

Refugees in Harrisburg

How Schools Can Support

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"An immigrant leaves his homeland to find greener grass.

A refugee leaves his homeland because the grass is burning under his feet..."

— Barbara Law, *More Than Just Surviving Handbook: ESL for Every Classroom Teacher*

What does it mean to be a refugee?

A refugee is someone who is forced to leave their home country because they are afraid for their lives.

Refugees are people forced to flee their own country and seek safety in another country. They are unable to return to their own country because of feared persecution as a result of who they are, what they believe in or say, or because of armed conflict, violence or serious public disorder.

Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.



What does it mean to be a refugee?

When they arrive in a new country, the government there must decide whether or not they can stay.

If they are allowed to stay then they become known as refugees. While they are waiting for a decision, they are known as people seeking asylum.



What is resettlement?

Resettlement is the selection and transfer of refugees from a country in which they have sought protection to a third country that has granted them permission to stay on the basis of long-term or permanent residence status. It is a solution that ensures refugees are protected against refoulement (forced return), provides them access to rights similar to those enjoyed by citizens and gives them an opportunity to eventually become citizens of the resettlement country.

Country of Origin



Country of Asylum

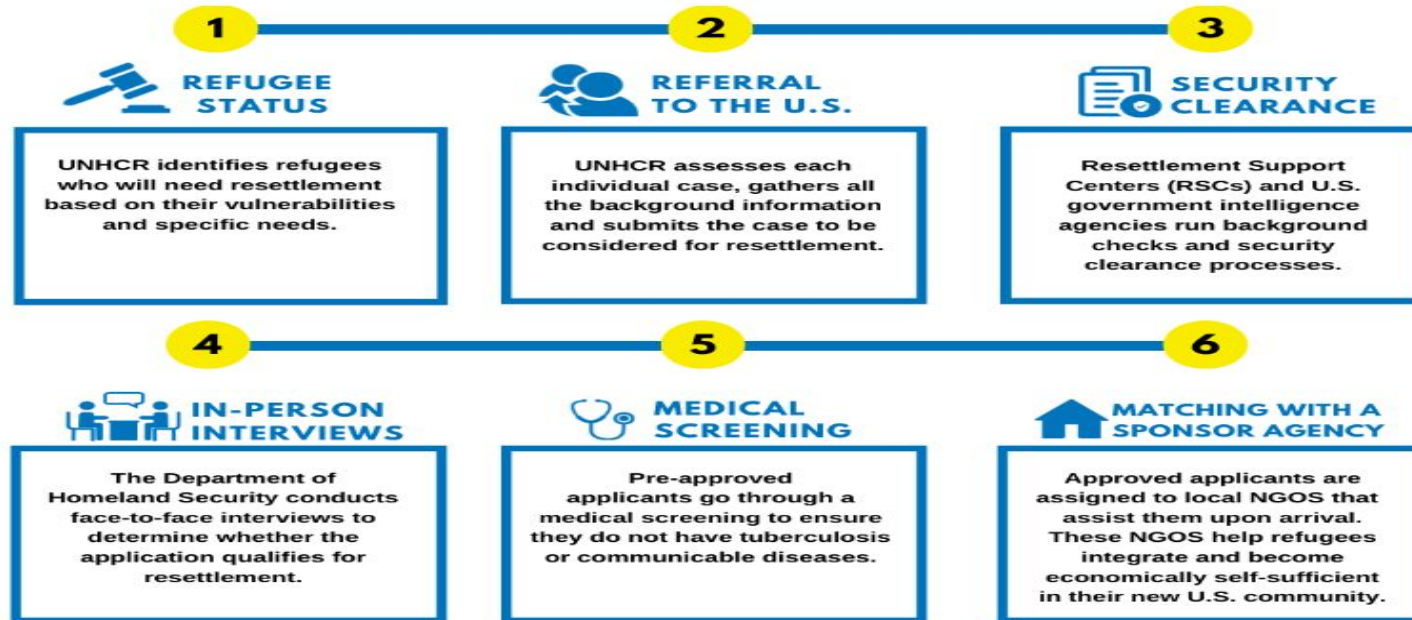


Country of Resettlement



Resettlement Process in the United States

The United States conducts a rigorous vetting process to determine whether to accept a refugee for resettlement. The entire process takes approximately two years and involves the following steps:



What is a Refugee Camp?

Refugee camps are temporary facilities built to provide immediate protection and assistance to people who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, persecution or violence. While camps are not established to provide permanent solutions, they offer a safe haven for refugees and meet their most basic needs such as food, water, shelter, medical treatment and other basic services during emergencies.



A typical Refugee Camp - Azraq (Jordan)

Azraq Refugee Camp (Jordan)

- **Population (Feb 2021):** 37,775 individuals - 61 percent are children
- **Established** in April, 2014
- **Occupants:** Syrian refugees

Azraq camp was opened in April 2014 to receive the large influx of Syrian refugees that arrived in Jordan seeking safe haven. It is located in a desert area in northern Jordan and one of the early challenges when it first opened was the lack of electricity, which made daily activities -such as cooking, washing, studying or walking safely at night- difficult for refugees. In 2017, the UN Refugee Agency, in partnership with the Ikea Foundation, constructed a solar plant to address these challenges and significantly improve their wellbeing. It became the first solar plant built in a refugee setting in the world.

Through the years, efforts to support people at the camp have also included the provision of shelter, healthcare, food, clean water, sanitation services as well as educational and livelihood opportunities. More than 80 percent of refugee children at Azraq camp are enrolled in school and more than 350 formal shops owned equally by refugees and the host community have opened to provide livelihood opportunities and self-reliance.

Refugees in Harrisburg

Harrisburg SD currently has 93 scholars who are identified as refugee.

Their countries of origin are; Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Pakistan, and Syria.

Camp Curtin has 20 scholars who are identified as refugee.

6th - 7 scholars

7th - 6 scholars

8th - 7 scholars

How Can I Support Refugees in My Class



1. Create Open and Welcoming Environments

A. Embrace and value diversity and the cultural backgrounds of all students.

Examples:

- Model multicultural sensitivity for scholars
- Engage in self-reflection to address personal biases and increase multicultural competence.
- Proactively address bullying or subtle forms of discrimination between peers, education personnel, and others.
- Incorporate discussions around diversity and immigration into instruction.

How Can I Support Refugees in My Class



B. Focus on Scholar's Strengths

- Many refugee students bring many unique skills, strengths, and knowledge into the classroom. Build on those strengths of resilience, and consider having them share their knowledge about their country, customs, and culture.
- Educators should also support maintaining the home culture and language, while also balancing the importance of developing the skills and knowledge to succeed in the United States.

How Can I Support Refugees in My Class



C. Engage and Empower Families

- Families from other countries may have different views about education, including the assumption that education remains the duty of the school and any involvement would encroach on that responsibility.
- Some families may not be proficient enough in English to know how to engage, despite a desire to do so.
- Many families may experience practical barriers, such as not having a car or employment that does not allow for active engagement during school hours.
- Schools can work with cultural liaisons or community leaders and the families to find ways to connect with parents and ensure they have opportunities to participate in their child's schooling.

How Can I Support Refugees in My Class

2. Understand and recognize stressors.

Refugee children and youth are often traumatized from premigration and resettlement experiences. They may have been exposed to violence and combat, home displacement, malnutrition, detention, and torture. Many have been forced to leave their country and cannot safely return home. Some may have come without their parents and without knowing of their health or safety. Psychological stress and traumatic experiences are often inflicted upon these children over months or even years, and many experience some kind of discrimination once entering U.S. schools. Additionally, they often resettle in high-poverty and high-crime neighborhoods, increasing exposure to stressful conditions.

How Can I Support Refugees in My Class

- A. Understand the challenges of relocation and acculturation.
- Refugee children and youth often have significant adjustments to life in their new communities and schools.
 - This includes language differences, not understanding how schools function, not knowing where to go for help, little familiarity with the curriculum or social mores, and difficulty making friends.
 - Some refugees are relocated to communities with an existing population from their country. Others may be the only people from their country, heightening the sense of isolation.

How Can I Support Refugees in My Class

B. Equip staff to provide trauma sensitive responses and supports.

- A trauma-sensitive school views behaviors as a potential outcome of life circumstances rather than willful disobedience or intentional misbehavior.
- Trauma-sensitive approaches emphasize helping school staff understand the impact of trauma on school functioning and seeing behavior through this lens;
 - building trusting relationships among teachers and peers
 - helping students develop the ability to self-regulate behaviors, emotions, and attention
 - supporting student success in academic and nonacademic areas
 - promoting physical and emotional health

How Can I Support Refugees in My Class

C. Understand the effect of trauma on school functioning.

- Extreme stress, adversity, and trauma can impede concentration, cognitive functioning, memory, and social relationships.
- Stress can contribute to both internalized symptoms—such as hypervigilance, anxiety, depression, grief, fear, anger, isolation—and externalized behaviors—such as startle responses, reactivity, aggression, and conduct problems.
- Given the often chronic and significant stress placed on refugee students, many are at increased risk for developing trauma and other mental health disorders, undermining their ability to function effectively in school.
- The environment of their previous schooling and the immigration to the United States, many have experienced significantly interrupted schooling; coupled with language gaps, many students arrive unprepared to participate in school with their same-age peers.

Voices from the Field

- Teacher
- [Building a Refugee Support System](#)
- Scholars Story
- [Refugee sisters tell their story](#)
- School Impact
- [Global Village Project](#)

Resources

- [Teach Immigration](#)
- [Brave Girl Rising: The Refugee Crisis and Human Responsibility lesson plan](#)

Questions

Think about what are your next steps
to become more aware
of the ever-changing diversified scholars
entering your classroom.

What changes do you need to make?

What opportunities are there for all scholars to feel
valued, seen, and heard in your classroom?