

*"There is no greater sorrow on earth
than the loss of one's native land."
— Euripides, 431 B.C.*



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Resettlement and Immigration Services
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**Catholic Charities' Resettlement &
Immigration Services
Diocese of Green Bay**

Catholic Diocese of Green Bay
Catholic Charities' Refugee Resettlement Program
P.O. Box 23825, Green Bay, WI 54305
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Matthew 25:35

“For I was a stranger ... and you welcomed me.”

Imagine for a moment, that your life has been torn apart by war. Imagine that you've lost your job, your home, and possibly even your family. You've fled the country, and find yourself in a strange land, with no family, no friends, and little knowledge of the language or culture.

Who will welcome the stranger?

Who Are the Refugees

They are people who “owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular group, or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of the country.”

Refugees are forced to leave behind their homes, jobs, possessions, family and friends. As refugees seek a better life in the United States, they are filled with hope, but they have little else.

Our Response – Parish Partnership

Parish Partnership is a supportive commitment to a refugee or refugee family needing your help. This social action ministry is an opportunity for parishioners to practice what our faith teaches. Helping a refugee begin a new life in our community is a tangible expression of what our faith calls us to do, and brings blessings to refugees and parishioners alike.

The Parish Partnership project matches your gifts to the specific needs of refugees. Parishes, other church congregations and community groups can choose from three options:

- * **Full Partnerships** by individual parishes and congregations provide housing and resettlement support to a refugee, group of refugees or a refugee family for four to six months.
- * **Joint Partnerships** allow several individuals, parishes, congregations or groups to jointly provide housing and resettlement support to a refugee or refugee family for four to six months.
- * **Contributing Partnerships** enable individuals, parishes, congregations or groups with specific resources to help refugees.
 - Greet newly arriving refugees at the airport.
 - Prepare a welcome basket or individual backpack
 - Help orient refugees to the new community.
 - Support a refugee transition house for four to six months.
 - Set up the apartment with basic furnishings.
 - Be an English Language tutor.
 - Offer temporary housing or other support for a specific period of time.
 - Offer financial assistance and goods for refugee resettlement, perhaps through a special collection or donation of household items or ongoing collections.
 - Offer prayers for the new arrivals
 - Provide transportation including moving furniture into apartments.

Contact Information

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CATHOLIC CHARITIES
RESETTLEMENT AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES
CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF GREEN BAY

The Catholic Diocese has been resettling refugees since the end of World War II. Resettlement and Immigration Services has settled over 5,000 refugees from Vietnam, Laos, Moscow, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Somalia, Cuba, and Bosnia.

Resettlement and Immigration Services (RIS) welcomes the stranger and enables those escaping persecution to begin new lives with dignity through early self-sufficiency. RIS strives to foster a community climate of acceptance for persons of different cultures.

RIS provides state and federally funded comprehensive refugee resettlement services including:

- Orientation in the U.S. laws, customs and institutions.
- Intensive case management to insure all initial needs are met including: resource development, transportation, interpretation and advocacy.
- Early employment placement assistance.
- Resources for English as a Second Language classes.
- Prevention services for refugee youth and families.
- Community resources available for the families to utilize when they arrive.
- Health concerns (mental & physical)
- Employment
- Residency and Citizenship

RIS is highly dependent on **volunteers** who tutor English and academic subjects, mentor refugees, set up housing, provide transportation and act as interpreters. Volunteers are essential in welcoming the newcomer, putting a human face on America and helping the refugees connect with the community.

RIS also depends heavily upon **donations** of household items such as cooking utensils, gently used furniture, beds, blankets and pillows. Such donations allow RIS to set up housing, pay deposits, furnish and feed families. Refugee resettlement could not happen without the significant dollar-stretching resources provided by the community. This support precludes refugees from accessing cash assistance in the six-week span from arrival to their first paycheck. Newcomers quickly become self-sufficient because of a unified volunteer, staff and client resettlement plan.

RIS also provides low-cost immigration counseling to immigrants who need assistance adjusting status, petitioning for relatives, applying for asylum and dealing with a myriad of other immigration issues.

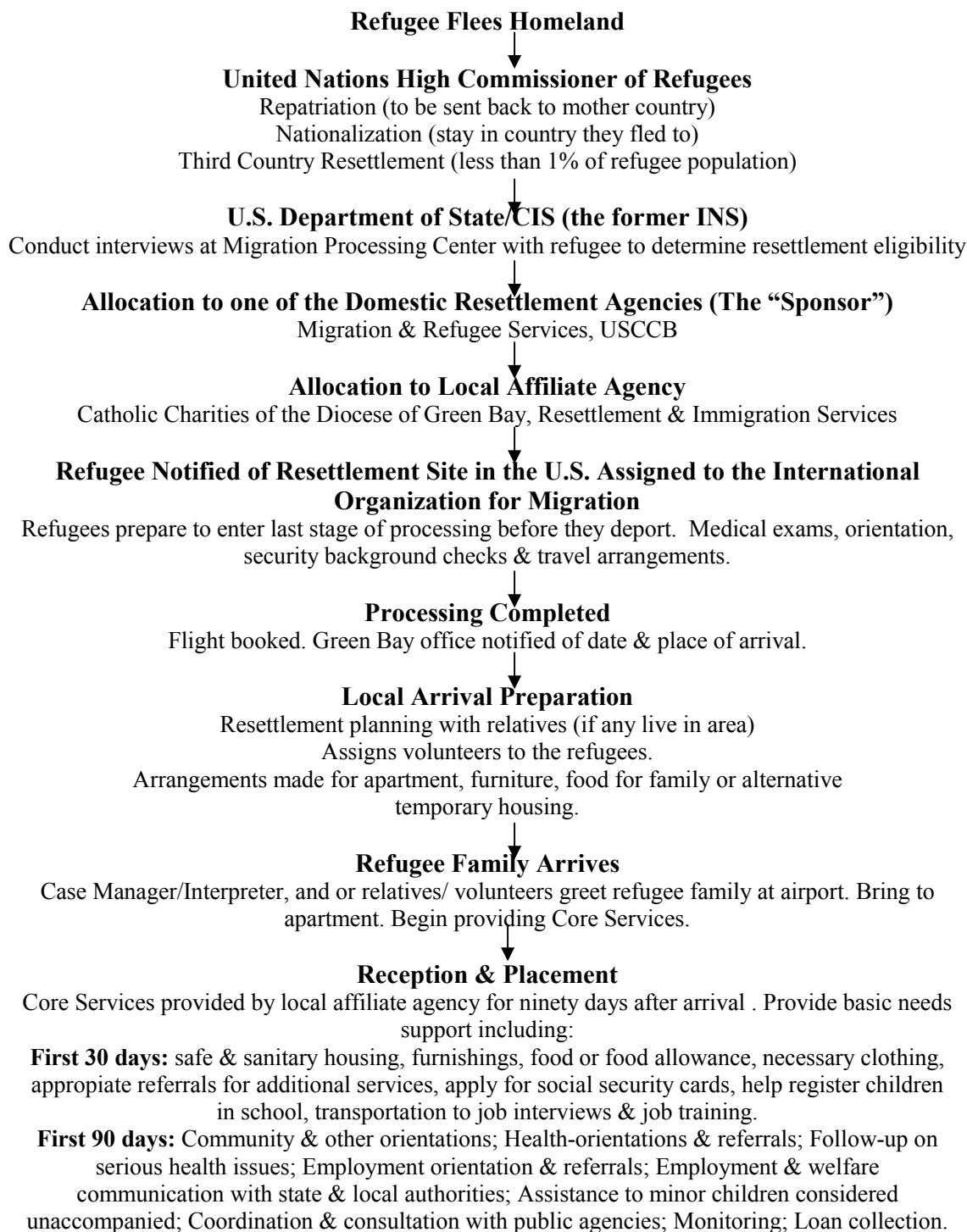
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THE REFUGEES JOURNEY TO THE DIOCESE OF GREEN BAY



THE DIFFERENCE

REFUGEE

A person outside of the U.S. who seeks protection on the grounds they fear persecution in their homeland. To attain refugee status, the person must prove they have a “well-founded fear of persecution” on the basis of at least one of five internationally-recognized grounds: race, religion, membership in a social group, political opinion or national origin.

IMMIGRANT

A Foreign-born individual who has been admitted to reside permanently in the United States.

Refugees are a Resource for the Future – Not a Burden of the Present, Without any Future

Who are refugees?

Refugees are individuals or families who seek safety outside their country because of well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or because of political opinions.

MYTH 1

Refugees Come Here For Economic Reasons

FACT: Refugees are individuals or families who come here because they had to flee their homeland, and are unable to return because of persecution or fear of persecution. Most refugees would rather live and work in their native country.

MYTH 2

The U.S. is the Only Country to Take Refugees

FACT: There are 20 countries involved in refugee resettlement; some of the major countries are: Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The U.S. takes less than 1 percent of refugees resettled each year.

MYTH 3

Refugees Automatically Receive Special Money From the U.S. Government

FACT: The U.S. government does not automatically provide refugees with money when they arrive here in the country. However, there are benefits available for needy refugees. The refugees must apply for these benefits and meet an income and resource test to qualify for any assistance just as U.S. Americans do.

MYTH 4

Refugees Do Not Pay Taxes

FACT: Refugees pay taxes the same as any citizen living in the United States. They pay federal and state taxes, and local taxes. There are no special rules which give refugees a tax break.

MYTH 5

Refugees Take Jobs From Americans

FACT: Refugees must apply and compete for jobs the same as any citizen. Refugees also make jobs. They open new businesses that employ refugees as well as others living in the community. Refugees bring new energy and creativity into U.S. communities

MYTH 6

The U.S. Spends Millions of Dollars Every Month Supporting Refugees

FACT: Refugees must apply and compete for jobs the same as any citizen. Refugees also make jobs. They open new businesses that employ refugees as well as others living in the community. Refugees bring new energy and creativity into U.S. communities

MYTH 7

The U.S. Spends Millions of Dollars Every Month Supporting Refugees

FACT: Refugees contribute a great wealth to this country through their culture and customs. They are also a great resource. Many of our finest people came here as refugees.

MYTH 8

Refugees do not want to learn English.

FACT: Most refugees want to learn English and enroll in classes to study English as a Second Language (ESL).

RESETTLEMENT AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES

VOLUNTEERING

✿ Committing to Volunteering

The commitment to assist a refugee family in their resettlement is a moral, not a legal obligation. Churches and parishes can provide more than can otherwise be offered to the refugees – the most important of which is the human hand of kindness. Volunteers often serve as a “lifeline” for refugees, orienting them to a new city and a new country, helping them with advocacy, tutoring them in English and providing friendship.

Your commitment and responsibilities are flexible. Our office works with your church to determine what combination is right for you. Some groups prefer hands-on work with our families by visiting, shopping with and orientating the children and adults personally. Others prefer to conduct drives or fundraisers on behalf of a family. The opportunities for both are plentiful and we welcome any contribution from your group. Our volunteering philosophy is guided by the idea that there is more than one way to help a family.

✿ How do we organize our church to volunteer?

Churches have used a variety of successful structures for sponsorship. Some organize full committees for each of the resettlement needs: Furniture Committee, Clothing Committee, Housing Committee, Health Committee, Education Committee, etc. Other churches have organized a few families (three or four) to share the major tasks.

You can begin by inviting a staff member from the RIS office to speak. In the past, we have found that many myths and misconceptions exist on refugee resettlement based on “old” models that were used over a decade ago. Our staff members can help to answer questions and concerns. We also provide assistance in organizing your members around resettlement.

✿ What is required of volunteering groups?

Again, requirements are flexible. They depend on the resources and interest of the volunteers. Our office provides a guideline of needs that a sponsor can assist with. We ask that the sponsor evaluate those needs and determine what you are interested in.

Once your church has decided what it can do, your church will sign an agreement detailing everything that you have agreed to provide. Our office will then provide orientation and training to volunteers, donors and leaders to help you organize your sponsorship efforts.

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VOLUNTEER ROLE

In keeping with the Program's mission, and with both *compassion* and *common sense*, volunteers are committed to addressing the legitimate initial resettlement and adjustment needs of those refugees entrusted by the Program to their care.

Volunteer Guidelines

1. Remain within Program parameters in your dealings with refugee clients. When in doubt as to what those parameters are, consult with your Team Leader, the volunteer coordinator, or case manager.
2. On matters of communication, always take the initiative! Maintain a healthy and effective level of communication with fellow volunteers and Program staff. Keep team leaders, the volunteer coordinator and Program staff fully apprised of significant developments, problems and concerns.
3. Expect the unexpected; anticipate shortcomings and problems; “roll with the punches”; don’t “take it personally”; maintain a healthy detachment; be natural. Don’t try to “make them over” into something they are not, or someone you want them to be.
4. Guide, educate, encourage, empower! Don’t make choices for them, or demand that they select those paths chosen by you. Reach Out but don’t intrude or be Controlling. Our primary purpose is to properly fulfill THEIR legitimate needs and not our own.
5. Guide refugees to earliest possible employment – self sufficiency being the central goal after resettlement. “Free” cases must be employed by not later than 4 ½ months after their arrival. “Family Reunification” cases must be employed within 90 days of arrival. (All refugees enrolled in Match Grant must be employed within 45 days of arrival.)
6. The Volunteer or Parish/Congregational Resettlement Team is intended to be the primary vehicle for the provision of direct resettlement services. With the Resettlement Services Checklist as a guide, Teams should continually *strive for uniformity of purpose, approach and effort*. Working closely together to achieve the Program’s resettlement goals ensures success, minimizes stress and confusion, and allows for a greater level of personal enjoyment and fulfillment.
7. Avoid the “Lone Ranger” approach to involvement. Going-it-alone will lead to divergence of purpose/approach, avoidable mistakes and quite possibly, needless dissension.

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