

VOLUNTEER GUIDE

What to know about engaging with refugees

1

Partner with a refugee resettlement agency or trusted refugee-serving group

Resettlement agencies are your best point of contact to get involved in welcoming refugees. These agencies are the experts in resettlement in your community and are contracted to provide required services. By partnering with them, you will be joining a coordinated network of services with the best access to information and ability to provide education and support in your work.

2

Know how to protect the confidentiality and safety of refugees

Refugees arrive in the U.S. vulnerable to miscommunication and misuse of their information. It is extremely important that you are educated about how to protect any sensitive information that you may learn about a refugee and their family. Resettlement agencies are equipped to provide volunteer trainings and request background checks to protect the interests of refugees.

3

Take precautions to protect the health of yourself and clients

When volunteering, please follow state, local, and CDC guidelines for mask usage when in close contact with others. As a condition of receiving resettlement services, Afghans complete vaccinations for COVID-19 and other age-appropriate vaccinations. Additionally, they receive medical exams and health screenings during initial resettlement services.

4

Use interpreters

Unless you can communicate proficiently in the refugee's preferred language, the services of an interpreter is advised. The primary aim of resettlement services is for refugees to become self-sufficient and to successfully integrate in their community. Offering help without engaging them in the process denies refugees the ability to self-advocate and self-determine how they start their life in their new home.

5

Be patient

Resettlement agencies are busier than ever. Please be patient with them as they field the needs and requests of both refugees and volunteers. If you don't hear from them right away, it's not because these questions or concerns are insignificant. Integration is not the work of weeks or months, but years. By coordinating efforts now, we can build a network of manpower to respond to needs as Tennessee's resettlement network looks towards the long-term stability and comfort of those rebuilding life in their new home.

6

If you have concerns...

If you are concerned that a refugee client is not receiving services for which they are eligible, it is important to refer to the resettlement agency's grievance policy. These policies lay out clear terms of accountability based on the rights and the responsibilities of clients and ensure that concerns are responded to and documented. . A client's well-being and safety is always the primary priority.

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Connect with a local resettlement agency

CHATTANOOGA & KNOXVILLE

Bridge Refugee Services

<https://www.bridgerefugees.org/volunteer/>

NASHVILLE

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Nashville

<https://cctenn.org/volunteers/>

Nashville International Center for Empowerment

<https://www.empowernashville.org/afghanistan/>

MEMPHIS

World Relief Memphis

<https://worldrelief.org/memphis/get-involved/afghan-allies/>