



IRC HOME Program

Manual



IRC Atlanta

Contents

How to use this manual	<u>3</u>
About refugee resettlement at the International Rescue Committee	<u>4</u>
Understanding who refugees are	<u>6</u>
What is resettlement?	<u>8</u>
Rights & responsibilities of refugees	<u>12</u>
History of Community Sponsorship in the USA	<u>15</u>
What is Co-Sponsorship?	<u>16</u>
HOME team guidelines & procedures	<u>18</u>
Steps to becoming a HOME team	<u>19</u>
HOME team training	<u>20</u>
Responsibilities of HOME team	<u>21</u>
HOME Program Required Documents	<u>23</u>
R&P and Community Sponsorship	<u>24</u>
 Core Service Delivery	
• Pre-Arrival	<u>28</u>
• Post-Arrival	<u>30</u>
• Public Benefits	<u>32</u>
• Service Plan and Family Budget	<u>34</u>
• Important Documentation	<u>36</u>
• Money and Financial Literacy	<u>38</u>
• Employment	<u>39</u>
• Family Education	<u>41</u>
• End of R&P Milestones	<u>42</u>
• Case Note and File Documentation	<u>43</u>
• Tracking Time and Donations	<u>46</u>
 Recognizing our differences	<u>48</u>
Setting and Keeping Self-Sufficiency	<u>52</u>
Boundaries	<u>54</u>
Privacy Considerations	<u>56</u>
Client scenarios	<u>57</u>
Additional and Important Issues for HOME team Consideration	<u>59</u>
HOME Program 360	<u>64</u>
Recommended Resources	<u>65</u>
Contact information	<u>66</u>
Acknowledgments	<u>66</u>

How to Use this manual

Congratulations on becoming a HOME team with the International Rescue Committee!

In partnering with IRC, you are joining us in responding to the greatest humanitarian crisis of our time in the spirit of American welcome. By committing to the work of resettling a refugee family in your community, you are playing a pivotal role in expanding opportunities for refugees to reach both safety and stability while further enriching the fabric of American society. This manual is designed to facilitate both the preparation for and management of your HOME team experience. While comprehensive but not exhaustive, this manual will provide a framework from which you and your group can approach required tasks, tackle sensitive topics, and gather resources in support of the refugee family's resettlement. Throughout your Co-Sponsorship period, you will have the support of the Community Sponsorship Coordinator (CSC) and their experienced colleagues at IRC Atlanta as you carry through your responsibilities.

For additional questions

International Rescue Committee
2305 Park Lake drive NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30345
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About Refugee

Resettlement at the International Rescue Committee

The International Rescue Committee is one of nine national Resettlement Agencies (RA) that are contracted through the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) to administer the Reception and Placement program for refugees admitted through the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). The mission of PRM is to provide protection, ease suffering and resolve the plight of persecuted and uprooted people around the world on behalf of the American people. Resettlement is one of the ways refugees are offered durable solutions to start their new lives after fleeing violence and persecution.

The objectives of the Reception and Placement program at IRC are:

1

To arrange for the proper reception and placement of refugees in the United States and offer assistance during their initial resettlement in the United States, including the provision of secure and stable housing,

2

To provide refugees with basic necessities and Core Services during their initial period of Resettlement.

3

In coordination with publicly supported refugee service and assistance programs, assist refugees in achieving economic self-sufficiency through employment as soon as possible after their arrival in the United States.

The goal of the HOME program is to engage local community members in supporting and advocating for refugee resettlement and to support refugees in navigating their new environments during their first six months in the United States.

About refugee resettlement at the International Rescue Committee cont.

The Resettlement Program provides a bridge for clients from their former life experiences to the new skills required for success in the United States. The HOME program provides a bridge for connection to and integration within the United States community.

Our schedule of goals includes, but is not limited to:

Within the first 90 days	Within the first 6-8 months	Within the first 5 years
Provide safe and sanitary housing and furnishings; food; clothing; referrals for additional services; social security cards; registering children in school; offering English classes; health-orientations and referrals; community and other orientations; employment preparation and assistance;	Ensure clients are accessing regular English language training and extensive cultural and job orientation classes; Ensure case managers work with clients to connect them with resources to achieve employment in the United States.	Assist with applying for citizenship, reunification with family members and engagement in civic life in the United States

Primary Program Services at IRC Assist with:

- Cash and public benefits and health care coverage.
- Access to English as a Second Language classes
- Vocational services to help clients develop the U.S. training credentials and obtain the job-related tools necessary for competitive job hunting.
- Employment support, including finding and applying for jobs, resume writing and job coaching.
- Cultural orientation and civics lessons.
- Securing safe and sanitary housing.

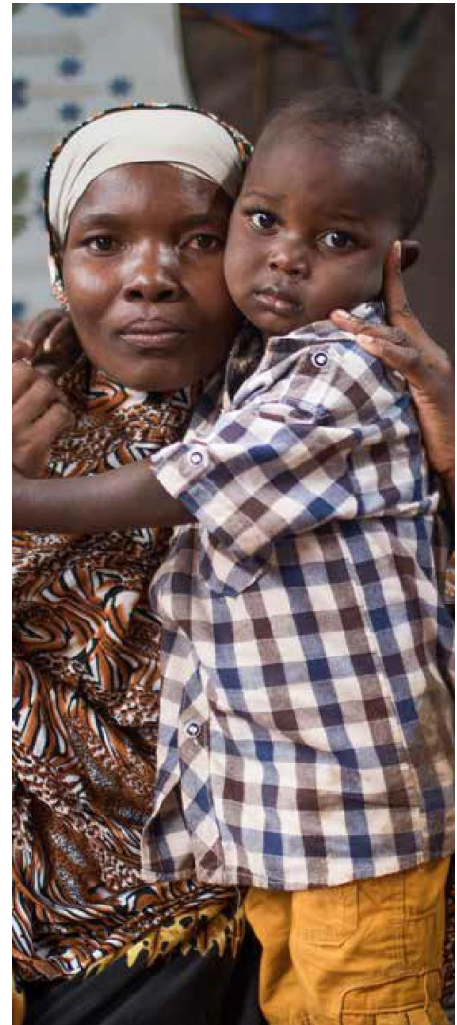
Understanding Who refugees are

Refugees are people who must flee their homeland due to fear of death or persecution because of race, religion, or political views. They must leave everything behind, including family members and material possessions, for the chance to rebuild a life with personal safety, individual freedom, and peace. While the term “refugee” is often used interchangeably with other terms such as “immigrant,” or “asylee,” there are important distinctions. Participants in the USRAP have received Refugee Status. Refugee Status is a form of protection granted to people who meet the definition of refugee and who are of special humanitarian concern to the United States. Refugees are generally people outside of their home country who are unable or unwilling to return because they fear persecution, serious harm or death.

Refugees

Under United States law, a refugee is someone who:

- Is located outside of the United States
 - Is of special humanitarian concern to the United States
 - Demonstrates that they were persecuted or fear persecution under the following 5 grounds as per US Law: race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group
 - Is not firmly resettled in another country
 - Is admissible to the United States
-



Understanding who refugees are. cont.

The critical difference that sets refugees apart from other groups such as economic migrants is refugees flee persecution, sometimes for their lives, with little if any prior planning. Hence, they can best be viewed as “pushed” from their country of origin rather than “pulled” to a new land for economic or social benefit. Of course, the reality is, these distinctions are seldom clear-cut, and so the refugee definition, along with the claim to asylum, may be very difficult to determine.

The key distinction between refugee and asylum seekers is that refugees arrive in the country and start their life “from scratch” through the USRAP. Asylum seekers are individuals that have been in the United States and apply for asylum status in the country based on the above grounds, therefore asylees can be connected to a community and have housing. The IRC supports refugees from a variety of countries, including Eritrea, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Burma, Iraq, Syria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The IRC also supports asylees, who are granted political asylum coming from many different countries.

IRC also supports Afghans and Ukrainians with designated **humanitarian parole** status through programming funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement. According to USCIS, “parole allows an individual who may be inadmissible or otherwise ineligible for admission to the United States to be in the United States for a temporary period for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit.” While special provisions enacted by Congress allow for Afghan and Ukrainian parolees to access public benefits and obtain work authorization similar to refugees, their temporary status requires application for asylum to remain lawfully in the United States before their two-year parole period ends.

Glossary of Terms

Immigrant is a broad term referring to anyone who migrates to another country to set up a new residence.

A **refugee** is an immigrant who flees their home country seeking safety due to persecution, political upheaval, or war.

Migrants typically travel from their homes to other countries in search for work.

Asylee refers to a person who entered the United States and applies for refugee status, having met the legal definition of an individual who has a well-founded fear of persecution based on the 5 grounds above.

The key difference between an **asylee** and a **refugee** is: a refugee is someone who is interviewed for asylum outside of the United States, whereas an **asylee** is interviewed **inside** the U.S. An **asylee** may have entered the U.S. on a tourist visa and feared returning to his/her own country.

Source: Office of Refugee Resettlement

For additional information please visit:

Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration
www.state.gov/j/prm/index.htm

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-asylum/refugees

What Is resettlement?

The term “resettle” simply means to “move to a different place.” Resettlement is, however, anything but simple. The road for many refugees from danger to resettlement in a safe country is perilous and stressful. The journey often begins abruptly with an attack on a village in the middle of the night, with little or no time to gather belongings. Family members are frequently separated, as they slowly and painfully try to make their way to a neighboring country. Often, women arrive without their husbands, as the men have either stayed behind, or are missing due to the wars in their homeland. After arriving in a neighboring country, refugees may apply to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for protection.

Refugee camps have United Nations workers who interview refugees to see if they fit the definition. If the United Nations recognizes the refugee’s need for protection, the individual may be allowed to live in a country or in a refugee camp. It is not uncommon for refugees to languish in a refugee camp for months or years, before being accepted into another country, if at all. Less than 1% of the total refugee population is accepted for resettlement. Conditions in the camps are generally poor, with only basic food and shelter provided, along with limited sanitation, medical care, education, and nutrition. Additionally, employment opportunities in camps are either severely limited or non-existent. Crime is often rampant.

As of 2019, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 26 countries worldwide had formal refugee resettlement programs. The United States led the world, accepting an estimated 33,992 refugees for resettlement during 2019. The State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) reported that in 2020 and 2021, total refugee admissions in the US were much lower at 11,814 and 11,411, respectively. If qualified for resettlement, the UN refers the refugee(s) to United States Refugee Admissions Program or USRAP. Once referred to USRAP, a refugee will meet with a U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration representative, international organization or resettlement agency, most commonly at Department of State Run “Refugee Support Centers” across the globe.

The USCIS representative will conduct an in-depth interview with the refugee to determine if they meet the requirements for the USRAP. At the Refugee Support Centers, fingerprints are collected and submitted to U.S. government employees. The refugee applicant’s fingerprints are screened against FBI, Department of Homeland Security and Department of Defense biometric databases. Once it is determined that the refugee can access the USRAP program, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS, formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Service), which is under the Department of Homeland Security, will adjudicate the case. Officers from USCIS conduct interviews and extensive background checks. Once it is determined that a refugee is qualified for entry into the United States through the USRAP, PRM then allocates the refugee(s) to a national resettlement agency in the United States that will find a community in which to resettle them. (For more information regarding refugee processing please visit: <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-and-asylum/refugees>). Each year, the U.S. Congress proposes the number of refugees that the U.S. should accept from each region (Africa,

Asia/Pacific, the Americas, Europe and the Middle East). The United States President then sets the ceiling, or the maximum number of refugees that the U.S. will accept into the country. This is an executive decision that is entirely at the discretion of the president.

Once the refugee is approved for resettlement, the linchpin of the resettlement process is the Resettlement Agencies such as the IRC. Through contracts with the State Department, from whom they receive partial funding, these secular and faith-based humanitarian organizations provide for or arrange the requisite Core Services of resettlement such as housing, medical attention, job training and procurement, social security and school enrollment, etc., for a finite period of time. The exact specifications of financial assistance and responsibility vary per state. Resettlement agencies resettle refugees on a non-denominational basis.

The goal of each agency is to assist refugees in attaining economic self-sufficiency in their new country, which allows full participation in opportunities all Americans enjoy.



How do refugees get to Atlanta?

Though refugees are not usually able to choose precisely where in the U.S. they would like to be resettled, agencies try as much as possible to place refugees in areas where they already have family members or where there are pre-existing ethnic communities. Resettlement agencies also consider housing availability, unemployment rates and cost of living when selecting a specific community.

What services refugees receive once they arrive?

Through culturally competent services, the IRC assists by being an advocate, a guide and a resource to clients in areas related to housing, health, employment, and other basic needs as expressed by our clients. In all assistance, IRC staff seeks not to simply do for the client, but to teach them how to do for themselves and, ultimately, gain self-sufficiency. All refugees are eligible to receive certain social benefits. A resettlement agency representative helps a refugee family begin a new life in the U.S. by greeting them at the airport; providing them with housing, food, clothing and household goods for their first 30 days; applying for social security cards and registering children for school and adults for English classes; taking the family to appointments with medical providers and social service agencies; and helping the adults find work. I. For many refugees, it is challenging to understand that benefits and assistance are NOT entitlements. Each state designs its own parameters. Once these services run out, additional support from community entities, such as faith-based organizations and community

volunteers, becomes essential to a successful transition.

Some of the ways volunteers can help include serving as tutors to teach English language skills, securing interpretation services, providing transportation, and collecting donations for refugees.

How is the Resettlement Process Funded?

Refugee resettlement in the United States is best described as a public-private sector partnership between the government and resettlement agencies. U.S. Congress proposes the refugee admission numbers for each fiscal year and the President approves it. Public Agencies as well as organizations, community groups, and faith-based communities work closely to ensure that refugees are successfully resettled into the United States. The IRC is funded through a combination of public contracts, foundation grants as well as private donations.

Resettlement agencies nationwide provide the following services and benefits for a finite period of time:

- Basic needs such as housing, essential furnishings, food, clothing
- SNAP benefits
- Community orientation
- Social Security cards
- School registration for children
- Twelve months refugee cash assistance for single adults or couples without children.
- Referrals for medical appointments and other supportive service needs and health care coverage.
- Employment services
- English language classes
- Case management (through local agency and caseworkers)
- Other services may be available, depending on location and local capacity.

What does the transitioning process involve?

While a ticket to America must feel like a ticket to heaven, a refugee's expectations may be unrealistic. The area of misplaced expectations looms large in the resettlement picture. Frequently, refugees hear rumors from friends, relatives, or even from television or videos about "the good life" in countries of asylum. While overseas orientation prior to arrival is extensive and every effort made to fully inform refugees of the situation in their receiving communities, refugees may not clearly understand the scope of the adjustment challenges that await them upon arrival. For example, refugees may mistakenly understand that when they get to America, all their needs will be taken care of by the government, and all they need to do is call 9-1-1 for help.

In reality, most refugees arrive with only a small suitcase or bag containing some clothes or personal items and a few pieces of identification. Many arrive with little to no knowledge about the language or culture of their receiving community. They lack the skills to secure employment or navigate the healthcare and education systems, pay taxes, obtain a social security number, use the bus, or drive to the store. They have to learn everything, usually in English, a language foreign to many though not all refugees. Most significantly, they lack the strong personal network inherent in their old "village."

While Refugee Resettlement Programs are designed to address these challenges, available funds and programs are typically not sufficient to ensure full integration for all refugees, particularly those from non-

Western cultures. When the slack is not picked up by other family, public, or private entities, adaptation may be prolonged or unsuccessful. For refugees who have become accustomed to the timelessness of camp, adjusting to the fast pace of our western society may be difficult. Help with basic concepts, such as arriving at scheduled appointments on time becomes a crucial part of their successful transition.

In Atlanta, service providers, as well as individual volunteer mentors have played an increasingly important role in transitioning refugees. A new “village” of support can be created in the receiving community by marshalling the talents of volunteer mentors, tutors, and other “friendly visitors” to help with day-to-day challenges.

Volunteers, for example, may serve in a niche opportunity, driving families to doctor’s appointments or to summer day camp. Others may visit the refugee on a weekly or bi-weekly basis to help go through the mail, put together a budget, tutor English, or help with homework. Help is generally needed in all areas.



Rights & responsibilities of refugees

The following information helps familiarize volunteers with the legal status of refugees. IRC's immigration department is available to help clients with any issues concerning these topics. Please feel free to ask IRC HQ to clarify any points that are confusing to you.

Legal Classification and Documents of Refugees

Persons admitted to the U.S. under the provisions of the Refugee Act of 1980 are protected by the same laws, subject to the same obligations and penalties, and entitled to most of the basic rights enjoyed by U.S. citizens. Volunteers can help inform refugees of their rights as well as responsibilities when explaining the basic laws that govern this society.

There are many laws which refugees from some cultures will be unfamiliar. By the term "refugee" this section refers to an individual who has been legally adjudged a refugee and been officially admitted to the U.S. under the provisions of the Refugee Act of 1980.

Refugees who enter the U.S. are issued an I-94 by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). Previously refugees were issued a physical card at their point of entry. Currently the card is printed out from the USCIS website with the help of resettlement agencies. This card indicates the refugee's name, date of birth, country of citizenship, alien number, employment authorization and date of arrival. This document is the refugee's proof of legal entry and a photocopy of it should be carried at all times. If the I-94 contains an error or in the event it is lost, inform IRC immediately. Refugees need to be reminded to take extra care of their I-94, as it costs \$445 to replace a lost one!

Special Immigrant Visa (SIV)

The IRC resettlement team also serves Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders. SIVs are available to certain Iraqis and Afghans who have worked as translators or interpreters, or who were otherwise employed by, or on behalf of, the U.S. Government in Iraq or Afghanistan. To apply under the SIV program for Iraqis or Afghans a prospective candidate must have submitted a petition to the Department of Homeland Security; be otherwise eligible for an immigrant visa and admissible to the United States. An Iraqi or Afghan SIV applicant whose petition is approved is required to have an in-person interview with the U.S. Department of State. Upon admission to the United States SIV recipients are granted legal Permanent Resident Status. Iraqi and Afghan SIV holders are eligible for the same resettlement assistance and federal public benefits as refugees.

Social Security Card, State ID, and Employment Authorization Document (EAD)

Refugees are automatically eligible for an unrestricted social security card and IRC staff will help them apply soon after they arrive. After the social security card arrives in the mail, the refugee will then apply for a State ID or Learner's Permit (if able to pass the written and road driver's test). Refugees are eligible for employment upon entering the country, however many employers are not familiar

with refugee travel documents. Refugees will receive social security cards soon after arrival. IRC is also required to help the refugee apply for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

Registering with the Selective Service

Refugees are subject to the same requirements in this area as are U.S. citizens. Male non-citizens living in the U.S. who are 18 through 25 must register to remain eligible for citizenship. According to current regulations, all refugee young men who arrive in the U.S. who are already 18-25 years of age must register with the Selective Service within 30 days of their arrival. Those who turn 18 at a later date must register within 30 days of their eighteenth birthday. IRC assists with this responsibility.

Lawful Permanent Residency (Green Card)

After having lived in the U.S. for one year, a refugee is eligible (but not required) to apply for adjustment of status. The refugee must obtain, complete and file an Adjustment of Status form with the USCIS. Refugees are then granted permanent resident status. The USCIS then issues a "green card" (I-551). A refugee is entitled to almost all of the same benefits that a permanent resident is entitled to. However, a refugee cannot apply for citizenship until he or she has been in the U.S. for five years. (For refugees, this time is measured from the date they entered the U.S.) The refugee doesn't need to speak English to get a green card.

Most IRC offices can support refugee clients with their adjustment of status.

Applying for Citizenship

After five years of residency in the U.S. (including six months in the state where applying), a refugee who is a Permanent Resident (as the refugee is then legally classified) can apply for citizenship (naturalization.) The IRC Office is qualified to aid refugees with their citizenship applications. Most offices offer these services for a nominal, sliding scale fee. Please refer refugees to the IRC's immigration department if refugees have any questions regarding their citizenship applications.

A person applying for citizenship must meet six basic requirements:

1. Applicants must be at least 18 years of age; (children may derive citizenship through the naturalization of their parents)
2. Lawful permanent residence
--Applicants must be a lawful permanent resident and have been in the country five years, except in the case of a person married to a U.S. citizen, who may be eligible to apply after three years;
3. "Good moral character" and attachment to the principles of the Constitution;
4. Willingness to take an oath of allegiance to the U.S. and renounce all allegiance to his or her former country (Th2QWGere are exceptions to this stipulation).
5. Knowledge of the English language.
6. Knowledge of U.S. government and history.
*There can be certain exceptions, with a doctor's determination, for those who are unable to learn English and/ or the civics information.

Travel outside the U.S.

Refugees who leave the country temporarily must secure a Refugee Travel Document from the USCIS. Form I-131 is used to secure this document and can be obtained by calling or visiting your USCIS office. The Refugee Travel Document is used in place of a passport for refugees. Permanent resident aliens can get a Re-entry Permit (Form I-131) instead of a Refugee Travel Document. Both documents take about 45 days to obtain and are available through the local USCIS office. Travelers should then contact a consular office of the country they wish to visit for a visa.



History of Community Sponsorship in the USA

After World War II and the establishment of the UNHCR in 1950, refugees were primarily resettled either privately or through ethnic, cultural, and religious organizations. With the fall of Vietnam in 1975, the enormous challenge of resettling hundreds of thousands of Indochinese refugees in the US resulted in the standardization of refugee admissions and placement through the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, thereby creating the resettlement infrastructure still in place today. Community Sponsorship of refugees waned significantly as national refugee resettlement agencies (RAs) grew and managed most refugee admissions and placements for nearly 35 years. Starting with the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015, community groups resurfaced and approached RAs nationwide seeking to help and to partner in greater numbers. The same enthusiastic response occurred as the crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine unfolded in 2021 and 2022, respectively. Community groups of all kinds reached out to RAs eager to partner with and walk alongside refugee families toward resettling and integrating newcomers to life in the US. To this end, IRC is committed to advancing, engendering, and integrating Community Sponsorship programming at the local and national levels.

At the local level, community groups of any size can partner with local affiliates of all RAs through Community Sponsorship. Community Sponsorship has a long history in the R&P program, with each national RA offering unique Community Sponsorship programs and models that vary widely in their scope, requirements, and implementation. Beginning in FY2023, PRM is expressly committed to expand welcome, empower local communities, and increase resettlement capacity by facilitating the growth and incorporation of Community Sponsorship as an integral component of R&P programming.

Soon after IRC launched its Community Sponsorship programming in July 2021, the crisis borne by the fall of the government in Afghanistan presented a fortuitous opportunity to resettle evacuated Afghans with community groups through both the Co-Sponsorship and Community Partner programs. The IRC offices are establishing their Co-Sponsorship programs are preparing to focus on the participation and placement of refugee families through the R&P Program in FY2023. In turn, Community Sponsorship staff at IRC HQ are working to expand training of dedicated CS staff in field offices toward building community group recruitment and training locally, while continuing to offer technical assistance as offices build out their program infrastructures.

What is

The HOME Program?

The HOME program (Housing, Orientation, Mentoring, Education) is a Co-Sponsorship program. The primary role of **Co-Sponsorship** is to form partnerships between local offices and Co-Sponsor groups, within a 100-mile radius in the same state, toward increasing community capacity to resettle refugee families. Co-Sponsor groups or HOME teams can take many forms, including local clubs, university communities, faith-based institutions, community groups, sports teams, book clubs, and many more. While these groups do not have to be a formal 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, they must be structured comprising 6-10 individuals. One person cannot be a HOME team.

HOME teams formalize their arrangement through a non-legally binding agreement that details what majority of Core Services they will provide under the supervision of dedicated local Community Sponsorship staff or a Co-Sponsorship Coordinator (CSC). A strong working relationship between the CSC and a HOME team is essential to maximizing collaboration in support of the refugee family's resettlement.



An Afghan family and their co-sponsor group in Farmville, VA facilitated by IRC Charlottesville.

In the following sections, information and guidance will be provided on program guidelines and procedures, steps to becoming a HOME team, mutual responsibilities of HOME teams and clients, required documentation, accounting for volunteer time and cash and in kind (CIK) donations, training, and how coordination on provision of core services works in the co-sponsorship context.

Co-Sponsorship is one of several forms of Community Sponsorship programs, a summary matrix for which is provided on the following page.

Avenues for Community Sponsorship with the International Rescue Committee				
Avenue	Type of Community Actor	Partnership with	Level of Responsibility	Written Agreement
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) Initiatives				
<i>COMMUNITY PARTNER</i>	Local community group or organization	IRC HQ	Provide <u>all</u> R&P core services	Signed agreement with IRC HQ
<i>INSTITUTIONAL PARTNER</i>	National community organization	IRC HQ	Oversees its own community partners to provide <u>all</u> R&P services	MOU signed with IRC HQ
<i>CO-SPONSOR</i>	Local community group	Local IRC Office	Provide <u>majority</u> of R&P core services	Signed agreement with local IRC office
<i>PRIVATE SPONSORS HIP</i>	Private Sponsors (Individuals) and groups	TBD	Provide <u>all</u> services like what is required in R&P	TBD
Outside of Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration				
<i>SUPPORT TEAM</i> (Not recognized in FY2023 as community sponsorship)	Local community group	Local IRC Office	May provide <u>less than a majority</u> of R&P core services	Not required
<i>SPONSOR CIRCLE</i>	Local community group certified through Sponsor Circle Program	Sponsor Circle Program (overseen by the Community Sponsorship Hub)	Provide <u>all</u> services like what is required in R&P (Including financial support)	Signed agreement with Sponsor Circle Program
<i>UNITING FOR UKRAINE (U4U)</i>	Private Sponsors (Individuals) and groups	Department of Homeland Security/USCIS	Provide <u>all</u> services like what is required in R&P (including financial support)	Form I-134 filed with USCIS

HOME Program guidelines & procedures

The most important guideline is your own common sense! Keep in mind that you are serving as a role model and your example will have significant effect on how the refugee views his or her new country and its members. In addition to the guidebook, please also review the [HOME team Rights and Responsibilities](#) document prior to the refugee family's arrival.

We ask you to observe the following guidelines while interacting with the clients:

1. Recognize that the refugee may have just joined his or her relatives in the United States and that this extended family must be respected and given high priority.
2. No drugs or alcohol permitted with or in the presence of clients. This also includes if it is offered to you by the client.
3. No sexual activity of any kind permitted - even between consenting adults.
4. If a client makes a request beyond the scope of your duties or responsibilities, discuss with your IRC CSC.
5. If you have a need for additional supplies or training, notify the CSC. If you detect that someone has a need not being met (food, clothing, housing, job etc.), please contact the IRC CSC.
6. Respect differences in culture. You may be exposed to religious, medical and cultural practices different from your own. Make every effort to acquire knowledge about these differences (your CSC will direct you to relevant resources).
7. HOME team members must abide by Mandatory Reporting laws and codes of confidentiality. This means that suspected child, spouse or elder abuse must be reported to the CSC. If a client wishes to confide potentially harmful information, you need to remind the client that you can and do share information with the CSC as necessary. Confidentiality also means that no information about the IRC office or staff, other volunteers, or any clients may be shared with anyone outside the agency at any time without authorization. IRC gains consent from clients to release information to certain organizations.
8. As an IRC volunteer, you are representing the program as well as International Rescue Committee. Please keep this in mind while volunteering. If you would like to use this representation for activities such as lobbying, talking to the press, or any other official acts, you must seek authorization from the program first.
9. Please do not proselytize to our clients. Proselytizing is against IRC code of conduct and grounds for removal from the HOME program. IRC serves those that are unfamiliar to you.

If issues arise that you are uncertain of how to interpret or respond to, please speak to your CSC.

Steps to becoming a HOME team

To become a HOME team working with IRC Atlanta, here are the steps to take:

1. **Attend a Virtual or In-Person Informational Session presented by the Community Engagement Coordinator at IRC Atlanta.**

The Informational Session will provide an overview of refugee resettlement, where Co-Sponsorship falls under the umbrella of Community Sponsorship, the responsibilities of HOME teams, and a description of the Core Services your group would deliver in partnership with IRC Atlanta. Your group will be provided with an application, in which you would describe your group's composition, capabilities, and limitations to be reviewed by the CSC.

2. **Set Up a One-on-One Meeting to Review Application**

During this meeting, your group lead(s) would meet with the CSC at IRC Atlanta to review your application and discuss your prospective Co-Sponsorship in greater detail, as well as to answer any questions or concerns your group may have before proceeding.

3. **HOME Team Training Sessions**

Following a favorable review of the application, your group will be asked to attend two 2.5-hour training sessions facilitated by the CSC and/or the Program Officer for Community Sponsorship Training. The content of these training sessions is described in the HOME team Training section of this manual.

4. **Complete Volunteer Background Checks and Intake of Client Confidentiality Agreements**

Once training is completed, each member of the HOME team will undertake a background check through HireRight, IRC's background check vendor, as well as sign a client confidentiality agreement. Your CSC will help facilitate this process. Background checks and confidentiality agreements must be complete before entering into a formal agreement with IRC.

5. **Complete and Submit "Rescue Ready Form" to Community Engagement Coordinator**

This form certifies your group's readiness to receive a refugee family for co-sponsorship and ensures the CSC of your availability as their office receives arrival notices.

6. **Sign HOME Program Agreement and Required Documents with IRC Atlanta**

Once a family is matched with your group, a point person/team lead for your HOME team and your CSC will sign required documents) and a HOME Program agreement, which will reflect mutual understanding of Core Service delivery responsibilities.

HOME team Training

During the onboarding process, the leadership and other key members of a HOME team are required to undertake two 2.5-hour training sessions. The topics covered include:

Part One

- Comprehensive overview of R&P Program structure and assistance
- Client roles and responsibilities
- Cultural backgrounder resources
- The Resettlement Process and the Goals of Refugee Resettlement
- Core Services and their Completion Guidelines
- Optional support services
- Components of Community Sponsorship
- HOME team Roles and Responsibilities (e.g., coordination of case file documentation and case notes)

Part Two*

- Outmigration
- Culture Shock and Cultural Adjustment
- Trauma-Informed Care
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Mandatory Reporting
- Power Dynamics
- Identity (i.e., race, sexual orientation, sex and gender identity, bias)

This training may be delivered either online with the CSC and/or the Program Officer for Community Sponsorship Training or locally in person by the CSC. For online training sessions, your CSC will make the recordings available to your group for reference during your preparations.

*Greater detail on these topics can be found in the [Recognizing Our Differences](#) section of this manual.

Responsibilities of HOME teams

It is important for HOME team members to understand their responsibilities in working with your CSC in preparing for your partnership.

1. Background Checks and Client Confidentiality Agreements

As highlighted in the previous section, all HOME team members must undertake a background check through HireRight as well as sign a client confidentiality agreement. These must be complete before the HOME program agreement is signed.

2. Establishment of Point Person(s)/Team Lead(s)

To streamline communications with your CSC, point person(s)/team lead(s) must be established prior to the HOME program agreement being signed. Going forward, your CSC will communicate primarily with your point person(s)/team lead(s) on keeping administrative matters on task. While IRC requires at least one point person or team lead to represent the HOME team, it is highly recommended that each group have two point persons/team leads in order to ensure coverage in the event one point person/team lead has a family emergency, is experiencing illness, has scheduled or emergency travel, or is under other circumstances that would preclude him/her from being available to carry out her/his responsibilities.

3. Completion of IRC Non-Legally Binding Agreement

As highlighted in the previous section, a point person/team lead must sign an IRC HOME Program Agreement with your CSC prior to consideration for placement of a refugee family with your group. The agreement is finalized after the family arrives and grants consent to being Co-Sponsored by your group.

4. Case File and Documentation

While IRC maintains all case file documentation, your group plays a pivotal role in working with your CSC to provide required forms and case notes for review toward maintaining compliance with R&P Program requirements. Accordingly, your group and CSC must establish a process and timeline to ensure all case file documentation is supplied and maintained based on Core Service deadlines.

5. Monitoring and Oversight

Your CSC will set up weekly check-ins with your point person(s)/team lead(s) to ensure compliance with

case file documentation requirements, discuss client progress, provide technical assistance, and/or address other matters of concern related to your group's activities.

6. Financial Contribution

Each group is responsible for fundraising \$5,000 toward supporting the family you will resettle. This amount is exclusive of the direct assistance that the family will receive roughly 2-3 weeks after arrival in the United States (i.e., either \$1,075 or \$1,275 per person, depending on the IRC Office). Your fundraising dollars are critical for securing housing for the family before arrival, as well as for providing material assistance for the family until their direct assistance arrives and/or when their cash assistance and SNAP are activated.



HOME Program

Required Documents

Once your group has been successfully matched with a refugee family, HOME teams will be required to complete and submit the following documents to your CSC.

1. [IRC HOME Program Agreement](#)

This document serves as the foundation under which IRC Atlanta and your group agree on the delegation of a majority or all Core Services and terms of partnership. The agreement also confirms a 6-month time commitment from the HOME team. The agreement will be presented to the refugee family's principal applicant at the 24-Hour Home Visit to obtain her/his consent to be Co-Sponsored. Upon the provision of client consent via signature, the HOME Program agreement is fully in force. While non-legally binding, the agreement nonetheless provides for the delineations of roles, responsibilities, and expectations for delivery of both required Core Services and selected additional services and material needs support.

2. [Client Confidentiality Agreement and Research Consent](#)

Each member of the HOME team must sign a client confidentiality agreement that will be in place once the HOME Program agreement is signed by IRC and your group's principal contact. All client confidentiality forms must be completed and signed prior to the arrival of the refugee family you will be assisting. Attached to the client confidentiality agreement is a research consent form, in which you may agree to provide your contact information to IRC's Monitoring and Evaluation Officer toward conducting anonymized surveys regarding your experience participating in the HOME Program.

3. [IRC Vehicle Use Agreement](#)

All HOME team members who will transport clients in their personal vehicles must complete and submit an IRC Vehicle Use Agreement to your CSC at IRC Atlanta.

During the intake meeting, your group's principal contact, your CSC, and the refugee family's principal applicant (PA) will review and sign the [Client and Co-Sponsor Rights and Responsibilities Form](#). This form outlines and acknowledges mutual roles, responsibilities, and expectations as program participants.

R&P and Community Sponsorship

Delegation of Core Services

The R&P Cooperative Agreement requires that a Co-Sponsor group undertake a majority of or all Core Services in partnership with an IRC office. Prior to the refugee family's arrival, you and your CSC will meet to review which Core Services your group will be responsible for delivering. Delegation of Core Services to your group either will be a function of IRC Atlanta's preferences or a mutual understanding reached with your group as a result of discussions during this meeting.

The portion of the agreement form regarding Core Services is shown below. You will see that services grayed out in the HOME team column may only be performed by the CSC. The remaining Core Services and material needs support activities will be delegated accordingly in order to ensure you are providing at least a majority of Core Services. Please note that while those services with asterisks must be performed in collaboration with your CSC, they would still count toward the majority of services your group would perform.

The agreement form is shown on the following two pages.



Co-Sponsor Agreement Form

Activity <i>These services should be provided with appropriate interpretation, if needed.</i>	Timeline	Responsibility <i>(for service and documentation) Note: It is the affiliates' responsibility to document all core services. Co-sponsors should communicate what services they're assisting with to the affiliate so it can be documented.</i>	
		Affiliate	Co-Sponsor
Co-Sponsor Assessment and Commitment form	Pre-Arrival		N/A
Training/Orientation of Co-Sponsor Group	Pre-arrival		N/A
Submit an assurance for the case	Pre-arrival		N/A
Home Evaluation and Safety Check conducted	Pre-arrival		N/A
Relevant health information shared with health care providers and/or state and local official in order to plan for provision of appropriate health services	Pre-arrival and Post-arrival		N/A
Case File	Pre-arrival and Post-arrival		N/A
Airport pickup	Arrival		
24-hour home visit	1 calendar day		
Housing and Personal Safety Orientation	1 calendar day		
Intake interview*	5 calendar days		
Public benefits application: cash assistance, Medicaid, SNAP	7 calendar days		
Social security card application	7 calendar days		
AR-11	10 days of move		
ESL enrollment	10 calendar days		
Employment program enrollment	10 calendar days		
Service Plan including family budget*	30 calendar days		
Health screening and immunizations*	30 calendar days		
Second home visit	30 calendar days		
School enrollment	30 calendar days		
Selective service registration	30 calendar days		
Transportation to job interviews and job training	30 calendar days		
File R&P Period Report	90 calendar days		N/A
Assisting with family reunification*	90 calendar days		
Cultural orientation	90 calendar days		
Cultural Orientation Assessment	90 calendar days		

Note: Services with asterisks () may NOT be delegated to co-sponsors but can be performed in active collaboration with co-sponsors.*

Co-Sponsor Agreement Form

Reception & Placement Material Needs Support (Cash and In-kind Contributions)			
Arrange safe, sanitary and affordable housing	Pre-Arrival		
Set up housing with essential furnishings	Pre-Arrival		
Provide culturally appropriate, ready-to-eat food on arrival including baby food as needed.	Arrival		
Provide appropriate seasonal clothing for work, school, and everyday use	Arrival		
Distribute pocket money for each adult	throughout 30 days		N/A

Additional Services and Material Needs Support Occurring Outside of Reception & Placement (Note: The services listed below, while beneficial to client integration, are not part of the co-sponsor delegated core services as stated in the Cooperative Agreement. The activities listed below are considered additional wrap around support services)		
	Affiliate	Co-Sponsor
Assistance in setting up a bank account		
English language tutoring		
School tutoring		
Job support		
Transportation		
Ongoing financial assistance		
Supportive services (behavioral health, childcare, driver license)		
Community Orientation (grocery shopping, public transportation)		

Commitment of the co-sponsorship group:

We enter this partnership thoughtfully and prepared to perform the activities indicated above to the best of our ability. We have been trained in our role and know whom at IRC to contact with questions or concerns. We understand that the IRC is ultimately responsible for the provision of all core resettlement services, and that this commitment form is not a legally binding agreement.

Co-sponsor group representative

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Note: Services with asterisks () may NOT be delegated to co-sponsors but can be performed in active collaboration with co-sponsors.*

In reviewing which Core Services are delegated to your group, your CSC will indicate the timeline by which these services must be completed. Below is a chart indicating the due dates for each Core Service:

Core Service	Due Date
Airport Pickup	Arrival Date
Housing & Safety Orientation	Arrival Date + 1
1 st Home Visit	Arrival Date + 1
Intake Interview	Arrival Date + 5
Pocket Money	Arrival Date + 5
Cash Assistance Application	Arrival Date + 7
Medical Assistance Application	Arrival Date + 7
Food Stamps Application	Arrival Date + 7
Social Security Card Application	Arrival Date + 7
Resettlement Service Plan	Arrival Date + 10
AR-11	Arrival Date + 10
English Language Training Enrollment	Arrival Date + 30
Employment Services Enrollment	Arrival Date + 30
Selective Service	Arrival Date + 30, if applicable
2 nd Home Visit	Arrival Date + 30
School Enrollment	Arrival Date + 30
Other Enrollments (WIC, SSI, etc)	Arrival Date + 30
Public Transportation Orientation	Arrival Date + 30
Initial Health Screening	Arrival Date + 30 Exception: Class A
Family Budget	Arrival Date + 30
Cultural Orientation and Assessment	Arrival Date + 90
R&P Period Report	Arrival Date + 90

Core Service Delivery

Pre-Arrival

Prior to the refugee family's arrival, your CSC will undertake a pre-arrival meeting to review preparations and to highlight coordination on delivery of core services. The following are activities that need to be performed before the family arrives. As mentioned in the previous section, some of these can be done in collaboration with the CSC and/or delegated to your group.

Group Fundraising

Your group is asked to reach a fundraising goal of \$5,000 in order to facilitate the following:

Housing Acquisition

Ideally, your fundraising would allow for the acquisition of permanent housing prior to the refugee family's arrival. These funds can be used for a security deposit and payment of first month's rent. Should permanent housing not be ready in time for the date of arrival, these funds can be used for the procurement of temporary housing. Permanent housing should meet the following criteria:

- Affordable
- Suitable size for the family
- Favorable lease terms
- Proximity to services and public transportation
- Satisfactory maintenance

Please note that your group may conduct a housing search in active collaboration with your office's housing specialist. Your CSC or your office's Housing Specialist must perform a home safety evaluation on the temporary or permanent housing acquired before the family arrives.

Pocket Money

All adults in the family should receive pocket money within 5 days of arrival. Best practice would be to have the cash available upon the family's arrival. The amount of pocket money depends on the number of adults and children in the family. Your CSC will inform you of the appropriate amount based on the pocket money policy in your office, and s/he will provide the pocket money among all adults as equitably as possible.

Phone for Each Adult in Case

To ensure that the family can communicate with you and/or emergency services after arrival, your CSC will secure a prepaid, no-contract phone for each adult in the case.

Basic Necessities per Supply and Grocery Lists

Your CSC will provide you with the [Supply List](#) form to complete for the family's case file. In the meantime, your CSC can provide a grocery list containing local restaurant or market information in the language of the family you will be resettling as well as in English.

Community Support Planning

As your group prepares for the refugee family's arrival, it is highly recommended that you familiarize yourselves with local/community resources and orientations that will help you carry out delegated Core Services. These resources include:

- Supplemental resources through/partnerships with civic, corporate, and/or interfaith organizations
- Public benefits orientation (in person/online)
- Public school locations and enrollment procedures
- Pre-K locations and options
- Public health resources for initial health screenings (i.e. Federally Qualified Health Centers, health department, community health centers)
- Public transportation alignment with housing
- Accessible and affordable grocery stores



Core Service Delivery

Post-Arrival

Once the family arrives, the provision of key Core Services begins. As a reminder, these services may or may not be completed independently by or in active collaboration with your IRC office and/or your group, these services are grouped into the following pages to give you a greater sense of what these services entail.

Housing and Home Visits

The following are housing and home visit related core services that **may** be delegated to your group.

Airport Pick-Up

The family must be greeted and picked up from the airport with appropriate language interpretation. If an interpreter is not available in person, an interpreter may be provided via video or phone. Your CSC will provide you with the family's flight information so that you may monitor the time of the arriving flight. Once the family has arrived, be sure to check that all baggage has been accounted for. If any luggage is lost, please assist the client with filing lost baggage claim before leaving the airport.

Housing and Personal Safety Orientation

Upon arrival at the refugee family's temporary or permanent home, please conduct a brief orientation of the home for the family. Included in this orientation would be a review of appliance and water usage, locks on windows and doors, use of the thermostat, and how to call 9-1-1 in an emergency. In addition, your group will have arranged to have a **culturally appropriate hot meal (examples below)** for the family to enjoy, which can be home-prepared or procured from a restaurant. In addition to the examples below, a list of ingredients for meals by country of origin can be found [here](#). If the family is Muslim, it is best to make sure Halal ingredients are used. Upon leaving the family to rest, please inform them that you will be visiting them the next day to provide further orientations and review their documents.

Population	Examples of Culturally Appropriate Meal	Examples of Meals that are NOT Culturally Appropriate
Afghan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meal from Indian or Middle Eastern restaurant Curry or rice dish with meat and vegetables Halal food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pizza McDonald's Subway Taco Bell Bananas and Bread Sandwiches Food that needs to be cooked prior to eating
Congolese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meat from African or Indian restaurant Curry or rice dish with meat and vegetables 	

24-Hour Home Visit

Within 24 hours of the family's arrival, your group's point person(s) may conduct a home visit to assess the welfare, living conditions, and current or expected needs of the family. Items to be covered include:

- Questions about housing, finances, and health
- Review of personal and home safety orientation
- Provision of IRC Case Worker contact information
- Clothing needs
- Check on any medical concerns
- Review of food stock and determining when to visit the grocery store
- Overview of upcoming appointments
- Answering of any current question or concerns
- Deliver and review I-94 forms
- Introducing the family to their neighbors

Intake Interview

The intake interview can be done in collaboration with your CSC at the client's home to verify biographical data and medical information. At minimum, review of the following topics must be undertaken:

- Review of documentation (i.e., transportation letter, overseas medical report)
- Explanation of finances
- Client Consent (HOME Program agreement) and Release of Information forms (one per family member)
- Explanation of upcoming appointments
- The roles of the Case Worker (IRC), Co-Sponsor, and the client as explained through the Client and HOME team Rights and Responsibilities form.

30-Day Home Visit

An additional home visit is required within thirty days of arrival. During this visit, the HOME team should conduct an assessment of the family's needs and progress toward self-sufficiency. All home visits must include an assessment of the welfare, living conditions and any current or expected needs of the clients.

- The HOME team should complete the **30-Day Home Visit Form**, which details the organization's minimum standards for the home visit. This form outlines the areas that the HOME team evaluates during a home visit, including:
 - Safety
 - Financial stability
 - Health
 - Employment
 - Children's needs

Public Benefits

Your group or your CSC may assist the family in securing the following important public benefits.

- **TANF/RCA (Temporary Aid for Needy Families/Refugee Cash Assistance)**

Families with children and pregnant women are eligible for TANF, while single refugees and childless couples are eligible for RCA. While in most cases an entire family may be covered by TANF, any family member who is 18 or older would receive separate cash assistance under RCA.

- **SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)**

All refugees are eligible for SNAP. SNAP benefits are determined by the number of individuals living in the same household. Typically, the household is a refugee family with children under 18. However, certain adult members of the household who receive RCA can receive SNAP benefits as part of the household.

- **Medicaid/Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA)**

All refugees are eligible for Medicaid. Parents with children under 18 would receive Medicaid, while single adults and childless couples would receive RMA. While Medicaid can be renewed based on eligibility, RMA lasts for 12 months from the date of enrollment.

- **Social Security Card (Follow-Up)**

The family's Social Security Card applications are submitted electronically and concurrently with their applications for the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) upon entering the United States. They are expected to be delivered to the IRC Atlanta soon after arrival. If the family's Social Security cards are not delivered by the 14th day after the family's arrival, you may need to take the family to your nearest Social Security Administration office to inquire on the cards' status.

- **Other Public Benefits**

Refugees are eligible for some of the following additional public benefits:

- **WIC (Women, Infants and Children)**

Families with children five (5) and younger are eligible for additional monthly food assistance through the Social Security Administration. Your CSC can assist either in applying or in referring you to the local SSA office to file an application.

- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**

All adults over 65 years of age as well as adults and children with documented disabilities may apply for SSI benefits through the Social Security Administration (SSA). While those over 65 years of age are generally granted the benefit after application, those with documented disabilities must undergo two (2) examinations by appropriate specialists who must provide documentation in support of the application. Your CSC can assist you with the application process.

- **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**

Energy assistance is a valuable benefit that allows refugee families to save on their energy bills. LIHEAP is administered locally through community organizations throughout the country and can provide heating and/or cooling assistance depending on the location. Your CS Lead can provide guidance on how to pursue this for the refugee family you are resettling.



Service Plan and Family Budget

Resettlement Service Plan

Sometimes referred to as the “self-sufficiency plan,” this service plan is necessary because it guides resettlement services, ensures the client is on-board with the plan, and helps manage client expectations. It is designed to help resettled refugees identify short- and long-term goals and to outline the steps needed to make progress toward their goals. While employment should be a goal for all employable refugees, the Resettlement Service Plan should be comprehensive and address actions steps **beyond** those directly related employment. The Resettlement Service Plan will outline various services and programs that the refugee should be connected to in order to make progress on those goals. Regardless of employability status or age, every client is required to have their own plan (including children). Your group may collaborate with your CSC in working with your clients to complete this plan within 30 days of arrival.

A **family budget** is required for each case, and the HOME team may collaborate with the CSC to complete one concurrently with the service plan. The HOME team should use the **Family Budget form** as a tool to counsel clients regarding their expenses (rent, food, public transportation, etc.) and the income they will be receiving (cash assistance, SNAP, etc.). The budget should be updated whenever the income or expenses change.

Developing a family budget provides clients with four basic understandings:

- An orientation to understanding their income sources, their projected expenses and the budgeting process;
- The time frames income sources such as R&P, TANF, etc. will last versus the benefit of a consistent income through employment;
- An overview of expected budgeting and financial literacy in the U.S.;
- Goal-setting and a realistic expectation about how much money it takes to support the family.

At least two family budgets can be completed in collaboration with your CSC during the R&P period:

- A **recommended initial budget** accompanying the service plan to demonstrate income from the R&P program, and how R&P income will be used in the first month. (The Co-Sponsor must explain the use of R&P per capita direct assistance to every client.)
- A **required transitional budget** that demonstrates the client’s income and expenses after transitioning off of R&P income. This budget should reflect the client’s actual income and expenses once they transition off R&P funds (and consequently, should not include any

money from R&P). The transitional budget must be completed during the R&P period and serves as the backup documentation for the R&P Period Report submitted to PRM following case closure.

To ensure gender equity in service provision, all adults should participate in budgeting conversations and have a full understanding of their family's financial resources (see more information [here](#)). The family budget form has been translated into many different languages. Your CSC can provide you with the appropriate version if your clients are not fluent in English.



Important Documentation

Tip: Don't just complete the AR-11 on the client's behalf (this is not compliant with R&P standards); **teach them how to do it themselves.**

AR-11 Change of Address Forms

A **Change of Address Form**, also known as an AR-11, must be filed with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for all cases within 10 days of arrival (not limited to working days). This includes UST cases living with their U.S. Tie.

The CSC or the HOME team can assist clients with the filing of the first AR-11 by teaching them how to complete it and inform refugees of the need to file a change of address form (AR-11) with USCIS either online or by mail within 10 days of any future move.

Clients should keep a record of all addresses reported to USCIS so that they can accurately note them when they go to adjust their status to permanent resident.

Selective Service Enrollment

Men between 18 and 25 years of age are legally required to register with the Selective Service System within 30 days of arrival (or within 30 days of their 18th birthday for 17-year-olds). This system is a list of men who can be called into military service during a national emergency that requires rapid mobilization of the Armed Forces.

Young men can begin registering at 17 years and 3 months of age. According to the R&P Award, the HOME team must counsel and assist all refugee men within the age stipulated to register within 30 days of arrival. Clients who do not register may face prosecution, fines, jail time and inability to access certain public benefits such as financial aid. To register, the CSC or the HOME team can assist the client in completing the [SSS Form 1M](#) or filing [online](#). A copy of the form will be placed in the case file and a case note will be recorded. Please note, even if a social security number is not received within the required time frame, this form still should be completed and then updated once the number is received. As with the AR-11 form, an address change must also be done with Selective Service after every move.



Health and Public Transportation

All refugees must complete a health screening within 30 days of arrival. It is not sufficient to schedule the health assessment within the 30-day period - the exam must be completed within 30 days unless extenuating circumstances prevent this. Each state develops its own protocols for refugee health screenings. HOME teams may collaborate with the CSC in advance of client arrival to begin the process for scheduling refugee health assessments. Although it may vary, a typical assessment will include the following examinations:

- Tuberculosis skin test
- Test for parasitic infection
- Hepatitis B Screening
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases Screening
- Physical exam
- Mental health assessment

Many clients face difficulties with culture and language when undergoing a health assessment. The CSC may choose to discuss the exam requirements before the exam, answer the client's questions, and ensure that a client has appropriate interpretation services available for the exam (which should be provided by the healthcare services provider). To ensure a complete screening, refugees should bring all medications, medical records, immunization records and overseas medical exam information.

Transportation Orientation

Throughout the R&P period (up to 90 days), HOME teams must ensure transportation to and from medical appointments, job interviews, and/or job training, as required by the R&P Award. Transportation must be in compliance with local motor safety laws regarding seat belts, child booster seats and car seats, number of occupants per vehicle and licensing. While not characterized as a Core Service requirement, it is best practice to complete transportation orientation within 30 days of arrival so that refugees can better manage their own basic needs.

Public Transportation Orientation

Transportation can be one of the most difficult aspects of life in the U.S. for a new client. To ensure gender equity in service provision, all adults should receive a public transportation orientation and understand how to navigate their community using public transport options (see more information [here](#)). This orientation should be provided by HOME teams.

Money & Financial Literacy

Money can be a very awkward thing to discuss during the transitional phase of a person's life.

However, talking about costs of goods, banking, and budgeting can be extremely helpful for any new resident. Often, before coming to the United States for the first time, people may have received conflicting or unrealistic information about earning or receiving money in the US.

Each refugee receives a grant amount of money when they arrive in Atlanta. This money is partly spent on the individual's behalf to provide groceries, clothing and household needs, and to pay rent. A modest amount of pocket money is also given to adult members of the family.

Families receive public assistance from the state. This includes medical insurance.

As families settle into the US, the HOME team take them to a bank to cash checks and also to set up a bank account if they so wish.

As a HOME team, you can discuss banking issues with them, such as:

- Never share your bank account information with anyone
- Always write your name in your check or money order
- Never sign your checks until you use them
- Do not carry a lot of cash
- Never keep your ATM card PIN number with your card
- Always get a receipt when you are paying for something, including rent.



Employment

The Employment Specialist with the IRC as well as with the county work to help refugees gain employment. The IRC employment team conducts an employment assessment through an interpreter with each new refugee client to find out their level of education, job skills and history of employment. Then the employment team works to fill out applications and take clients to job interviews. The employment team networks with various employers as an avenue for employment pursuits for clients.

HOME teams can help the employment process by conducting mock interviews

- Many countries do not conduct a traditional “interview process” so the interview may be a foreign concept to the clients
- Ask clients common questions asked in an interview
- Explain the importance of being on time, having good hygiene, treating customers politely and professionally, etc.
- Help them practice good “skills” to mention in interviews



Encourage clients to take entry-level jobs. Clients may be concerned that if they take a low paying job they may be stuck in it forever. Remind them that in America people change jobs frequently and they can always leave and get a new job after they gain experience. Clients will learn English on the job and can network with the employer and co-workers to get their name known in work world.

Teach the client to call in sick when they are sick, give notice when they have a medical appointment, and call the employment team if they have a concern about their treatment at work. Teach about employment laws in the U.S. and in Atlanta. Emphasize that laws usually protect employees over employers.

- Laws usually protect employees over employers
- State policy to get overtime after working 8 hours in a day
- When working full time, clients should get an unpaid 30 minute lunch and two 15 minute breaks
- If you work 6+ hours the client is entitled to an unpaid lunch break (at least 30 minutes)

Family Education

School Enrollment

All school-aged children are to be enrolled in school within 30 days of arrival. Enrollment of children in the U.S. can be very complex, given the number of requirements and regulations for this process, which can vary significantly by location. Typically, children need the following materials and information when enrolling:

- Proof of residence (utility bill, rental agreement, etc.)
- Health and immunization records
- Proof of name and age (birth certificate, I-94 Form, passport, etc.)
- Social Security card

Children receiving TANF funds or SNAP are automatically eligible for free or reduced school breakfast and lunch programs which the HOME team should assist them to enroll in.

English Language Classes Enrollment

All clients over eighteen should be enrolled in English classes within 30 business days after arrival. Referrals to the class or program are not sufficient; actual assistance with enrollment is expected and required. The office of public benefits may refer clients to ESOL classes as part of their TANF enrollment, so be sure to ask about this when you apply. Additionally, many colleges offer community ESOL classes, as well as adult education centers around the country. Some colleges require proof of high school completion, so be sure to search for locally available ESOL classes and understand their requirements in advance of arrival.

Tutoring

Although providing supplemental ESOL tutoring to the client is recommended, particularly in preparation for employment, it is not a replacement for ESOL course enrollment. However, in the event that enrollment in ESOL classes is significantly delayed or not available in your area, it is highly recommended that you pursue formal tutoring through Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA), which has a strong history of tutoring immigrants and refugees in English. As tutoring through LVA does not fully replicate the experience of in-class instruction, your group can play an important role in providing supplemental tutoring.

Childcare

Your group can play an important role in identifying childcare options through connections at both your IRC office and in your own networks. Your state may offer access to reduced cost childcare through employment programs. There also may be childcare centers, both private and those connected to houses of worship, who may be willing to provide reduced cost childcare or even scholarships for refugee children. Some communities may also offer English classes to mothers with young children in order to alleviate the childcare burden. Your CSC can help facilitate initial conversations and resources before or after the family's arrival.

End of R&P

Period Milestones

Assisting with Family Reunification

Should the refugee family wish to pursue family reunification with relatives, you may collaborate with the CSC on how you can support the family with documentation and application requirements.

Cultural Orientation and Assessment

The term “cultural orientation” (CO) describes an ongoing process that occurs throughout the R&P period and is a continuation of topics covered in [overseas CO](#).

Your CSC will advise you on how cultural orientation is delivered to HOME Program, clients at IRC Atlanta.

The [Cultural Orientation Assessment](#) is administered to every adult in the case and submitted to the CSC. The assessment needs to be entered into the IRC internal database. If your group conducts this assessment, it is important that HOME teams provide this to the CSC before the end of the R&P period.

R&P Period Report

PRM requires an R&P Period Report for every case to be completed at the end of the R&P period. The information that the HOME teams provide on the R&P Period Report reflects the status of the case as of the end of the R&P period. Case file documentation should substantiate and back up the information provided in this report

In the final weekly check-in with the CSC before the case’s 90th day, the HOME team and the CSC will collaborate on the Period Report together. Before this meeting, HOME teams should coordinate with the CSC to assess the client in the following areas in order to complete the R&P Period Report:

- Employment
- Financial self-sufficiency and sources of income
- Provision of material needs support, Core Services and R&P funds
- Enrollment in on-going services
- IOM loan repayment status
- Outmigration

The HOME team and the CSC will make a case note to support the R&P Period Report. In addition

to documenting completion of the R&P Period Report and the conclusion of the R&P period, as a best practice this casenote should also include a description acknowledging:

- All Core Services have been delivered
- The refugee(s) has been transitioned timely from IRC financial assistance to other financial assistance (employment, TANF, RCA, Fish/Wilson, SNAP, SSI)
- Income from these sources exceeds expenses.
- The family understands the new sources of income on the family budget that was reviewed with them.
- The family understands the reporting requirements and time limits for the new income sources.



Case Note & File Documentation

Accurate and complete case files for each case are required by the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. It is important to track and prove the delivery of each Core Service to ensure that every required service has been provided by the end of the case, and for monitoring and evaluation purposes.



Once a case is assigned to a Co-Sponsor, the CS Lead will share two Box folders with the point of contact. The first is a folder designated for your group to upload the following:

- financial information
- R&P documentation
- client documentation
- enrollment in services and benefits
- and supporting, non-essential documentation

The second is a public folder containing templates of the required casefile forms. HOME teams are responsible for uploading completed casefile documentation into their Box folder as each service is completed. Case file documentation **must** be uploaded in its entirety for each case by the end of the service period.

Depending on core services delegated to or done in collaboration with your group, HOME teams must upload applicable pieces of documentation to Box as follows:

Forms

- [24 Hour Home Visit Form](#)
- [30 Day Home Visit Form](#)
- [Housing Criteria Form](#)
- [Home Safety Form](#)
- [Supply List](#)

- Client Releases of Information
 - Core Service Release
 - Core Service Release-specific
- Service Plan
- Family Budget Form
 - Recognition of Payment Form (supplied by local office, to be signed once direct assistance is received)
 - Housing Letter of Understanding (applicable if not all case members' names on lease)

HOME teams should download case file forms from the public folder but should only upload completed documentation into your designated group folder for privacy purposes. Please do not overwrite the templates supplied to you. For the intents and purposes of the required forms, you (the HOME teams) are the “caseworker.” Please complete each form in its entirety, and if you have questions, reach out to your CSC. It is important to be as accurate and specific as possible in each form. For example, when completing the supply list, indicate the exact quantity of items provided, rather than including general terms like “several”.

Proofs

- Copies of AR-11s for Each Case Member
- Lease
- Proof of Enrollment in ESOL
- Proof of Enrollment in School
- Proof of BOTH Application and Enrollment in TANF/SNAP/Medicaid (ideally application copies and approval letters)
- Copy of Client’s State ID
- Proof of Enrollment in WIC (if applicable)
- Selective Service Registration (if applicable)

There are no templates associated with the above proofs. Enrollment letters, copies of the lease, and screenshots of completed applications can serve as proof for these services.

Case Note Documentation

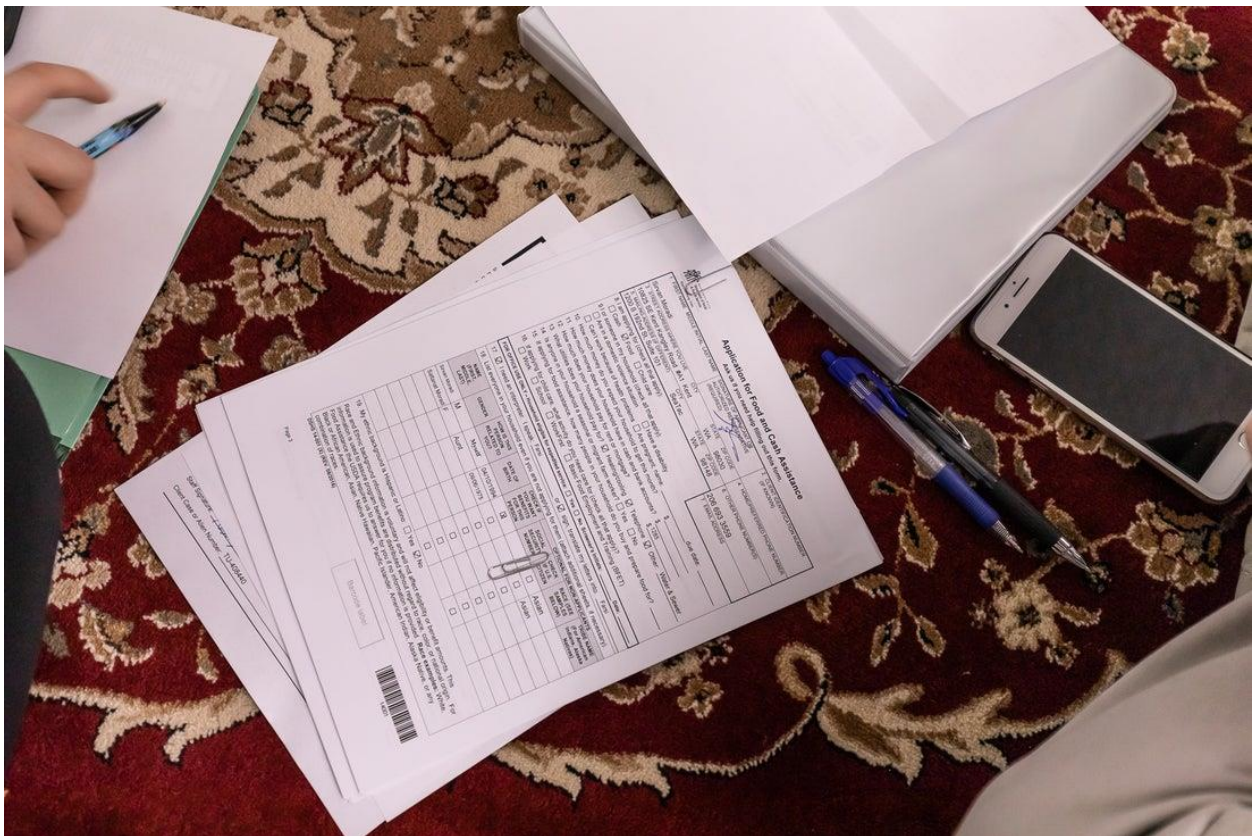
In addition to maintaining the case file, HOME teams are required to maintain corresponding case notes for each case. Each case file shall be treated as confidential. Secure electronic signatures are acceptable. Each case file shall contain evidence of required basic needs support and Core Service delivery, including: a clearly legible case note log which shows the date, mode, and substance of regular contact between the refugee and HOME teams throughout the R&P period and which identifies the person or entity making such contact; a clear plan of action and follow-

up (service plan) for each refugee, including children, in the case, based on an assessment of individual needs, and a detailed record of basic needs support and Core Service delivery.

As HOME teams are responsible for writing and providing case notes on a regular basis, your CSC will establish a weekly submission deadline (e.g., Monday mornings) using a case note template for this purpose. Through use of this tool, HOME teams can maintain timely case notes on a secure platform that is accessible to your CSC for regular review. Your CSC will provide you with access to and directions for using this template.

The case notes template will be housed in your group's folder on Box, set up and managed by the CSC, to ensure security as well as monitoring access. The CSC will input all case notes into the IRC internal database and produce a case note report. The case note report will showcase the entire resettlement process of the case, documenting everything from pre-arrival through the end of the sponsorship period. As case notes are reviewed, the IRC CSC will enter case notes into the IRC internal database.

For more information on the template's functionality and usage platform, please review the [Standard Operation Procedure on the Case Note Tracking Template](#).



Tracking Time and Donations

Tracking Volunteer Time

Volunteer Hours are recorded and submitted to ensure accurate program assessments and compliance with reporting requirements. Typically, once a volunteer has completed their background check, they are automatically registered with Salesforce and receive weekly reminders to submit Volunteer Hours once their period of service begins. Your CSC will provide your office specific Volunteer Hour tracking instructions and training if applicable.

Tracking Donations

The State Department requires that all field offices and HOME teams track in-kind and donation support for each case. Under the HOME program arrangement, the HOME team is responsible for collecting required donation information for the CSC's entry into ETO, an IRC database, as community groups do not have access to IRC databases.

IRC employs Salvation Army pricing for both used and new donations. This pricing is used across IRC programs to standardize donation values throughout the network. These prices have been built into a donations tracking spreadsheet for easy calculation of certain donation categories. Those categories listed as "Other" or certain supply list items require entering a donation amount as new or used. Your CSC will provide you with access to the template and review its functionality.

The HOME teams will have access to the sheet in their Box folder, created and managed by their CSC, and will use their folder to upload receipts. The CSC will monitor entries onto the sheet and any supporting documentation (including those that require client signatures) to ensure accuracy. Once accounting for donations by the community group is complete, the CSC will conduct a final review before entering the total figure in the IRC database.

For more information on the template's functionality and usage platform, please review the [Standard Operation Procedure for Cash-in-Kind \(CIK\) Donations and Tracking Input.](#)

Recognizing Our Differences

In addition to understanding the importance of compliance and coordination with the CSC on matters of case management, it is essential that HOME teams also recognize our differences in building client relationships through a culturally sensitive lens. This section reviews qualitative and cultural realities that you may encounter as you facilitate the family's resettlement.

Cultural Adjustment and Culture Shock: How to Help

The loss and grief experienced by refugees may be overwhelming. Refugees leave behind family, friends, homes, possessions and livelihoods. They have been cut off from their cultural and ancestral roots. These profound losses may precipitate a loss of self-esteem for the refugees. They may even sense a loss in personal identity. These combined events are cause for the refugee to experience extreme grief.



As is universally recognized, people must go through a grieving process in order to move on with their lives. Ideally, people who grieve learn to reorient, adjust and rebuild their lives and regain their emotional stability. Mental health workers, however, have found that refugees are sometimes forced to postpone their grieving process. Learning to cope in a new country, refugees often have little choice but to postpone the grieving process while all their energies are devoted to resettling.

The unresolved grief and pain take their toll. It is commonly manifested in a lingering, constant fatigue, and depression. Outbursts of anger and antisocial behavior, especially within families, are likewise common expressions of unconscious attempts to deflect intense emotional pain away onto others.

Sometimes during periods of frustration such outbursts focus on volunteers. It should be helpful to volunteers to realize that this anger is often not directed to them personally, i.e. it does not mean they do not like the volunteer. Rather, it may mean that the refugee trusts the volunteer enough to “express” him- or herself. Of course, as in any human relationship, the volunteer should not have to take continued abuse. The refugee needs to be told when he or she is unfair in his or her assessment or treatment of the volunteer.

Stages of Adjustment

Culture shock may be viewed as a series of stages of adaptation:

Stage I – Euphoric/Touristic Stage

The person is experiencing the country for the first time. They are fascinated and thrilled by the new things they see. They tend to only see the similarities with their own country.

Stage II – Friction Stage

The person slowly begins to feel uncomfortable. They begin to see differences between this culture and their own that they do not understand, and this is disturbing.

Stage III – Accepting

Newcomers are *slowly* recovering. They are becoming interested and sensitive to the new culture and people around them. Their sense of humor returns, and joking may even begin about new experiences.

Stage IV – Adjusted

Adjustment to the new country is almost complete. They are truly understanding and experiencing the new environment in a meaningful way. They may still be convinced that some of the cultural practices do not make sense or are distasteful, but they have basically accepted the new culture. In short, they are hopefully beginning to enjoy their new life.

What is culture shock?

Culture shock may be defined as the feeling one experiences when one is taken out of a familiar environment and thrown into a completely new and different environment. In your own country, you are among people who understand you ---who know who you are and who think and behave in a similar manner to you. You know what to expect from them and they from you. However, when you enter a new culture, you suddenly encounter people with a new behavior and a new way of thinking - a simple gesture or movement or utterance may mean something completely different.

Indicators of Culture Shock

An individual undergoing Culture Shock may experience the following symptoms:

1. A particular concern for cleanliness or dirtiness
2. Helplessness - a dependence on his or her family or others from the same country.
3. More irritation than is usually shown for things that go wrong
4. A fear of being cheated, injured or robbed
5. A concern for pains or skin rashes.
6. A longing to be back home with people who understand.
7. A delay or refusal to learn the language of the new country.
8. Feelings of anger, indecision, frustration, anxiety, unhappiness, loneliness, homesickness and/or illness.
9. Feelings that the home country becomes most important and that he/she will choose to remember only the good things about it.

Delayed Grief and Related Depression

Experience has shown that severe, immobilizing depression can surface many months after the initial settlement. Sometimes this happens when the difficulties of resettlement seem to be successfully resolved. After the newness of the U.S. wears off and the tensions of coping with the resettlement on their own mount, refugees may experience a “let down” or depression. Once settled they may also have time to grieve, something they were unable to do upon their arrival.



How can volunteers assist refugees in their adjustment?

- 1** Learn as much as you possibly can about the refugees' culture and history

Learn this through self-study and interaction with members of that culture. Study the history from the point of view of various social classes and ethnic groups. Obtain a bilingual dictionary in English and the refugee's language and take the time to learn a few words in his or her language. Knowledge of the culture will enable you to understand the refugee's behavior, the type of conflicts he or she is facing, and to differentiate between “normal” responses and responses which may indicate a deeper underlying emotional or psychological problem.

- 2** Clarify your role with the refugee.

The volunteer needs to explain to the refugee what kind of help he or she can provide. Many refugees have unrealistic ideas about what a volunteer can and will do for them. You may also need to describe your own emotional and time limitations in the relationship. Don't be surprised if you have to repeat this information.

3 Give the refugee a thorough orientation about what is realistic to expect in the U.S.

Of particular importance is the need to describe how much the refugee can expect from others (including the government) and how much they must do for themselves in regard to resettlement, adjustment, and development of a support community.

4 Explain KEY Factors of Adjustment to the refugee.

One key factor in adjustment is learning to speak English. Two primary reasons for this are:

- People who speak English have a much greater chance of finding employment than those who don't.
- People who speak English can communicate with members of their new community. Refugees who don't speak English become more and more isolated, even from family members. Isolation leads to a loss of confidence, increased dependence on others, and depression.

The other key factor in adjustment is getting a job in which the refugee feels he or she is making a valuable contribution to the family. One critical area which causes adjustment problems occurs when the husband feels that he is not adequately supporting his family or that his wife has a more prestigious job than he does.

When it is not possible to find a job and/or a suitable job, the mentor or sponsor may assist the refugee by encouraging him and his family to make some long term plans about how they will acquire the education and skills needed to find a suitable job. These plans will probably require the cooperation and agreement of all the family members.

5 Recognize the need refugees have for a support community.

The volunteer can be an important part of a refugee's support community. A patient, understanding and encouraging volunteer can help a refugee overcome feelings of homesickness, loneliness, physical illness, anxiety and depression. Another source of support can come from the refugee's ethnic group. Extended family members, community political and religious leaders, and ethnic support groups can provide extremely important sources of support.

6 Be honest about the changes caused in adjustment.

Adjustment to life in the U.S. will probably entail basic changes in the refugee's way of life. Family and community relationships and basic values will all be affected. A volunteer can assist the adjustment process by encouraging the refugee to assess the changes in family relationships, i.e. between husband and wife, parents and children, etc. It might also be helpful to help them assess changes in their relationship to the community and in their basic values.

Changes in relationships and values will cause deep emotional responses on the part of the refugee.

Sometimes these responses are unconscious. When a refugee can articulate the changes and their effect upon him he is more able to define what he likes and doesn't like about these changes. Refugees who can accept, modify and/or selectively choose the adjustments they are making adjust better than those who lose control of what is happening to them. Unconscious dissatisfaction and a sense of loss of control often lead to frustration and anger. These emotions often result in abuse to family members, psychosomatic illnesses, sleeplessness, depression, and in some cases suicidal tendencies.

7 If depression deepens and/or lasts a long time a mental health worker or religious leader with an understanding of the refugee's culture should be contacted. Please let IRC staff know if you suspect this is the case.

Many refugees will look upon intervention in family problems as a violation of their cultural and family rights. Therefore, it is important for the volunteer to be sensitive to the refugee's feelings when problems arise.

If counseling is needed, it may also be necessary to have them meet the refugee in an informal, rather than an institutional setting. IRC will gladly help facilitate this.



❖ Adapted from: *Bridge Refugee and Sponsorship Services' Sponsor's Handbook*

| Setting and Keeping self-sufficiency

Resettling refugees provides an extraordinary opportunity for us to take an active part in offering a caring and supportive environment for refugees as they begin new lives.

The guiding philosophy behind refugee resettlement services is enabling self-sufficiency. Your role as a volunteer is vital. But please realize that your role has limits.

You are asked to help refugees obtain necessary information. You are not asked to make decisions on their behalf regarding health care, housing, employment, social service benefits, family relations or schooling. When refugees have problems in these areas, you should refer them to the IRC office. As a volunteer your help is part of a team effort that includes staff members, other volunteers and families. As such, we want to all work together and communicate often.

As you will read many times in this manual, we **STRONGLY** encourage you to ride the bus with the family. Being able to get around independently is incredibly important for refugees. If they are able to ride the bus, every other step towards self-sufficiency goes a lot smoother.

In the face of real need or an outstretched hand, we understand it is difficult to say no. So, here are a few guidelines to help you if faced with more demand on your services than you anticipated:

Encourage the family to find their own solutions to problems.

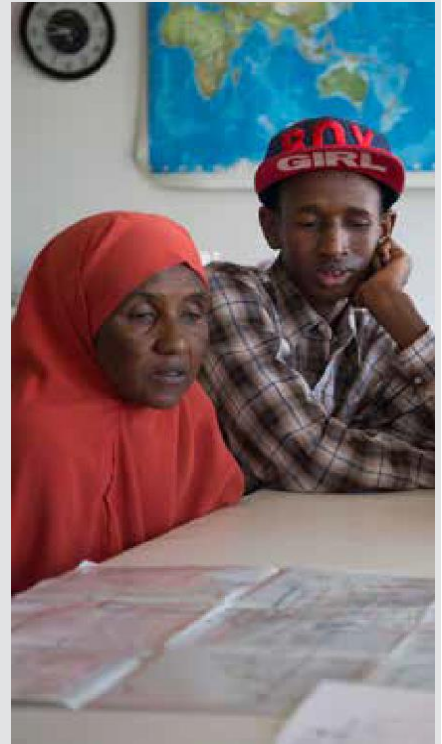
For instance, if they find that they lack a piece of furniture, a backpack, etc, help them to learn how to find it themselves (discount stores, etc.) or budget to be able to afford it.

Demonstrate how to do things: use the bus, get a driver's license, make a maintenance request to the landlord. Avoid doing it for them.

Assist in the employment process by talking about job possibilities with them, lending an eye with a resume, or helping them search for openings.

Put them in contact with others who share their cultural or religious background and other support systems for new arrivals.

Encourage them to make contact with Americans: employers, teachers, neighbors, bus drivers. The more contacts they make in the American community, the more confidence they will have in moving out into the community.



Boundaries

Make boundaries clear early on and keep them consistent

Doing so will help prevent problems in the future. Every volunteer-client relationship is different, so it is important for there to be a clear understanding from the beginning. Sometimes refugees have a hard time differentiating between agency staff and volunteers and they expect the same of both. IRC will gladly help facilitate the boundaries conversation with the client.

Boundaries are essential for both you and the client

Even agency staff can have a difficult time with boundaries! It is very difficult to undo a problem that has been created by blurred boundary lines.

Do not be afraid to say “No”

This can be very difficult at first but it is essential. Is the refugee asking you to make a phone call even when his or her English is sufficient to do it alone? Are they asking you for money or material goods? As a volunteer, you have the right to say no. If you find yourself doing it repeatedly about the same issues, please let IRC know.

Boundaries help prevent burnout

Refugee resettlement work can be stressful, even for volunteers who do it once or twice a week! It is a high burnout field and the primary way to prevent that is to care for yourself. Don't feel bad if you need to take a week off for a little personal time. The best helpers know how to keep a balance between themselves and the people they are helping. If you start to feel yourself burning out, please let us know quickly.

Detached compassion

This Buddhist concept is defined as “a way of entering into the situation of the person being helped that enables the helper to continue to function effectively in the helping role.” Although it is important to form a bond with the clients, remember that taking on their problems as your own will only hurt both of you in the long run.

Boundaries (cont.)

A few ways to recognize that there are boundary issues...

- Your gut says, “Oh no not again!” to a refugee request but your mouth says, “One more time can’t hurt.”
- You begin to feel the refugees’ fear or sense of urgency as your own.
- You find yourself wanting to “solve” refugees’ feelings of anger, disappointment or loss.
- You want to “buffer” refugees from the very real difficulties of starting life over again at the bottom of a new culture.
- You insert yourself as “middleman” into a refugee’s relationship or disputes.
- You realize that you are afraid that refugees won’t like you or might be angry if you don’t meet their expectations.
- You try to force solutions to a problem rather than giving the refugees the information and tools needed to solve it for themselves.
- You start to think that no one can solve a refugee’s problems as well as you can.
- You catch yourself thinking, “It feels so good to be needed.”
- Your own family, work and/or relationships are suffering because of time or emotional attention given to refugees.

Questions to Consider when setting boundaries:

- Which phone numbers do I want to provide to the family? Which days and times are acceptable for them to call?
- Do I want to go places with the family that cost money? How much am I willing to spend per week? (Spending money is NOT a requirement of volunteering!)
- Do I want them to visit my home? Is there a possibility I will feel uncomfortable about the differences between our homes?
- Will I meet with the family only certain times each week or will it be flexible? What if they call and ask me to help them today?
- What will I do if I begin to feel stressed about the relationship? (Hint: call the CSC)

Privacy Considerations

A common concern of volunteers is whether they are intruding into a refugee family's private business. In addition, it is the responsibility of staff and volunteers to teach them to succeed in the United States. Sometimes, this requires being a little "nosy" and some volunteers feel uncomfortable. This includes topics such as finances, medical issues, child discipline, and cleanliness.

Refugee families might feel uncomfortable when you offer to help with these sorts of topics. Take cues from the refugee family and ask if they would be interested in discussing such topics. If you help with this, you will need to know their finances in detail. The same is true with medical issues. Of course, it is important to keep this information private between the refugee family, the agency, and yourself, but the medical system in the U.S. is very complex and sometimes they will need help.

Cleaning apartments properly can be another subject that feels awkward to volunteers. Refugees understand that they have never lived in an American-style apartment. They will likely feel relieved when you demonstrate how to clean properly.

In short ask questions, demonstrate proper behavior, and empower refugees by helping them build good habits. As usual, if you have concerns or questions, ask your CS Lead.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is very important. As a mentor, you are often informed of personal issues regarding the family. Please remember that the family and/or the Volunteer Coordinator trust that you will not divulge this personal information to anyone. Each volunteer has signed a confidentiality agreement stating that you will not share any personal information you receive through volunteering with the IRC.

All volunteers have signed a confidentiality agreement. It is essential that IRC staff and volunteers respect clients by maintaining their confidential information, including physical and mental health, finances, past traumatic experiences, and personal identifying information. Use your best judgment and follow up with IRC as needed.

When the match is made, an IRC staff member will explain the concept of confidentiality to the client. The client has the right to decide what kind of information will be disclosed to the volunteer. Under any circumstances, IRC staff will only share information that has the potential to help the client by the volunteer knowing it. If the client is not comfortable with it, volunteers must remember they may not be aware of particular situations, such as a client who is HIV+. Volunteers must always use their best judgment and take appropriate precautions.

Client scenarios

Some things IRC clients may say

"I can't afford my rent."

Reality IRC places clients in the most affordable apartments in the area. IRC case managers know in advance what monthly income clients will have here and we try to rent accordingly. Most people spend the majority of their limited income on housing.

Best response "Let's work on your job applications. As soon as you start working, rent will seem more affordable. If you are worried about it, you should talk to your case manager."

"It's been three weeks! My kids still aren't enrolled in school! They need to start right away!"

Reality Newly arrived refugee children always need additional vaccinations, a TB test, and a doctor's evaluation before they can enroll in school. They must wait for their initial health screening which should occur within their first month here.

Best response "Unfortunately, your children cannot start until they get their shots and a TB test. They will go to school. You have to be patient a little longer. Maybe we could check some kids' books out of the library, go over the letters and numbers with them, or go to a science museum."



"I need a television, a CD player, sewing machine, computer, etc."

Reality Clients may want these, and many other things, as well a volunteer wants to give something to the client or solicit donations from friends for the client, that's fine.

We strongly advise against buying things for clients as that can lead clients to have unrealistic expectations.

Why clients say that: The IRC can only provide the basics, i.e. beds, cooking pots, dishes, towels, sheets, toothbrushes, etc. As we all do, clients want the things that make life easier and more interesting.

Best response This is a great way to encourage the families to advocate for themselves by asking at social service agencies that have donation rooms open to clients.

"Please call my case manager and talk to them about ..."

Reality Clients know how to contact their case managers and they communicate with them frequently (sometimes daily!) either on the phone or in person. They have our office number and they know how to get to the office.

Best response Encourage the client to contact their CM and tell them that you will let the CSC know what is going on. Generally, many of these issues seem like emergencies, but the IRC usually has a hold on things since the case managers communicate with the CSC and other staff daily.

"I want IRC to pay for my childcare."

Reality Childcare is a major hurdle for anyone who works or attends classes. Case managers and job developers assist clients to locate childcare providers in their neighborhoods. We also encourage the clients to find someone in their community or apartment complex to watch their children. Although we would like to, we cannot support paying for every client's childcare.

Best response Ask what would happen in the client's home country in this situation, and see if you can help find a way to apply those methods to this new culture.

"I do not have bus money."

Reality If the client is referred to Matching Grant, they are given money to buy a bus pass to be used for job-hunting purposes. If they have been here for more than 4 months, or have not been referred to matching grant, then they have to use money from their jobs or their cash assistance.

Best response Help them to create a budget including transportation costs, showing them that it is a real expense that they have to budget for.

"I want to apply for subsidized housing."

Reality This is not something that the IRC encourages because we have a long history of seeing clients succeed financially and become self-sufficient. However, we do resettle some families that face extreme hardships.

Best response Explain to them that the wait can be years, and that the houses are not in the safest areas. If the client insists, you can help them to fill out an application.

Additional and Important Issues for HOME teams Consideration



Religious Sensitivity

IRC has a strict policy against proselytizing. It is important to realize that religion is a fundamental part of one's identity, and anything that could make refugees feel obligated to participate in the religious life of their HOME team members can be disastrous both psychologically and emotionally for refugees. Instead, offer to put them in touch with others of their nationality and faith and assure them that your friendship and support are not dependent on their involvement in faith-based organizations of your group members. Please make every effort to avoid making any gesture that could be construed as proselytizing; it is strictly prohibited. In addition, please note that some refugees will not adhere to or practice any religion. Do not assume that they will or suggest to them that they should adhere to any religion. It is essential that the family be in control of decisions regarding their religious practices or lack thereof.

Over-Assisting and Over-Giving

These are among the most formidable and consequential ongoing challenges HOME teams will face. Indeed, we encourage groups during the initial resettlement period to ensure they are not assisting and/or giving the family too much.

Why is this so important?

In working with HOME teams, our overarching goal is to make sure the family is as independent and as self-sufficient as soon as possible. IRC recognizes that every family and each person within it is unique and that circumstances can inform how well the family gains a foothold toward independence. Assisting family members through tutoring, transportation, and tasks is often necessary at the beginning. Approaching the end of R&P and onward, the family is generally expected to undertake the majority of their shopping, transportation, and at least partial rent/bill payments. IRC expects that issues surrounding mobility, employment, and transportation be worked out before the case close out date of 90 days, when the family should be generally independent while the group takes less active roles in routine activities. The more empowerment is employed in encouraging self-sufficiency, the less likely the group should find itself over-assisting the family.

Similarly, over-giving can be either overt or inadvertent. Procuring provisions far beyond what are basic necessities may be what your group thinks the family needs, but they could create both unrealistic expectations and wants by the family. IRC urges groups to follow our guidelines and to refrain from purchasing expensive furniture or other household items. In addition, it is expected that groups be mindful of the privilege gap between group members and the family when planning activities. Special occasions should be special, of course, but it is good to strive for balanced and practical approaches. For example, taking the entire family to an expensive outing can be fun but also could embarrass the parents, who could never afford to do so. Likewise, donating a car unconditionally to the father before he has his driver's license and/or a job takes away from the very real experience most Americans must have before getting a car: getting a job and affording insurance. Essentially, over-giving can and often does create complacency and unrealistic expectations. When coupled with over-assistance, over-giving will make the end of eventual assistance that much harder.

Identity

For many refugees, they are arriving in a land replete with a colorful diversity of races, gender roles, faiths/religions, nationalities, and orientations that they may never have seen before. We have found that most refugees are warm, hospitable, and kind, and interact well with volunteers in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Nonetheless, it is important to discuss key social and cultural factors that the refugee family and your group may encounter while you build your relationships.

Race

The social concept of race varies across cultures. The same person could be referred to as white in the U.S. and black in Brazil. Black Americans traveling to Ghana may also be referred to as white. The race they ascribe to back home may be legally different in the U.S. The U.S. Census recognizes 5 racial categories:

- **White** – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
- **Black or African American** – A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.
- **American Indian or Alaska Native** – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- **Asian** – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander** – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

Oftentimes refugees are first exposed to the above racial categories when completing employment applications or benefits onboarding documents, introducing them to race in the US in a bureaucratic way. To ensure that the refugee families we resettle are given the opportunity to be better informed about race in the US, it is important for HOME teams to have educational, honest, and respectful conversations with our refugee families about racism and its pervasiveness in American life and history. To facilitate such conversations, we would invite all of your group members to review [an anti-racism blog series](#) developed by our colleagues at the Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), one of the nine national refugee resettlement agencies contracted with the US State Department. While the intended audience is that of refugee resettlement service providers (e.g., IRC), the comprehensive information the blog posts provide is very useful for HOME teams to review.

Sexual Orientation

In the countries refugees are from, LGBTQ+ rights and freedoms are nonexistent. Indeed, LGBTQ+ people who suffer persecution are eligible for refugee status. It is not as common, however, as very few refugee-eligible LGBT people are willing to describe their persecution in the kind of detail required for the rigorous vetting process by the US government. Hence, some may simply apply for refugee status based on other legitimate incidents of persecution (e.g., religion, political affiliation) rather than reveal their sexual orientation as the reason for requesting protection.

As sexual orientation is taken very seriously in many cultures, it is best to avoid asking members of the family about their sexual orientation. Should a member of the family “come out” to you, please do not discuss their sexual orientation with their family unless the individual who has come out gives you explicit permission to do so. Sexual orientation can be a problematic topic in many cultures and disclosing such information could put the individual at risk. Please consult your CSC for additional guidance if you encounter this situation and are unsure how to proceed.

Accordingly, some openly LGBTQ+ members in HOME teams may be concerned about working with refugee families with very conservative cultures. This is not to suggest that openly LGBTQ+

individuals should not be part of the core resettlement team that will be interacting frequently with refugees. Quite the contrary. Being your authentic selves is the best way to help acculturate and educate a refugee family about LGBTQ+ issues and homophobia, while respectfully allowing the refugee family the space to become more culturally sensitive and aware.

Sex, Gender, and Gender Identity

Sex is a label assigned to you by a doctor, oftentimes before you are even born. Gender is a social and legal status that comes with set expectations regarding one's behavior, traits, and ways of thinking which are based on the inaccurate belief that a specific sex is always tied to a specific gender (i.e., if your sex is female, you are always a woman). Gender identity is how you view yourself, regardless of your legal gender status and society's interpretation of you.

In many cultures represented among refugees, the family structure is very traditional, wherein the father is the head of the household, and the mother is expected to stay home to tend to the home and care for the children. In some cases, young girls are not permitted to engage in the same kinds of activities that are common among young boys and girls in American culture. For example, sometimes a young girl is expected to come home right after school while her brother is allowed to play soccer with his friends. Similarly, a mother may wish to work and establish her own sense of identity, only to be told not to by her husband. Sometimes this simply reflects adherence to their own cultures without incident, and sometimes cultural adjustment pressures can escalate into situations involving domestic violence.

As was highlighted above with respect to sexual orientation, it is important to be aware while allowing the family to proceed with cultural adjustment at their own pace. By simply being yourselves, you can help this process along, for example, by showing how men and women in your group work together without regard to gender and/or “expected” gender roles (e.g., women in positions of leadership, men not afraid to look after children or cook dinner). Keep in mind that women from Syria, Iraq, or Afghanistan may be averse to being alone in a room with a non-related man. And likewise, some men may be hostile toward women whom they perceive to encroach on their authority. In any case, it would be wise for your group to do some additional research on cultural background and customs, especially once you know who your family is and where they are from.

Biases

Harvard University's Project Implicit maintains that bias is a human trait that resulted from our need to quickly categorize individuals, objects, beliefs, and items to ensure our survival. We no longer face the same struggles as our ancestors did in the wilderness, but the bias tendency is still within us.

Today, bias takes the form of prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person or group compared with another. This is usually in a way considered to be unfair. Bias can be either explicit or implicit.

- **Explicit Bias:** Occurs when individuals are aware of their bias towards certain groups. (i.e. racist comments and overt discrimination against specific groups.)

- ***Implicit Bias***: Refers to negative and positive stereotypes that exist in our subconscious and affect our decisions, behaviors, and interactions with others. (i.e., what do you visualize or feel when you hear the words, "police", "doctor", "wealthy", "refugee"?)

Becoming aware of your own personal bias allows you to self-regulate your thoughts and behaviors towards others (and yourself).



HOME Program

Best Practices, Challenges and Success

Below is the feedback collected from IRC offices on the successes, challenges and best practices of mobilizing and creating a HOME program.



Best Practices

- Program functions best when it is connected to the Resettlement and a dotted line approach to Development Team. The development team assists with volunteer onboarding and management process (HireRight, Salesforce, Volunteer policies, etc.) as well as outreach events. The resettlement team helps with ongoing case management, core service delivery and client safeguarding
- Clear, established communication times for CSC and HOME teams.
- Frequent communication with resettlement team and deputy director to understand their needs, receive feedback on program scope and local program administration.
- Weekly check-in calls with HOME teams to address concerns and goals.
- Synergizing all community engagement efforts within office to include the HOME Program as well.
- Come up with a list of behaviors or statements that you consider red flags (anything related to proselytizing, white savior complex, over-giving, etc.) that you can use to filter out trouble teams.

On communicating with groups
"Especially in the beginning, there are going to be a million questions and it helps streamline things/reduce emails when teams know they will be meeting with me in a few days or so.
Hannah- IRC Charlottesville



Challenges

- Moving a group through the various stages of background checks, training, meeting times, and case noting has been challenging. Some individuals have difficulty retaining their enthusiasm given the extensive time it takes to go through the process
- Documentation of services has been challenging. Who does the documentation and when? Tools need to be easily accessible and useable.
- Families are asked to provide consent for the program but that leaves groups unable to really assist in pre-arrival services such as attaining housing.
- Lots of time educating staff on what exactly the program is and why it is essential to building the capacity of the office.
- Managing Volunteer Boundaries: Super easy for clients to become dependent on the HOME team and we have had issues of a team actively getting in the way of a client's self-sufficiency. Make sure to emphasize boundaries repeatedly in the training.

dynamic messaging flow to the local communities is challenging. Although people in Denver are familiar with the refugees and immigration, co-sponsorship is still a new approach requiring an assertive community outreach." Genevieve, IRC Denver



Successes

- Members of current HOME teams are now playing an ambassador role for the community sponsorship program.
- HOME team members opened a whole new network of job leads for the IRC employment team.
- Training other local office staff that will be working alongside HOME teams has been effective in making them advocates of the program (e.g., colleagues have understanding and well-defined roles in HOME program)
- Cultivated an operating manual after months of communication with the team and groups.
- Having a HOME team finish and then commit to sponsoring a second family. So huge to be able to have a seasoned team that can help support new teams who are onboarded.
- Expanding office resettlement reach outside of the county and city. Placing clients in communities up to 80 miles away from the office brings new housing solutions.
- Clients placed with HOME teams get more in-kind, financial and volunteer assistance. Clients are better supported and with that the office has more capacity to support other cases.

"Our first co-sponsorship with WSU has been a great experience so far! I think completing the hours of training together built up a good relationship and then consistent communication has been key. The best success is seeing how happy the family is and how they're thriving in Pullman with the WSU community, even though they were initially very reluctant to resettle so far away from our office. We've visited with them multiple times since and they are very happy!"
Kimmy, IRC Spokane

Recommended Resources

Websites

1. www.unhcr.org
2. www.refugees.org
3. www.rescue.org
4. www.coresourceexchange.org/cultural-orientation/links
5. <https://switchboardta.org/>
6. <https://refugeewelcome.org/>

Books

1. What is the What – Dave Eggers
2. Children of War: Voices of Iraqi Refugees – Deborah Ellis
3. Kite Runner – Khaled Hosseini
4. Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps – Julie Peteet
5. God Grew Tired of Us: A Memoir – John Bul Dau and Michael S. Sweeney

Articles

1. www.thinkprogress.org/immigration/2016/04/07/3767479/syrian-family-refugee-resettlement/ www.nytimes.com/2015/11/23/insider/reporters-notebook-syrian-refugees-rejected-rerouted-and-resettled.html
2. www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/refugee-crisis-three-stories-from-syrians-who-have-made-a-new-life-in-the-west-10497136.html
3. www.npr.org/2015/11/22/456971109/syrian-refugees-in-michigan-respond-to-u-s-resettlement-hesitations www.cbsnews.com/news/syrian-refugee-profiled-by-humans-of-new-york-comes-to-u-s www.rescue.org/video/welcome-home

Movies

1. *Lost Boys of Sudan* (2003) – Megan Mylan and Jon Shenk, 87 minutes
2. *War Dance* (2006) – Sean Fine and Andrea Nix, 105 minutes
3. *Heavy Metal in Baghdad* (2007) – Suroosh Alvi and Eddy Moretti, 84 minutes
4. *Home Across Lands* (2008) – John Lavall, 59 minutes
5. *Letter Back Home* (1995) – Nith Lacroix and Sang Thepkaysone, 14 minutes

IRC Work

1. Mandy Patinkin visits Lesbos, Greece
www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOwL89Tndk4
2. I Left Everything www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHXmDbegw0o
3. A Refugee Mother's Dream Come True
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kxiq6RQ7XU8
4. Long Journey to Texas www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7BF9gkQpa8



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