



Refugee Sponsorship FAQs and Glossary

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is a refugee?

A refugee is a person who fled their country of origin to escape persecution, war, violence, or natural disaster. Today we see worldwide refugee levels at the highest ever recorded. One in every 122 individuals is either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, the U.S. government admitted 69,933 refugees to the United States, just shy of meeting the goal of 70,000 admissions for the fiscal year, and 7,200 Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) were admitted, surpassing the goal of 7,000 projected for the year.

Each year, LSS/NCA welcomes more than 600 refugees to the Washington-DC Metro Area.

Where are refugees coming from?

Currently, the majority of LSS/NCA refugee arrivals are coming from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Russia, Bhutan, Burma, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

There are an ever-increasing number of Syrian refugees that has now reached 4 million, confirming it as the world's single largest refugee crisis in the past 25 years. LSS/NCA expects to welcome and resettle Syrian refugees beginning in FY2017.

Where are they resettled? Which towns?

Families in Virginia, resettle as close to the District as Falls Church and as far away as Loudoun or Fauquier Counties. We are currently seeing more families move to and resettle in Alexandria.

In Maryland, we resettle predominantly in Prince George's County given the cost of living and proximity to possible job opportunities in Washington DC.

Do we resettle in the District of Columbia?

Our organization does not resettle within the District due to high cost of living, limited financial assistance programs, and state-funded job employment programs.

Upon arrival, refugees go through two important phases in their first 6 months. In the first phase, Reception and Placement, a refugee works closely with a case manager to secure housing and address any immediate needs, such as obtaining groceries, enrolling children in school, applying for a social security card, and receiving required health care.

In the second phase, a refugee works with a job developer to craft resumes, conduct mock interviews, and acquire a job within the first three months of arrival. This program is strictly funded by state agencies.

Since we do not have any funding for job development within the District, we do not resettle refugees within DC to ensure that each refugee is eligible to receive the breadth of LSS/NCA services. However, if free or low-rent housing options are available through a co-sponsor, LSS/NCA directors will weigh the financial benefits for the family in this housing option is available.

As a congregation, what should be our financial goal as a co-sponsor?

Depending on the varying levels of co-sponsorship, the budget will fluctuate. In addition, a co-sponsor's budget will also vary depending on the family they are assigned. Refugee family size and history can affect housing needs, medical treatments, and special provisions such as cribs or car seats.

For example, a Level 1 sponsor (Home Raiser) will need to budget around \$3,000/mo for a family of 4 in Maryland or \$5,000/mo for a family of 4 in Virginia, accounting for rental assistance and other varying needs.

Additionally, co-sponsors will also need to consider miscellaneous costs, such as volunteer background checks, apartment items that were not donated through in-kind drives, and any additional assistance the co-sponsor intends to provide for the family (gas, pre-paid phone, etc.).

For further information, please refer to our Sample Refugee Family Budget Sheet on pgs. 4 & 5 of the co-sponsor description document.

How do you contact a family when they arrive and throughout the sponsorship?

The main point of contact throughout the co-sponsorship will be the family's LSS/NCA case manager.

At any point, you may also contact: Kiersten Rossetto, Outreach and Engagement Coordinator (RossettoK@lssnca.org; 202-723-3000 x. 284) or Jessica Cuellar, Volunteer Coordinator for Refugee Services (CuellarJ@lssnca.org; 703-698-5026 x.113).

Can furnishings be donated or do they have to be new?

Furnishings may be new or gently loved. Certain items must meet rolling government regulations for safety and health. These items include cribs, car seats, etc. If you have questions about a certain item, please contact the case manager for proper instructions. A full list of required home supplies is on p. 8 in the co-sponsor description documents.

What are average family sizes?

Families range from a family of 3 to 7.

Which faith traditions do the refugee families have?

LSS/NCA has a proud tradition of serving people of all faiths and working to create a society where the most vulnerable among us find wholeness, justice, and self-sufficiency. Currently most refugee families resettled by LSS/NCA are from the Muslim faith. We also welcome families who are of Christian, Ba'hai, Buddhist, Jewish, and Orthodox traditions.

Glossary of Terms

Asylee: An asylee, like a refugee, is someone who cannot return to his home country because of past persecution or a well-founded fear of future persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, and his government is unwilling or unable to protect him. The term “asylee” refers to those who have had their statuses approved in the U.S., by either an asylum officer at United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) or an Immigration Judge in court. In contrast, refugees have been resettled after having their statuses approved abroad.

Family Self-Sufficiency Plan (FSSP): The self-sufficiency plan (budget) exists to outline clear expectations of the family expenses and all possible sources of income. When completed, the FSSP should provide concrete solutions to assist the family or individual in overcoming barriers to self-sufficiency.

International Office of Migration (IOM): IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need whether they are refugees, displaced persons or other uprooted people.

Internally Displaced Person: Internally displaced persons, or IDPs, are among the world’s most vulnerable people. Unlike refugees, IDPs have not crossed an international border to find sanctuary but have remained inside their home countries. Even if they have fled their homes for similar reasons as refugees (armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations), IDPs legally remain under the protection of their own government – even though that government might be the cause of their flight. As citizens, they retain all of their rights and protection under both human rights and international humanitarian law.

Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services (LIRS): LIRS is one of 9 regional Resettlement Agencies in the United States. Once a refugee is granted permission to resettle in America and has passed a myriad of security clearances, tests, and health screenings, he/she are assigned to one of these 9 regional agencies for placement. Once LIRS is given a case, they assign that case to one of their local

partners (such as LSS/NCA) to receive resettlement and employment services.

Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSS/NCA): Washington-DC based non-profit that was founded in 1917 when a number of local Lutheran congregations joined together to provide food, clothing, and shelter to families in need and to protect our most vulnerable neighbors. LSS/NCA is a local partner of LIRS. LSS/NCA provides direct services to our refugee neighbors.

Matching Grant Program: The Resettlement Agencies Matching Grant Program is an alternative to public cash assistance providing services to enable ORR-eligible populations (refugees, asylees, Cuban and Haitian entrants, certain Amerasians from Vietnam, Victims of Severe Forms of Trafficking, and Special Immigrant Visa Holders (SIVs)) to become economically self-sufficient within 120 to 180 days of program eligibility.

Services required under this program include, but are not limited to, case management, employment services, maintenance assistance and cash allowance, and administration. Self-sufficiency must be achieved without accessing public cash assistance. Enrollment is available to all ORR-eligible populations meeting the minimum employability requirements as defined under the Program Guidelines; however, enrollment must occur within 31 days of becoming eligible to ensure adequate services are provided and self-sufficiency is achieved and maintained within the period of eligibility.

Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR): A U.S. government office under the Administration for Children and Families that manages programs to provide economic, health, and social service assistance to the following groups: refugees, asylees, trafficking victims, survivors of torture, Unaccompanied Alien Children, SIV-holders from Iraq and Afghanistan, Cuban/ Haitian entrants, and Amerasians.

Special Immigrant Visa: Special Immigrant Visa is a status given to eligible Iraqis and Afghans who supported the U.S. military effort in their countries and thus they have been targeted by extremists in their countries. They are eligible for the same benefits as refugees and asylees.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): A U.S. government program that provides financial assistance varying state by state for low-income families. In Virginia, a family of four can get up to \$451 per month and in Maryland, the same family of four could get up to \$762 per month. Note: This usually differs within states and family sizes.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), also known as the UN Refugee Agency, is the world's leading organization aiding and protecting people forced to flee their homes due to violence, conflict and persecution. UNHCR provides shelter, food, water, medical care, and other life-saving assistance to refugees around the world.

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS): U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is the government agency that oversees lawful immigration to the United States.