



**CHURCH WORLD SERVICE**

## **Refugee resettlement: role of local cosponsors**

### **The role of the local community in refugee resettlement**

Historically, the U.S. refugee program has been characterized as an effective model of public-private partnership. Through private and government funding, and with the help of concerned individuals and voluntary organizations, refugees are properly resettled, adjust to their new homes, and achieve early self-sufficiency.

Often local organizations, such as faith groups and local voluntary organizations in the community, agree to serve as cosponsors for newly arriving refugees. Generally, cosponsors are asked to make a three-month commitment to assist refugees with core services, including:

- Transportation to appointments and job interviews
- Help with job applications, interview skills and work practices
- School enrollment
- English training
- Cultural orientation
- Emotional support

Individuals who are not a part of a cosponsoring organization are encouraged to volunteer one-on-one with a refugee. Here are some typical needs:

- **English Tutoring** – For many refugees, learning English is the first step to achieving self-sufficiency. Volunteers help children with homework and adults with learning the vocabulary needed to secure a job.
- **Mentoring** – A mentor can help a refugee adjust to American culture by sharing knowledge and experience, such as by showing how to navigate the bus system, explaining use of bank accounts, or taking a child to a museum.
- **Translation** – Bilingual individuals can share their foreign language skills by translating a document or interpreting at a parent-teacher conference.
- **Health Care** – Although Medicaid provides limited medical services to refugees, volunteers are needed to help refugees navigate the health care system and connect with free or reduced-rate routine medical care and services to heal from the physical or emotional trauma they may have endured.
- **Employment Advocacy** – Most refugees have valuable work skills and are ready to work soon after arrival in their new communities. Volunteers are needed to locate job openings, help complete job applications, and assist in interview preparation.

The emphasis of cosponsorship is transitioning refugees to independence, especially economically and occupationally, as quickly as possible. As a refugee ceases to be a refugee and becomes a neighbor and friend, we are all enriched.

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