30 million Americans in all 50 states. In the United States, CWS and member communions work together at the national level to promote the resettlement of refugees, advocate for justice, and welcome newcomers into our communities.

Faith Communities in Solidarity

From its inception, CWS has collaborated with representatives of member communions in the carrying out of its mission, drawing on their relationships and shared commitment to mobilize local faith leaders and their congregations. CWS hosts monthly Faith Solidarity Calls to convene a group of denominational leaders at the national level working to ensure faith communities are engaged in solidarity with refugees. Many of these same faith leaders participate in the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, where CWS is one of the key organizers, to advocate for just and humane immigration policies, including the restoration of a more generous refugee resettlement program. In addition to partnering with CWS, many of these organizations are leaders of their own initiatives to mobilize communities in response to global migration and displacement.

The 37 CWS member communions are listed below along with websites for denomination specific refugee and immigrant programming. You will find a variety of ways in which these partners work to enhance refugee resettlement in communities across the country. You may find that many of these communions have initiatives as well as additional resources to support refugees and asylum seekers in your community.



PHOTOS: ERIC KRUSZEWSKI, COURTESY HIAS

Member Communions

- African Methodist Episcopal Church
- African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
- Alliance of Baptists
- American Baptist Churches USA
- Armenian Church of America
(including Diocese of California)
- Christian Church (*Disciples of Christ*)
 - [Refugee & Immigrant Website](#)
- Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
- Church of the Brethren
- Community of Christ
- The Coptic Orthodox Church in North America
- Ecumenical Catholic Communion
- The Episcopal Church
 - [Refugee & Immigrant Website](#)
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 - [Refugee & Immigrant Website](#)
- Friends United Meeting
- Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
- Hungarian Reformed Church in America
- International Council of Community Churches
- Korean Presbyterian Church in America
- Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church
- Mar Thoma Church
- Moravian Church in America
- National Baptist Convention of America
- National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.
- National Missionary Baptist Convention of America
- Orthodox Church in America
- Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in the U.S.A.
- Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
- Polish National Catholic Church of America
- Presbyterian Church (USA)
 - [Refugee & Immigrant Website](#)
 - [Refugee & Immigrant Website 2](#)
- Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.
- Reformed Church in America
 - [Refugee & Immigrant Website](#)
- Serbian Orthodox Church in the U.S.A. and Canada
- The Swedenborgian Church
- Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch
- Ukrainian Orthodox Church in America
- United Church of Christ
 - [Refugee & Immigrant Website](#)
- The United Methodist Church
 - [Refugee & Immigrant Website](#)

We encourage all faiths, traditions, and civic groups to consider what actions they can take in building more inclusive and welcoming communities for refugees. To partner with a CWS affiliated office, faith and community groups do not need to be a CWS Member Communion.

National Resettlement Agencies and Partner Agencies

When refugees arrive to the United States, they are welcomed and offered resettlement services by one of the nine private resettlement agencies that have signed a cooperative agreement with the State Department. Each of these nine agencies have local offices and affiliate offices around the country that are responsible for ensuring that the core services mandated by the Department of State's Reception and Placement Program are provided to every arriving refugee.

The nine national resettlement agencies are:

- Church World Service
- Ethiopian Community Development Council
- Episcopal Migration Ministries
- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
- International Rescue Committee
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services
- US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- World Relief Corporation

Partner Agencies

Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration

The State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration focuses on refugees, other migrants and conflict victims. Their mission is to provide protection, ease suffering and resolve the plight of persecuted and uprooted people around the world on behalf of the American people by providing life-sustaining assistance, working through multilateral systems to build global partnerships, promoting best practices in humanitarian response and ensuring that humanitarian principles are thoroughly integrated into U.S. foreign and national security policy.

This office does not operate refugee camps, or otherwise give aid directly to refugees. Instead, in the interests of effectiveness and efficiency, it works with the United Nations and other international organizations, as well as with non-governmental organizations, that operate these programs for refugees.

Office of Refugee Resettlement

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services helps new populations maximize their potential in the United States by linking them to critical resources that assist them in becoming integrated members of American society.

ORR provides time-limited cash and medical assistance to new arrivals, as well as support for case management services, English as a Foreign Language classes, and job readiness and employment services—all designed to facilitate refugees' successful transition to life in the United States and help them to attain self-sufficiency.

ORR supports additional programs to serve all eligible populations beyond the first eight months post-arrival, including micro-enterprise development, ethnic community self-help, agricultural partnerships, Matching Grant and Preferred Communities. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/what-we-do>

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is the government agency that oversees lawful immigration to the United States. Their mission statement is to secure America's promise as a nation of immigrants by providing accurate and useful information to newcomers, granting immigration and citizenship benefits, promoting an awareness and understanding of citizenship, and ensuring the integrity of the immigration system. If a refugee is referred to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, it is a USCIS officer who will determine whether they are eligible for refugee resettlement in the United States.

International Organization for Migration

International Organization for Migration is an inter-governmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. The organization arranges travel for all refugees approved for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and contracts with the State Department to perform the medical examination(s) refugees must undergo prior to their departure.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was created in 1950, during the aftermath of the Second World War, to help millions of Europeans who had fled or lost their homes.

Today, all refugees admitted to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program must first register as a refugee with UNHCR, which will determine which durable solution(s) are available to the individual— whether it be repatriation to the country they have fled, integration into the country that is hosting them or being resettled in a third country.

Refugee Processing Center

The Refugee Processing Center (RPC) is the creator of the Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System, a customized computer software system that is used to assist the processing of refugees bound for resettlement in the United States. The RPC manages the information sharing between overseas Resettlement Support Centers and domestic resettlement agencies. The RPC also hosts weekly allocations meeting in which all new refugee and Special Immigrant Visa cases are allocated between the nine resettlement agencies.

Resettlement Support Centers

Resettlement Support Centers facilitate the pre-screening of refugees when they are referred to the United States from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Since 1990, Church World Service has partnered with the U.S. Department of State to administer the Resettlement Support Center for Africa. The center works to process thousands of cases each year and assists U.S. government officials who conduct final interviews with refugees for their legal admission to the United States.

CWS Policies

Volunteers working with CWS local and affiliate offices are expected to be aware of and abide by the following policies which govern CWS staff conduct:

[CWS Code of Conduct](#)

[CWS Child Safeguarding](#)

[CWS Anti-Human Trafficking](#)

Continued Education

[UNHCR Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018](#)



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT REFUGEEWELCOME@CWSGlobal.org

PHOTO: SHANE NELSON PHOTO