

## CATHOLIC CHARITIES SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM TRAINING MANUAL

Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri is a non-profit social services agency that provides a range of programs and services to underserved and vulnerable populations throughout our 38-county service area, serving all regardless of faith, culture, or situation. Catholic Charities is committed to providing care and creating hope for the lives of the vulnerable through compassionate social services that respect the dignity of each person and engage the local community in our mission.

Catholic Charities Refugee Services is the only local resettlement agency in Mid-Missouri. The refugee resettlement program, originally under the auspices of the Diocese of Jefferson City, has resettled more than 4,000 refugees in Mid-Missouri since 1975. Catholic Charities Refugee Services provides case management, employment services, education and youth services, healthcare coordination, English language training, and cultural orientation to newly arriving refugees. Catholic Charities Refugee Services also provides ongoing support services to refugees and other eligible populations up to five years after arrival in the US. Catholic Charities is affiliated with United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, a national resettlement agency with whom refugees are placed through a cooperative agreement with the US Department of State. Catholic Charities sees the Sponsorship program as an enriching experience for refugees and enables community members to participate in and become advocates for refugee resettlement. Catholic Charities works closely with community groups to recruit and prepare Sponsors for this mission and continues to provide support as well as close supervision throughout the entire resettlement process.

The Community Sponsor is vital to the integration of newly arrived refugees. You are a bridge builder to the community at large and an ambassador of welcome for your community. You are an ambassador for your community, a friendly neighbor, and a part of a refugee's growing social capital in a new place. It is important for volunteers to consider the boundaries and their role when interacting with newly arrived refugees. Your job is not to solve every problem or to do for others what they can do for themselves. Your role is to equip, educate and guide—to empower! As you navigate your role as a volunteer, you must remember to set boundaries for yourself. The goal of the program is to work yourself out of the role of a volunteer and into the role of a neighbor as you 'teach to' instead of 'do for.' Remember, you are not alone in your welcome of newcomers. You cannot be and do everything and must know when to refer questions to local professionals in your community and when to communicate items to Catholic Charities. Catholic Charities will remain in close communication and coordination with your Sponsorship group to guide and support you throughout the Sponsorship program.

### **Welcome to Sponsorship!**

Thank you for your interest in Sponsorship. By opening your hearts to refugees, you are responding to the greatest humanitarian crisis of our time. We hope that you will

discover the rich blessings in the challenging and joyful work of Sponsoring a refugee family.

This training manual will be a reference throughout your Sponsorship experience. Our aim is to help you prepare for the Sponsorship experience in partnership with Catholic Charities. In addition to general information about refugee resettlement, we provide guidelines and expectations for partnership. In Sponsorship, as in refugee resettlement, you must be prepared to deal with the unexpected, but we hope to provide you with enough material for you to determine if Sponsorship is something you want to pursue.

Sponsorship is a wonderful way to welcome a family into a community. Sponsors coordinate with Catholic Charities to do the hard work of resettlement, ensuring that newcomers access all the help and information they need in accordance with the strict regulations of the federal government. With support and guidance from Catholic Charities, Sponsors meet the service and documentation requirements for refugee resettlement programs. They also provide a social network and opportunities for personal exchange.

### **Who are refugees?**

Refugees are a special type of immigrant. As defined by international treaty, they are people who have fled their home country because they were persecuted or because they had legitimate fears that they would be persecuted. They were singled out within their own country for violence because of their nationality, religious beliefs, political views, or racial or ethnic background. Currently there are more than 26 million refugees around the world. Refugees live in a variety of circumstances depending on their resources and the support made available to them in their host country.

### **How are refugees selected to come to the United States?**

Each year the president, in consultation with Congress, determines a ceiling for refugee admissions. Traditionally the United States welcomes the most vulnerable people among the entire refugee population, such as those with serious medical conditions. There are also specific programs for people fleeing specific countries.

Refugees approved for resettlement in the United States have undergone a rigorous vetting process overseas. They have been interviewed several times before being granted refugee status by agency personnel of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. After applying for admission to the United States, they are interviewed again by Department of Homeland Security personnel, fingerprinted, and subjected to several background checks regarding former political or criminal activity. The process often takes at least two years to complete. Once a refugee has been approved, a medical exam is conducted both to make sure they carry no communicable diseases, and to determine what level of healthcare needs they will have in the United States. Once approved for travel, refugees take out travel loans through the International Organization for Migration to cover their airfare to come to the United States.

Refugees are assigned to one of nine national resettlement agencies which –in turn – will place them with one of approximately 200 local affiliated nonprofit organizations spread across the country. Catholic Charities is an affiliate of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

### **Sponsorship Program**

At the time Catholic Charities receives a refugee arrival notice, Catholic Charities may assign families to selected community Sponsors based on family needs, Sponsor resources and availability. Co -sponsorship groups cannot select families based on nationality or any other criteria. When we receive an arrival notice for a family that seems to be a good fit for your group, we will share the case information that we can (ages, gender, languages, education, nationality, religion, health issues, and employment background) with you and ask that you take just two days to give us a confirmation that you will Sponsor this family. There may be two weeks or less between the time Catholic Charities receives an arrival notice and the family is scheduled to arrive.

Once you have agreed to take the case, the leader for your community organization will sign a Memorandum of Understanding. This is not a legally binding contract, but it aims to clarify the roles and responsibilities of both Catholic Charities and the community Sponsorship group during the Sponsorship period. Upon the receipt of the signed Memorandum of Understanding, a Catholic Charities case manager will be assigned to your group and will schedule a pre-arrival meeting with your group's designated Contact Person(s) to go over last-minute details and expectations for the first few weeks.

### **Responsibilities of Sponsorship**

Becoming a Sponsor is taking on a great responsibility. Catholic Charities delegates most of the tasks of resettling a family to our community Sponsors. It is hard work and a significant commitment that should not be entered into lightly. There are requirements that a group must meet to become a community co- sponsorship group:

- Conduct a community self-assessment/application and submit it to Catholic Charities for approval.
- Attend all required orientation and training sessions.
- Raise \$2000-\$4000 (depending on the location of the group and the cost of living in that location).
- Have 501(c)3 status or a benevolent association, registration with the Missouri Secretary of state and liability insurance to cover group members and other volunteers.
- Ensure that all volunteers in the group complete a background check on file with Catholic Charities.
- Ensure that all volunteers in the group complete VIRTUS training.

- Sign a Memorandum of Understanding detailing the roles and responsibilities of the group and Catholic Charities in the resettlement of a family.

Once a family is matched with the Sponsorship group, there are many tasks the group will be required to perform, in coordination with Catholic Charities and the Sponsorship group's assigned case manager/community sponsorship coordinator. Resettlement services must be accompanied with appropriate language interpretation (if they involve working directly with family members) and documented per USCCB requirements. They include:

- Securing housing, utilities, and furnishings.
- Providing rental and utility assistance up to six months as needed.
- Welcoming the family upon their arrival and providing for their basic needs such as food, clothing, and transportation.
- Assisting the family in applying for social security cards and all the public benefits they are eligible for including medical insurance, food stamps (SNAP) & cash assistance.
- Ensuring that the family has access to primary medical care including a required exam as well as any specialized care, as needed.
- Ensuring that adults are enrolled in English language classes and children are enrolled in school.
- Assisting in sourcing employment for at least one family member to achieve financial self-sufficiency.
- Coaching the family as needed so that they understand their financial needs and obligations.
- Conducting community orientation – show the family where and how to shop, how to pay bills, how to use public transportation, use emergency telephone numbers, understand local laws and customs, etc.
- Providing transportation to Catholic Charities office and classes.
- Maintaining regular contact with the Catholic Charities case manager/community sponsorship coordinator, submitting all required paperwork, case notes and financial documentation in a timely manner, and complying with all Catholic Charities guidelines related to Sponsorship responsibilities and limits.

### **Application for Sponsorship**

Catholic Charities must receive an application from Sponsoring organizations. Your group's Contact Person(s) should be selected to represent the group on the application. Upon favorable review of the application, members of your group, including its Contact Person(s) will be invited to participate in co- sponsorship training at Catholic Charities. It is required that at least five (5) members of your core resettlement volunteer team complete the training program. At the training we will review the contents of this manual and provide more detailed information on what to expect and how to prepare. If your

organization is selected into the Sponsorship program, the director, president, or head official will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Catholic Charities when matched with a refugee family.

### **Group Roles and Responsibilities:**

Each member of your group will take on a specific role and responsibilities, which include contact person(s), administrator(s), leader(s), and core service team members.

### **Responsibilities of Your Group's Contact Person(s)**

This person is the primary contact for Catholic Charities and your community group. All communication between Catholic Charities and your group should go through your Contact Person(s). Establishment of co-contact persons is highly recommended. S/he will coordinate the overlapping activities of your other resettlement volunteer team members. S/he will check in with the refugee family regularly until the family is securely established in their surroundings. Depending on how your group operates, the Contact Person might have primary decision-making responsibility. Your resettlement volunteer team members will make regular reports to your Contact Person who will be responsible for maintaining contact with Catholic Charities. We ask that you streamline all communication accordingly.

### **Responsibilities of Your Group's Administrator(s)**

Refugee resettlement is bureaucratic across the board. As a refugee family's Sponsor working with Catholic Charities, you are responsible for completing and submitting forms, case notes, and documentation to Catholic Charities in a timely manner. Familiarizing yourself with the required forms and case file documentation and timeline for their submission is an important part of preparing for the Sponsorship experience. Catholic Charities is subject to federal, state, and resettlement agency monitoring during which these items are reviewed and scrutinized. Given the importance of this aspect of Sponsorship, one person and an active alternate must be designated to handle all administration to effectively manage documentation requirements independent of the group's numerous resettlement activities. The group administrator must be organized, detail-oriented, and thorough.

### **Responsibilities of Your Group's Leader(s)**

It is important to identify a group leader or co-leaders who will also generate a broad base of support within your community. We have found that groups that successfully organize and publicize their efforts seldom have difficulty raising the funds necessary for refugee resettlement. We do not recommend drawing from your group's operating budget. Instead, you can hold fundraising events (concerts, movies, dinners, speakers on refugee/international issues, etc.) or solicit one-time contributions from your members, congregants, or community through letters and appeals.

### **Your Core Resettlement Volunteer Team**

Your core resettlement volunteer team members take on the responsibility for providing the core services of co- sponsorship for a refugee family and maintain communication with your Contact Person(s). We recommend that your core resettlement volunteers consist of at least 7 members responsible for coordinating with Catholic Charities in each of the following areas: housing/furnishings/clothing, finances, obtaining documents, transportation, employment, health, language classes, children's education, community integration, hospitality, and administration. Please structure your core resettlement team in such a way that it is clear who is responsible for each of these core services.

## **Documentation**

Federal refugee resettlement programs require all aspects of the resettlement process to be documented in a timely, accurate, and thorough manner. Please assign one person in your group to collect, organize, and share all documentation related to the refugee(s) with Catholic Charities. If you are assisting a refugee family in filling out an application for public benefits social services, or any other reason, maintain a copy of the application before submitting the original application. Maintain originals and copies of all documentation related to the refugee, including all the following:

- Receipts for expenses made on behalf of the refugee(s)
- Receipts for items donated to the refugee(s)
- Client acknowledgements of cash disbursements
- Client acknowledgements of cash and in-kind donations
- Housing applications, leases, utility bills, and other housing-related documents
- School enrollment forms
- Public benefits applications or social service applications or referrals
- Any document received from social security administration or a government benefits office
- All mail received within the first 90 days of arrival
- Documents related to service providers

Your group will be responsible for maintaining notes of all services provided to the family. Catholic Charities will provide a list of documentation requirements for each resettlement service and a notes log. One member of your group will be responsible for maintaining the note log and updating it on a weekly basis.

## **Housing**

While many community members may wish to offer to house the family in their homes, federal policy requires that refugees have their own living accommodations. This respects their privacy, helps to prevent over-dependency on Sponsors, and communicates your confidence in their ability to function independently. It is important that you locate housing that is safe, sanitary, accessible, and affordable to a family whose income may be limited during the first few years in this country.

Catholic Charities strongly prefers that Sponsors find apartments that refugees will have a good chance of being able to afford on their own at the end of their rental assistance period. We strongly recommend you search for housing options to maximize affordability and self-sufficiency. Typically, areas that are more affordable are also more likely to have other useful resources such as English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, food pantries and public transportation.

### **Co-Signing Leases**

Families should be listed as tenants on their lease agreements, and they will be expected to sign the lease shortly after arrival. Catholic Charities recommends trying to secure short-term leases if possible (3-6 months). Most landlords will require a guarantor or co-signer since the family will have no credit history. In such cases, Catholic Charities asks that the Sponsorship group co-sign the lease. We can provide best practices and information to ease any concerns about this.

### **Security Deposits**

Landlords will generally require a deposit equal to 1 month of rent. Catholic Charities recommends that you try to negotiate to avoid payment for more than 1 month. Catholic Charities also recommends negotiating to avoid or reduce any application fees. While the security deposit is an eligible expense for reimbursement, Catholic Charities prefers that Sponsorship groups use the funds they have raised to provide security deposits. At the end of the lease the deposit will be returned to the group, depending on any maintenance or repair costs incurred by the landlord as outlined in the lease. If the family needs to move at the end of the lease, then the Sponsorship group will be able to provide a deposit for the new housing.

### **Lead Inspections**

Catholic Charities requires that prospective housing built before 1978 are inspected for lead before any child under 6 years old is resettled there. When securing housing, it is important for you to do the following:

- Obtain a lead disclosure report signed by the landlord as an addendum to the lease.
- Walk through the entire apartment/house looking for chipped or peeling paint, especially around windows and doors.

### **Household Furnishings/Clothing**

Your core resettlement team “clothing/household furnishings” person is responsible for procuring, valuating, and documenting the material goods that will be provided to the family in their new home: clothing, donated furniture, new mattresses and box springs, and household items. Catholic Charities will provide a list of required items. The expectation is that these will be basic items in good condition that you would feel comfortable giving to a friend

Donations of furniture and household goods can be pledged in advance of the refugee(s)' arrival. Unless you are personally able to repair them, it is a good idea to only accept items in good condition. You should hold off on clothing donations until after you can determine the needs and sizes of your family. Some clothing you will need to purchase new, for example socks and underwear, but providing too much new clothing or other goods may establish an expectation that your group cannot and should not continue to fulfill. Most groups find that they are deluged with donated items and that their expenditures on clothing, household goods and furnishings is negligible.

The material goods that a Sponsorship group provides to a family must be valued, documented, and reported to Catholic Charities. Valuation of items can be based off the purchase price (receipt required) or the [Salvation Army's online donation value guide](#).

Clients must also sign acknowledgements of receipt of in-kind donations and their value. Catholic Charities will provide housing supply checklists and client donation acknowledgement forms to track the provision of material goods to the family per federal program requirements.

Catholic Charities Refugee Services has household furniture and goods that may be available to your Sponsorship group should your group need assistance procuring the required household and clothing items.

### **Finances of Sponsorship**

Your core resettlement team "finance" person is responsible for overseeing the expenditure of the resettlement funds and introducing refugee adults to family budgeting, credit, using a bank and taxes. Your team finance member must ensure that the family gets financial assistance and other benefits for which they are eligible.

### **Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Government Benefits Office**

Refugees who have not already applied for a social security card upon arrival must be taken to a local Social Security Administration (SSA) office to apply for their Social Security cards within five (5) business days after their arrival (this timeline may be delayed by a mandatory quarantine period or closure of SSA offices due to COVID-19). If refugees have not applied for a social security card prior to arrival, Catholic Charities will provide you with Social Security card applications for each household member in advance of the family's arrival. You must also bring each person's I-94 or Visa/Special Immigrant Visa (SIV). Refugees' passports, if they have them, should not be presented. Be sure that the application is for an unrestricted Social Security card. A refugee's card should not contain the notation "*Valid for Work Only with DHS Authorization.*" At the conclusion of your appointment with Social Security, each family member will receive a receipt proving that they have applied for a Social Security card. This receipt will be needed when visiting the government's financial assistance office soon after the Social Security appointment. It is normal for it to take ten days to three weeks to receive a Social Security card.

Your finance person is also responsible for ensuring that the refugee family applies for food stamps (SNAP), and either Match Grant (MG), Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The family should be brought to the public assistance office the day after their Social Security Administration visit. If the family's I-94s are not available three (3) days following arrival, you should bring the family to the public assistance office so that their benefits are granted without further delay.

### **Our Approach to Financial Assistance**

It is generally expected that Sponsors will follow the same financial policies that Catholic Charities applies to refugees resettled without a Sponsor. This usually means an expectation of the family's financial self-sufficiency within three to six months. The Sponsorship group must work with Catholic Charities to establish and manage a budget for resettlement.

In addition to the financial assistance that you will provide as a Sponsor, federal funds will be available to help pay the refugee family's expenses during the first 30-90 days. Catholic Charities expects the Sponsor to spend \$2,000-\$4,000 per family resettled, though spending can vary widely depending on specific needs and circumstances. The family's resettlement funds for the Reception & Placement program generally provide for rent and utilities for up to three months. The family may be eligible for additional rent and utility assistance from Catholic Charities depending on their enrollment in additional services. In line with this, the Sponsor will help the family develop a budget that factors in decreasing financial assistance from the Sponsor. Should the family not meet its goal of self-sufficiency within 3-6 months, financial assistance can be extended but the family's contributions will continue to increase.

### **Federal Funds Explained**

For each refugee who arrives, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops provides Catholic Charities Reception & Placement funds in the amount of \$1,225 to be spent on behalf of each refugee. \$200 of the \$1,225 per capita may be held by Catholic Charities in flex funds. While also deposited into a Catholic Charities account, these flex funds may be used at the discretion of Catholic Charities to help the neediest refugees. They are generally reserved for families who do not have Sponsors or for particularly vulnerable cases.

In a Sponsorship arrangement, Catholic Charities usually uses these funds to reimburse the Sponsorship group for eligible expenses. Expenses eligible for reimbursement include rent, groceries, a cell phone, bus passes, utilities, mattresses, furniture and other household items, car seats and baby items, and clothing. It is important for refugees to understand that the federal funding for financial and material assistance in the initial resettlement period will not continue, and that the family is expected to become self-sufficient.

At the pre-arrival meeting, Catholic Charities will tell you what maximum benefit amount your family may receive for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Match Grant (MG) and food stamps (SNAP). The Match Grant program provides additional housing and cash assistance to families who have a large likelihood of reaching self-sufficiency within six months. If families enroll in the Match Grant program, they are not eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). For families not enrolled in Match Grant, maximum Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is granted unless the family brings assets with them that were declared at their point of entry. If the family is enrolled in Match Grant, the family cannot access TANF or other cash assistance; however, the family is eligible for food stamps (SNAP). The maximum food stamps (SNAP) amount, however, may be reduced by the government when they see the family is receiving rental assistance. Once the family is paying their rent, The public assistance office will usually adjust the food stamps (SNAP) amount upward once they have proof.

### **State Funds Explained**

Cash assistance through State programs are available to refugees. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is administered by the Missouri Department of Social Services Family Support Division. Each refugee family will apply for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), Match grant (MG), or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) as soon as possible after applying for Social Security Cards. Families enrolled in Match Grant will receive additional cash, rent, and utility assistance from Catholic Charities for up to 180 days or until the family is self-sufficient. Refugees who alternatively enroll in other cash assistance programs usually have access to their Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) accounts within 2 to 3 weeks from arrival. The State cash assistance amount the refugee family will receive is calculated on several factors and will vary. Beginning in the second month after arrival, the families will be expected to contribute at least half of the cash assistance they receive towards rent.

### **Employment**

Refugees arrive fully authorized to work and demonstrate this upon being hired by completing an I-9, legal proof of work eligibility. Many employers will initially say they cannot hire a refugee unless she or he has a Social Security card or an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), but this is illegal. If a job is offered before the Social Security card is received, Catholic Charities will advise on best steps to take.

Your employment person is responsible for locating appropriate jobs for all refugees in the family who can work. Since early self-sufficiency is the goal of the United States refugee resettlement program, early employment should be a top priority. The search for employment opportunities should begin even before the refugee arrives. Before your family arrives, you are encouraged to conduct an inventory of job possibilities from among your groups and wider communities. The skills of refugees vary widely from

farming to electrical engineering, and they are confirmed during employment assessments. Beforehand, however, we encourage you to survey the employment landscape in your communities for entry-level, and reasonably accessible jobs that can accommodate English-language learners.

Within ten business days of the family's arrival, Catholic Charities will visit the family at home with your employment resettlement team person to conduct an employment assessment for every employable refugee in the household. Answers to extensive employment questions about literacy, language proficiency, health, education/employment/professional training history, availability, and career aspirations will be recorded in an assessment document for use in job searches for their family member(s). Once the employment assessment is complete, Catholic Charities will send your Contact Person(s) each refugee's employment assessment that also contains each refugee's resettlement plan. Your employment person will work on setting benchmarks for job searches and other key action plan points and write up a resettlement plan for each family reflecting their experience during the first thirty days. Each assessed refugee, and her/his interpreter, will sign her/his employment assessment and resettlement plan before returning a copy to Catholic Charities. From information in the employment assessment, the employment person will create a resume. Catholic Charities can provide a template for the resume. Your employment person(s) should meet with the job seekers very regularly to discuss progress, leads and search strategies.

### **Income Reporting**

Once a refugee family member starts working, s/he must report her/his income to the government. Recently employed refugees must report their income after they have been paid at least twice either weekly or biweekly. The government will use the wage information and recalculate their benefits to determine eligibility.

### **Employment Services**

Adherence to the State's employment services policies is generally required for anyone receiving cash assistance through the State. Failure to comply with State policies can result in a reduction or suspension of benefits. Thus, it is important to read through every letter related to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Catholic Charities has a Refugee Temporary Assistance Connection (RTAC) case manager who works with families enrolled in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Your group will coordinate and collaborate with the Catholic Charities Refugee Temporary Assistance Connection (RTAC) case manager regarding State employment services and access to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits. Most families will get Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for up to thirty-six months if they stay under income limits, fulfill periodic documentation requests, and comply with the government's requirements to provide ongoing verification of benefit-eligible activities. Pregnant women may be exempt from employment requirements and may be

eligible for statewide subsidized programs that provide discounted childcare and additional services.

## **Education**

School-age children should be enrolled in the local public school system as soon as possible upon arrival. Talk to school administrators in the local public schools of the neighborhoods where the refugee family resides. Request the resources they offer to English language learners and efforts they can make to accommodate newly arrived immigrant students. Ask about languages spoken among the student and teacher populations. For children less than 5 years of age, provide the refugee family the information of Head Start or other free school-readiness programs in your area for children aged 3-5 and any free or discounted daycare options for children under 3.

## **Periodic Report Form for Food Stamps**

After at least three months, the government may send a periodic report form to verify the refugee family's continuing eligibility for food stamps (SNAP). It is important to act upon this form as soon as possible and to document when the requested information was provided. Families may receive food stamps (SNAP) if they remain below its income limits, although the monthly benefit amount may go down when their income increases from employment.

## **Medical Insurance**

Most refugees will be eligible for Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) which is available for several years. Depending on their income, some refugees get short-term health insurance called Refugee Medical Insurance (RMA), which is available for up to eight months. Many refugees who are not eligible for Medicaid, CHIP, or RMA may be able to get medical insurance through an employer or the government's Marketplace.

## **Checklist of Key Action Items**

### **Pre-Arrival**

#### **✓ Secure Interpreter(s)**

You will need regular, reliable access to an interpreter/s to help you facilitate important meetings and appointments with the refugee family. Once you know the language of your family you will quickly need to source interpreters for the arrival and all core service meetings with the family and Catholic Charities.

#### **✓ Formalize Housing Arrangements**

When looking for housing you will use a safety checklist provided by Catholic Charities. You will send copies of this checklist as well as the signed lease.

#### **✓ Establishment of Utilities Accounts**

You must establish utility accounts prior to the family's arrival. Responsibility for the utility accounts will be transferred to the family once they have Social Security numbers, usually within 30 days of arrival. In the meantime, the accounts must be established by the group using its Tax ID Number or an individual in the group (e.g., Contact Person, Housing Person) using her/his Social Security number.

✓ **Designation of Arrival Contact at Point of Arrival**

You can choose to meet the family at the airport or meet them at the Catholic Charities office. If you want to go to the airport, you will need to send Catholic Charities a copy of the driver's licenses and cell phone numbers of those driving vehicles.

**Day of Arrival**

A small reception group, including an interpreter, must meet the family at their designated arrival and bring them to their new or temporary home. Remember that the refugees will be both tired and apprehensive; this is not the time for a gala welcoming party. Instead, offer the family a culturally appropriate hot meal and a chance to bathe and rest.

We offer these practical tips for meeting refugees:

- Track the family's flight online or call the airline to confirm the arrival time.
- Plan to wait. Entry procedures at Kansas City of Saint Louis can take 1-3 hours.
- If going to the airport, come equipped with a sign bearing the refugee's name in large letters.
- Bring weather/season appropriate clothing (in one-size-fits-all styles) and bottled water.

Your resettlement team members should also provide the family with an arrival packet containing the following:

- ✓ Names and telephone numbers of an interpreter, your and Catholic Charities contact information.
- ✓ Pocket money and food allocation.
- ✓ A map of the town, highlighting the home, safe routes for walking, and any nearby destinations. Keep in mind, however, that it will likely be necessary to show the family how to get to these places. Many can come from cultures where reading maps is not emphasized, and many have not yet learned to read or write in their native language.
- ✓ A poster with your core volunteer members' photos, names, and roles.

**POST-ARRIVAL**

**First Week**

The day after the arrival you must conduct a home visit and complete a Catholic Charities Home Visit Form and provide the completed Home Visit Form to Catholic

Charities the day of or after the visit. Within 5 days of arrival, the Sponsor must take the family to the local social security office and government public assistance office, provide basic community orientation including an introduction to public transportation and provide an overview orientation of policies, American culture and laws, and referrals. Catholic Charities will organize a meeting with the Sponsor members, the family, and an interpreter. During this meeting more information about the Catholic Charities Sponsor relationship and self-sufficiency policies will be provided by Catholic Charities. It is important for both refugees and Sponsors to confront and clarify any misconceptions or miscommunication early in the resettlement process.

Also, during this meeting, Catholic Charities will conduct employment assessments for all employable adults in the household. Your employment volunteer or Contact Person needs to participate in this meeting and an interpreter must be present. Each employment assessment will cover questions about language proficiency, health, education, work history, availability, and any other information concerning and/or affecting employability. With interpretation, each assessment should take no more than one hour. Once the assessment(s) is complete, Catholic Charities will send the assessment(s) to your Contact Person(s) with a resettlement plan for each adult. Once the benchmarks on the employment assessment are complete, your employment volunteer will use the information in the assessment to create a resume for each assessed employable adult before formally beginning job searches.

### **First Six Months**

Most of the tasks required from the Sponsor are completed within 30 days and the reception and placement period officially ends at 90 days. These 90 days will be a very busy time and they will pass very quickly. The community Sponsorship group and Catholic Charities will be in frequent contact to ensure that everything goes as smoothly as possible.

At 90 days the role of the Sponsor will already begin to shift. The family should be able to do most of their life tasks without your assistance. The Sponsor group needs to be proactive in encouraging such independence. Occasionally the Sponsor may need to provide a refugee family member with transportation to an appointment that is essential but not easily reachable by public transportation. In such situations, it is important to not tack on several other errands at once lest the family think you will do this after every appointment. At this juncture, the family needs to realize that you, as the Sponsor, are not available all the time and that you are available to help them via mutual agreement, not necessity. This is the most respectful way to approach it, as it levels the playing fields and reinforces the partner nature of the relationship.

By 6 months post-arrival there should be a significant shift as the family will have made significant progress towards self-sufficiency. Careful budgeting at the outset will prepare the family for the end of assistance. Regular conversations about budgeting and finance, no matter how unpleasant or annoying, are needed to underscore the

importance of managing finances and resources toward self-sufficiency. In most cases Sponsors stay very involved with the family throughout their first six months even when they are no longer providing any financial assistance.

### **Over-assisting and Over-giving**

These are among the most formidable and consequential ongoing challenges Sponsor groups 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 partnering with your community Sponsorship group, our goal is to make sure the family is as independent and as self-sufficient as soon as possible. Catholic Charities recognizes that every family and each person 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. The family is generally expected to undertake most of their shopping, transportation, and rent/bill payments. Catholic Charities expects that issues surrounding mobility, employment, and transportation be worked out so that the family should be generally independent while the group takes fewer active roles in routine activities. The more encouragement of 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 necessities may be what your group thinks the family needs, but they could create both unrealistic expectations of wants by the family, enmity, and jealousy among co-sponsored and non-Sponsored families. Catholic Charities 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. Similarly, 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 medical 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. Additionally, assisting the family more than Catholic Charities guidelines will undermine the trust placed in your group by Catholic Charities, creating difficulties in continued cooperation.

### **Friendship**

In our experience, community Sponsorship nearly always cultivates long-lasting friendships and relationships. While we would certainly agree that it is important to approach the family with a friendly disposition in your meetings and interactions, we

would nonetheless recommend that you manage the friendships you are building with care. Some of our clients come from cultures that may find outgoing, enthusiastic, and friendly dispositions common in American culture off-putting and strange. If your family is reacting this way, it is not necessarily a sign of hostility. Rather, it is likely a sign of being somewhat guarded given all the changes they are experiencing.

It is important to note that the first several weeks are very important for how your group and your family will form a relationship. Indeed, the relationship will be somewhat lopsided in your direction given the many tasks that will require your guidance and expertise. Eventually, when the dust settles, the dynamics of your relationship will become more even-handed. As time goes on and the family's self-sufficiency steadily increases, the family will still need assistance from time to time but not necessarily like when they arrived.

Thus, your friendship will carry with it the need to understand the meaning of the word "friend" in this context. In building a relationship based on partnership, don't be overbearing or assume that you are or even will be friends. By respecting each other's privacy, being straightforward in your advice and remembering not to over-promise, your partnership with the family is more likely to develop with mutual understanding and respect that will endure.

### **Understanding Your Culture and Biases**

We often are not fully aware of our own culture because it is obscured by its obviousness. But what is "normal", "appropriate", and "respectful" to one person may not be that way for others. We tend to judge and interact with the world by our own standards and the first step to being a Sponsor is to uncover your own background and perceptions of the world and appreciate that they are a result of your upbringing, experiences, and context.

In your role as a Sponsor, you hold a certain amount of power and privilege since you can volunteer, organize with your group, and have access to resources and ways to making your voice heard. As the saying goes, with great power comes great responsibility, so follow the Sponsor guidelines provided to you by Catholic Charities to ensure you are fulfilling your role appropriately. Also be aware that the people you sponsor or advocate with may recognize and respond to your position and power in different ways.

If you are a documented citizen or resident in the United States and have never been a refugee or asylum-seeker, your legal status in this country and your experience of safety and security is likely to be very different from people who have had the experience of being displaced. You may not personally fully understand this fundamentally different framework. Being aware of this difference can help to increase your sensitivity and openness to learning about others' experiences.

You may also hold other types of power, due to certain aspects of your identity, socio-economic status, educational background, the part of town in which you live, or your level of familiarity with U.S./ local culture. Keep in mind that these may affect your perceptions of others and what is acceptable, and their perceptions of you.

### **Appropriate Language Interpretation**

**“Appropriate Language Interpretation”** is the use of a client’s native language or a language in which the client is fluent. Appropriate language interpretation is required for all core resettlement services, and how appropriate language interpretation was provided must be documented in case notes for the service. Appropriate language interpretation can be provided by someone who speaks the client’s native language or a language in which the client is fluent or using an in-person or phone interpreter. Keep in mind that while one adult member of the case may be fluent in a second language (for example, English), other adult members of the case such as a spouse or adult children may not be. If you are providing a service to the entire family or to all adult members of the case, appropriate language interpretation is required for all adult members of the case. Therefore, using the client’s native language may be necessary to ensure that all adult members of the case are receiving the information directly in a language in which they are fluent, rather than just one adult member of the case.

Catholic Charities will provide your community Sponsorship group with access to phone interpretation services to ensure that appropriate language interpretation is provided for core services. Catholic Charities requires Sponsorship groups to identify interpreters available to assist the group, and phone interpretation services should be used only when interpreters are not available. Sponsorship groups must not provide the family with the access code and means to use phone interpretation services. All use of phone interpretation services must be reported to Catholic Charities.

### **Respect is Essential**

Refugees have been through a lot. They have fled countries where there was little respect for their human rights. On the move and living in refugee camps for years, many experienced insults, humiliation, and a sense of helplessness. Arriving in the US, not speaking English, they are dependent on our services and assistance. But they are not to be pitied. They must be treated with the utmost respect for their journey, their culture, and their individuality.

As Sponsors, remember that one of your most important jobs in refugee resettlement is to help refugees regain their confidence and sense of control over their lives. Part of this is helping them become self-sufficient as soon as possible. While it might be counter intuitive, confidence in their ability to handle difficulty and struggle well and insistence that they be as independent as they are capable of being, are signs of respect while giving them things that they don’t really need are signs of condescension.

Sometimes Sponsors liken their relationship to the family they are helping to a parental one. Catholic Charities strongly discourages this. The refugees you will help are not your children. You will not be adopting them, and it is disrespectful to envision your role in this way. We encourage you to approach your Sponsorship as a partnership with a refugee family.

### **Paternalism**

An imbalance of power can contribute to paternalism in this partnership. Paternalism is when you limit someone's autonomy based on what you think is for their own good. It is easier to make decisions for someone than you might think. It is not so easy to see someone make decisions that you feel are 'bad,' 'unnecessary' or are simply different than those you would make. Imagine this initial transition to a new culture and community as a river that newcomers must cross. The role of 'teacher' that you and the resettlement agency play is to point out the steppingstones across the river. Your role is not to choose the path, carry across or hide the paths that you would not utilize yourself.

### **Power, Culture and Diversity**

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

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

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

Take, for example, navigating public benefits and filling out reporting forms for governmental offices. Finding the answers for the refugee and telling them which forms to sign is power over. Going with them to the office and teaching them how to connect with a case manager there to assist with forms is 'power with.' There are many ways in which your 'power over' another might impact the way that they interact with you. Be aware that it might be hard for the refugee you are accompanying to say 'no' to you. If

you extend an invitation to your place of worship or to another event, the refugee might feel like they must attend because you are assisting them.

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

### **Exercise Religious Tolerance and Sensitivity**

Although it is natural to share what is important to you with others, we require that our Sponsors not engage in proselytism. Proselytizing is defined as inducing someone to convert to one's own religion. Many refugees have spent years fleeing persecution because of their faith, and this may be their first chance to live without fear that someone has an agenda to change them in some way. In all that you do, make sure the refugees understand that your help is not contingent on their participation in your church or religion; we do not want them to feel they have to become like us to receive our care and assistance.

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 Sponsors can be disastrous both psychologically and emotionally for refugees. Instead, 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 your group or congregation. Please make every effort to avoid making any gesture that could be construed as proselytizing; it is strictly prohibited. Also, 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.

### **Privacy**

During all the activity your group will experience in welcoming and resettling a refugee family, it is important to remember that the family, while likely hospitable, needs and deserves privacy. Your group may be the guarantor/co-signer of the lease, but it does not mean that multiple group members should have keys or that you should not ring the doorbell before entering. The family's privacy in their new home is more important than the convenience keys among group members would provide. The co-signer of the lease, the landlord, and the family are the only people who should have keys to the apartment once the family has arrived.

By the same token, every effort should be made to only visit the family when invited or when an appointment or meeting is scheduled. The family needs down time without visitors to help mitigate the stress of the myriad resettlement activities and functions they are dealing with. Early on, it should be established that you will either text or call

before coming over. It establishes an even playing field and mutual respect for each other's time and space.

### **Be Trauma-Informed**

Many communities who welcome refugees want them to tell their stories publicly. Unless they actively express interest in doing so, refugees should not be asked to speak about their refugee experience. Be aware that telling a persecution story can re-traumatize refugees. They have had to tell their stories multiple times to get refugee status and approval to resettle to the United States. Once they are here, they can choose whether and under what circumstances to talk about the persecution they have experienced. Please respect this choice. By the same token, persecution experiences are by no means taboo. If refugees want to speak with you about what they have fled in their home countries, you will have a tremendous opportunity to be compassionate listeners. It is important for us to recognize that things we may view as character flaws might be coping mechanisms as reaction to trauma. These might be:

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

We at Catholic Charities do not ask our clients why they are refugees, and we require that our volunteers and Sponsorship partners follow this guideline as well. This is part of being trauma-informed, whereby it is assumed that refugees have experienced trauma to some degree, regardless of how they may appear to us. In addition to applying great sensitivity by not asking for tales of their experiences, it is helpful to adopt a trauma-informed orientation with your family. If you notice any behavioral symptoms that are worrisome or problematic and are unsure of how to proceed, please reach out to Catholic Charities or a mental health professional in your community who can help you find appropriate resources.

### **Mandatory Reporting**

As a matter of federal and state law, any individual entrusted with caring for or working with children is required to report suspected or actual child abuse and neglect. While all Catholic Charities clients receive information on laws covering domestic violence and child abuse and neglect, occasionally parents may still revert to disciplinary practices that are not acceptable in this country. If you witness or learn of child abuse or neglect endured by the children in your refugee family, it must be reported.

Certain professionals, such as teachers, doctors, nurses, social workers, case workers, including those at Catholic Charities, guidance counselors, lawyers, and emergency medical technicians are required to report child abuse and neglect, whether it is suspected or confirmed. If anyone in your group is one of these professionals and is told about abuse or neglect, s/he is also required to report. The mandatory reporter has the

right to report anonymously so that the investigation into abuse or neglect can proceed without her/his direct involvement or the knowledge of the offending family member.

You should contact your Catholic Charities case manager if you are unsure about whether there is a need to report to authorities. If your case manager deems that the incident must be reported, s/he will suggest that you contact the required governmental authorities accordingly, since you are closest to the incident and can provide authentic, critical details. If you are uncomfortable doing so, your case manager will be obligated to report based on the information you shared.

While the need to engage in mandatory reporting is decidedly rare, it is important for your group to know who among you are mandatory reporters and to discuss how such incidents would be handled. Failure to report suspected or actual child abuse/neglect that is allowed to escalate without intervention can result in legal consequences.

### **Racism**

Hopefully we are all aware of the pervasiveness of racism in the history of our country. Many refugees are also aware of this history and of contemporary issues about race relations for example, police shootings of African Americans and overt discrimination toward Muslims. This is not to say that some refugees do not come here with their own racist attitudes. Nonetheless, we find that increased proximity to diverse groups of people breaks down barriers as people get used to being in class together, or through working in a diverse workplace.

The challenge for Sponsoring groups is to be aware of racial and cultural attitudes in your communities and the communities in which your family settles. Conversations with neighbors and school officials before your family arrives will be very important. Your refugee children could be the only Iraqi, Congolese, or Afghan children in the school, which may be predominantly white or black. In the best-case scenario, they will be embraced by their neighbors and classmates. If elements of racial bias, bullying, or harassment materialize, it will be important for the education person and Contact Person to immediately address the issues, while keeping Catholic Charities informed.

Issues of race, when they come up, should be discussed with refugees as equals. Everyone can learn from another's perspective. If you feel that a refugee has a racist point of view, question it but listen to the reply and encourage the refugee to ask questions of you. Do not assume that your point of view is better.

### **Sexism**

In many cultures represented among our 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.

CATHOLIC CHAITIES addresses domestic violence specifically as part of our federally required Cultural Orientation and Resettlement Education (CORE) program, which all adult refugees are required to attend within roughly one month of their arrival. With respect to less overtly violent sexism, 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. In general, do not try to impose your views on the family but encourage discussion and exchange among the family and members of your group.

### **LGBTQIA+ Refugees**

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

In some of the countries our 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.

Homophobia could be a concern for cosponsoring groups is if you have openly LGBTQ committee members, fellow congregants, or friends. This is not to suggest that openly LGBTQ individuals should not be part of the core resettlement volunteer that will be interacting frequently with refugees. Quite the contrary. As in the example above with respect to sexism, being yourselves is the best way to help acculturate and educate a refugee family with respect to homophobia. It is unlikely, in our experience, that a refugee would ask, “Are you gay?” or express disdain about an LGBTQ person in front of us. Nonetheless, as the refugee family gets to know people in your group better, and as they start to meet more Americans, you may see signs of inquiry start to emerge when certain cultural biases kick in. For example, a middle-aged gentleman may never bring up whether he is married or not, but that is often one of the first questions an Iraqi man or woman might ask when getting to know him. How he, or any LGBTQ person, answers is ultimately up to her/him, and of course, it depends on the refugee. It all

comes back to being your authentic selves while respectfully allowing your refugee family the space to be more culturally sensitive and aware.

### **Working Toward Independence**

The goal of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and of each of our staff, our clients and the community members who support them is self-sufficiency. Simply stated, a person who is self-sufficient can provide for themselves without the help of others. For newcomers to the United States, this goal is both incredibly difficult and necessary. Every refugee that comes through a resettlement agency has shown remarkable strength in one way or another. As Sponsors, you can support refugees in the way you view them, the language we use and with respectful, empowering approaches to practice.

Do not encourage refugees to depend on you because it makes you feel good to help them. From the day they arrive, make sure the refugees and the community Sponsorship group member focus on independence. Self-sufficiency signifies much more than being able to pay the rent and put food on the table without handouts. It means that one has the skills, knowledge, and resources to navigate daily life. The acquisition of these skills and knowledge base is the first and most important step in a refugee's path to rebuilding their lives. Our staff and volunteers are asked to be aware and deliberate in their service. Ask yourself, how does my action help this person become more self-sufficient? How can I take steps so that next time this person will have the skills to do this task on their own or without any assistance?

### **Teaching vs. Doing**

Accompanying a newly arrived refugee to self-sufficiency is the goal of the resettlement program. Self-sufficiency means that one has the skills, knowledge, and resources to navigate daily life. Your goal should be to gradually become less task-oriented and more of a friendly, community neighbor. This takes a high level of intentionality as the ways we typically think of helping people tend to be rooted in activities and accomplishing tasks. Additionally, it can take far longer to teach someone to do something for themselves than it does to just do it for them. It is not inherently bad to help someone by doing a task for them. However, the goal of resettlement is to ensure that refugees can navigate the community and their needs themselves. Amongst the refugees we serve there are ample illustrations of resilience in the face of extraordinary challenges. Rather than approaching refugees as traumatized victims, strength-based practitioners acknowledge the tremendous strength refugees have demonstrated to cope.

### **Social Activities**

Many times, this transition to a new culture and community can be one of loneliness and isolation for refugees. They have lost not only their homes, but their family, friends, and

community. The welcoming work of Sponsors does not solely exist to teach and assist with the tasks of transition but also to provide a social support to newly arrived families.

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

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

### **Healthy Boundary Tips**

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

### **Expectations**

It is important to acknowledge the expectations that you come to this work with. Perhaps you have welcomed refugees before and expect this new volunteer experience to mirror the past. Perhaps you expect to develop friendships, or to share the skills you have learned throughout your career. Volunteer work is often unpredictable instead of straightforward. How one family transitions to their new community might look quite different from another, and you shouldn't expect to duplicate a previous experience shared with one family. Our ideas about what newcomer families need are influenced by our own culture and upbringing, and they may be different from what the newcomer family desires. Donated items may not be cared for as you would like or might be sold instead of kept. Keep in mind, your lifestyle will be different than the lifestyle of the family you are in partnership with.

### **Perceptions of Success**

The decisions that refugees make in creating their lives here in America are their own, and we must encourage their autonomy in doing so. It is easy to apply your own definition of success onto a newcomer and worry that they are not 'doing well' or 'succeeding' in their acclimation to a new community. Newly arrived refugee families typically work hard and long shifts to provide for themselves. Because a refugee does not make the same choices as you in their lives does not diminish their success.

### **Refugees Might Decide to Leave**

Occasionally, refugees choose to move away from their initial resettlement community. This may happen within the first few months, or after a year or more. They may move to join relatives or friends, to pursue an avenue of economic support, or to live in a particular kind of climate. Our role is to provide objective information about the pros and cons of moving. In the end, however, refugees are free to make this choice. While it may disrupt our plans (and your plans) or even appear to be a bad choice for the family, we try to view it as a sign of their own independence and, of course, they are allowed to leave. It should not be viewed as a failure. One of the best antidotes to our feelings of disappointment is to cosponsor another family soon!

### **Advocacy**

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

### **Refugee Resettlement is Rewarding**

We are all human beings, and anything could happen to one of us, or one of the refugees, at any time. Your refugee family – like any family - is dealing with life’s unpredictable twists and turns. Keep calm. Sponsoring refugees is a big responsibility. Catholic Charities is here to support you, provide advice, answer questions, and work with you through difficult situations you may encounter. Catholic Charities has the experience and expertise represented by Catholic Charities staff and long-time volunteers.

## **DEFINITIONS & ACRONYMS**

**“Appropriate Language Interpretation”** is the use of a client’s native language or a language in which the client is fluent. Appropriate language interpretation is required for all core resettlement services. Appropriate language interpretation can be provided by someone who speaks the client’s native language or a language in which the client is fluent or using an in-person or phone interpreter. Keep in mind that while one adult member of the case may be fluent in a second language (for example, English), other adult members of the case such as a spouse or adult children may not be. If you are providing a service to the entire family or to all adult members of the case, appropriate language interpretation is required for all adult members of the case. Therefore, using the client’s native language may be necessary to ensure that all adult members of the case are receiving the information directly in a language in which they are fluent, rather than just one adult member of the case.

**“Catholic Charities”** is a private nonprofit organization registered as such with the Internal Revenue Service.<sup>1</sup> Catholic Charities is your local refugee settlement agency and is funded by the U.S. Department of State through a federal assistance award to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

**“Community Sponsorship”** pairs refugees, asylees, and asylum seekers in need of financial, in-kind, and volunteer support with local agencies willing to provide that support.

**CORE** Cultural Orientation and Resettlement Education program; federally funded program provided by Catholic Charities.

**“DHS”** Department of Homeland Security

**“ESOL”** English to Speakers of Other Language. Students who did not learn English in their native tongue and/or continue to use other than English as a dominant language would be considered an English language learner.

**“I-9”** an I-9 form verifies the identity and employment authorization of individuals hired for employment in the United States. All United States employers must properly complete FORM I-9 for each person they hire for employment in the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> 26 U.S.C. 501 (c) (3)

**“I-94”** is the Department of Homeland Security’s Arrival/Department Record that it issues to refugees who are admitted to the United States and who are adjusting status while in the United States.

**“Local Sponsor”** means an established community group which has accepted by way of a written memorandum of understanding with Catholic Charities to provide, or ensure the provision of, reception and placement services to certain refugees sponsored by Catholic Charities. Local Sponsors are different from volunteers in that they agree in writing to accept responsibility for performing certain services as required in the memo of understanding. Individuals or informal groups of individuals may not serve as local Sponsors.

**“RCA”** Refugee Cash Assistance program helps eligible refugees by providing cash assistance for up to eight months from their arrival date in the United States

**“Refugee”** 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 due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group; is not firmly resettled in another country; and is admissible to the United States.

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

**“SNAP”** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, federal food program more commonly known as food stamps.

**“TANF”** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.