



IRIS

Los Angeles

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES

INTERFAITH REFUGEE AND IMMIGRATION SERVICE

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT *FORMING A WELCOME TEAM* *INFORMATION SESSION*

#ShareTheJourney with Refugees



IRIS
welcome home.

www.iris-la.org

Interfaith Refugee &
Immigration Service

IRIS: The WHO and WHAT

IRIS is a program of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles

Also the tri-Site Affiliate office of:

- Episcopal Migration Ministries
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
- Church World Service (37 Christian denominations including Methodist, Disciples of Christ, Baptist, Presbyterian)

Multi-Service Agency

- Refugee Resettlement
- Refugee Employment
- Immigration Legal Services (citizenship, AOS, DACA, family based immigration, etc.)
- ESL/Civics/Cultural Orientation Classes
- Food Ministry

Who Are Refugees?

A refugee is a person who "owing to a **well-founded fear** of **being persecuted** for reasons of **race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social 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 that country..."



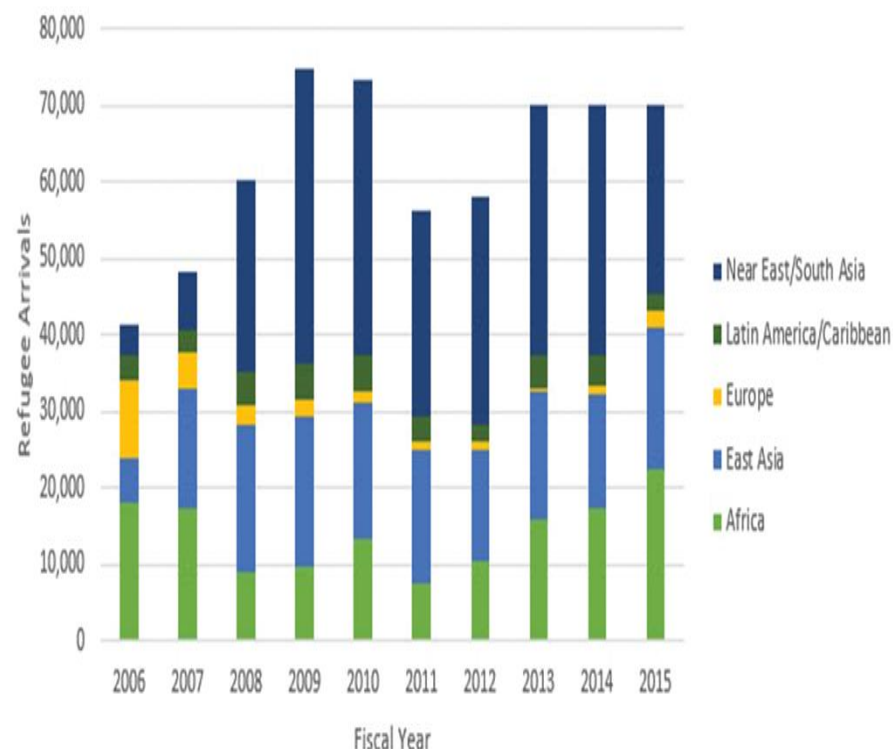
Who Do We Resettle?

The United States will admit 85,000 refugees from around the world in Fiscal Year 2016:

- Roughly 34,000 will come from the Near East and South Asia (of which at least 10,000 will be from Syria);
- 25,000 from Africa;
- 13,000 from East Asia;
- 4,000 from Europe;
- 3,000 from Latin America and the Caribbean; and
- An unallocated reserve of 6,000 will provide the flexibility needed to respond to emergent situations.

FY16 IRIS Projection: Refugees from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and minors from Central America

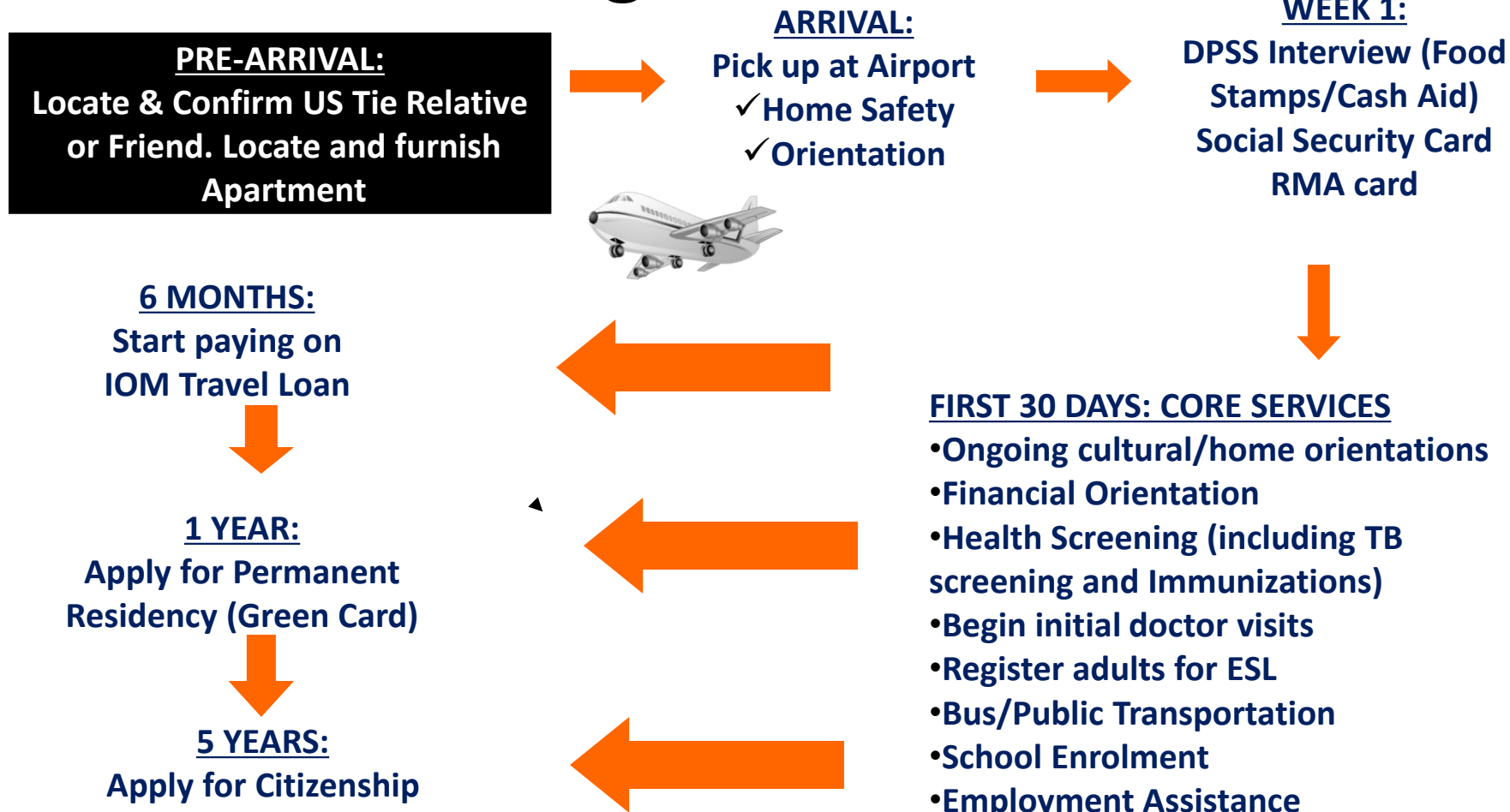
Refugee Arrivals by Processing Region
FY2006 - FY2015



Screening Process

- **Refugees are the most scrutinized and screened individuals to enter the United States.**
- The robust and multi-layered series of security checks include biometrics, medical screenings, interagency intelligence sharing, and in-person interviews with Department of Homeland Security
- Enhanced security screening is a joint responsibility of the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and includes the participation of the National Counterterrorism Center and the Department of Defense.
- The U.S. hand picks the refugees who are resettled here.
- USCIS-approved refugees also undergo a health screening to prevent those with a contagious disease from entering the country.

How do Refugees Arrive in the US



Arrival in the USA!

Reunited and it feels so good!



Core Services Provided During First 90 Days

Locate housing	Basic furnishings	Initial food	Basic clothing
Airport reception	Physical and Mental Health screening	Housing & safety orientation	Apply for social security card
Apply for public assistance	Immunizations	Cultural & community orientation	Employment orientation
Enrollment in English classes	School enrollment for children	Transportation assistance for job interviews	Job placement
	Create Resettlement Plan	Home visits by Case Manager	

A brief history of co-sponsorship

- **Post World War II Era (1940's – 1975)**
 - Faith based organizations (and denominations) coordinate refugee cases to be “sponsored” by local churches and community groups
- **Post Vietnam Era (1975-1980)**
 - During these years churches continue to play a key role “sponsoring” cases. Denominations have control over where, geographically, cases will be resettled.
- **Post ‘Refugee Act’ Era (1980-Early 2000's)**
 - U.S. Refugee Resettlement Agencies emerge to become primary “sponsors” for refugee cases and are entrusted with the responsibility to provide core services.
 - Churches and other Faith Communities act as “co-sponsors” providing assistance with some of these core services.
- **Where are we today?**

Definition of “Co-Sponsor”

- “Local ‘co-sponsor’ means an established community group, such as a congregation or service organization, which has accepted in a written agreement with an agency responsibility to provide or ensure the provision of reception and placement services to certain refugees sponsored by an Agency.”
- “Individuals or informal groups may not serve as local co-sponsors.”
- “Local co-sponsors differ from volunteers in that they agree in writing to accept responsibility for performing certain services required in this agreement.”

IRIS’ term for **“Co-Sponsor”** is **“Welcome Team”**

Local Co-Sponsor vs. Other Forms of Involvement

Co-Sponsor/Welcome Team

- A team of people (recommended at least 8-10)
- Team is organized by the same established organization (501c3)
- Assists with ‘Reception and Placement’ services (and more!)
- Works with a particular case or family
- Signs a written agreement

Volunteers

- Individuals
- Work with various refugee individuals or families
- Assigned to a particular task
- Examples include: transportation, interpretation, ESL tutoring, collecting donations, service projects, food pantry, school registration, bus training

Involvement

- Examples of involvement: Providing space, donations, funding, advocacy, promoting refugee awareness, attending annual world refugee day celebration

“Austin, TX — A Transformational Ministry” by
Episcopal Migration Ministries on Vimeo.

<https://vimeo.com/39646777>

What a welcome team IS and IS NOT

The Welcome Team Experience is:

- A moral commitment to help refugees begin a new life
- A direct way to serve and to truly make a global difference in lives
- An offer of friendship, guidance, advocacy, and/or financial assistance or donations
- A cross-cultural adventure right here at home!

Welcome Team's Activities are NOT:

- Adoption – the goal is early self-sufficiency
- A legal commitment
- Assimilation, or an effort to make the refugee “just like us”
- An attempt to convert the refugees to the Welcome Team's religion

Why are Welcome Teams important?

For the refugee...

- Welcome Teams introduce refugees to U.S. culture and American life
- Welcome Teams open opportunities and create pathways that connect the newcomer to their new community
- Welcome Teams act as advocates to help make sure refugees aren't taken advantage of (housing, jobs, etc.)
- Welcome Teams are friends who offer support and encouragement
- Welcome Teams offer information and advice
- Welcome Teams help refugees re-imagine their lives and rebuild hope

For the Welcome Team...

- Refugee ministry enlivens a church/group by bringing cross-cultural missions to the doorstep
- It can give a church/group new focus
- It provides hands-on work for people to get involved
- It can enhance church/group cohesion and sense of purpose
- People see that they really can make a difference
- It helps a congregation/group think beyond themselves
- It provides an opportunity to learn about new religions and cultures.

Welcoming Refugees – The Basics

PRE-ARRIVAL:

- **Form a Welcome Team** by gathering volunteers who have a heart for outreach and community service. Choose a Welcome Team Leader. Organize the team to tackle duties effectively.
- **Research & Publicity:** Learn about the refugees' home country and culture. Inform the congregation or civic group of the work of the welcome team and provide education regarding refugee resettlement, the refugees' cultural background, and welcoming the newcomers to the community.
- **Fundraising:** Determine funds that may be necessary (e.g. initial groceries, rent and utilities, clothing, furniture, etc.) and set a budget. Figure out where the funds will come from. Decide if and when to hold fundraisers or donation drives. It is good to have a small fund for things that the refugees may need along the way that you want to provide.
- **Housing & Furnishings:** Advertise the need for furniture and household items. Arrange for collection and storage. Provide any leads for safe, affordable housing to IRIS. When refugee family arrival date is received, deliver furniture and set up apartment. IRIS pays the rent with their resettlement money for a few months, until they begin working.
- **Food:** The day of arrival (or the day before), take the IRIS food list and purchase food so it is fresh. This food should last for about the first week or two. Deliver it to the apartment. Arrange for someone from the team to prepare a chicken and rice dinner for the day of arrival.

ARRIVAL:

- Team members accompany IRIS case management staff to **greet the family at the airport**, and **transport them to their apartment**. Staff will provide immediate, brief home **orientation**, including emergency information.



WELCOMING REFUGEES
THROUGH ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

Welcoming Refugees – The Basics

POST-ARRIVAL: GETTING SETTLED IN LOS ANGELES

- **Basic Needs:** In the first few days, take the family shopping for food and needed new items such as underwear, socks, and shoes. Help them find new or donated clothing or take them thrift store shopping. If funds allow, buy them a phone.
- **Transportation:** Have team members who are occasionally available to take the refugees to some appointments, grocery shopping, to the bank, to English classes, especially during the first few months. Help them learn to ride the city bus.
- **English Language:** Find someone from the team or congregation/group to tutor the refugees in English. IRIS will assist in enrolling them in ESL classes.
- **Education for Children:** IRIS will assist in enrolling children in public school. Recruit a team member to be their homework tutor and visit at weekly or as often as possible to help them learn English and complete schoolwork.
- **Cultural Orientation & Social Adjustment:** Invite them to **activities** hosted by the church/group and perhaps plan a welcome reception for the refugees (you may *invite* them to church, but always respect their own faith). Include them in **social and cultural outings** such as picnics, baseball games, children's museums, holiday events, etc. Designate at least 1 or 2 team members to be Mentors who visit the refugees weekly, helping them learn about the community and American culture .
- **Employment:** Employable adults will be enrolled in a Refugee Employment Agency (REP). The REP office will help find employment for the refugees, but any connections to potential employers who might hire refugees are always appreciated. *Network for job opportunities with the members of your church/group.*

Financial Needs & Budgeting

Establish a budget for co-sponsorship and begin raising funds

- IRIS provides \$1,125 per refugee
- Refugees also receive cash assistance, food stamps and medical
- Example of monthly budget items and approximate costs:
 - Rent - \$1,000 - \$1,350 (1 bdrm), \$1,450 - \$1,600 (2 bdrm)
 - Housing deposit & fees- \$1,000 - \$1600
 - Utilities - \$150-250
 - Initial food (until food stamps are activated) - \$150-300
 - Phone - \$50-100
 - Transportation (bus pass (\$100), bicycle with lock) - \$100
 - Miscellaneous (toiletries, underwear, socks, etc.) - \$150-200
- IRIS' estimated fundraising need for a family of 4 is about \$6,000 -\$7,000

Cash Assistance:

- For singles: Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)
 - Will last for 8 months or until obtain F/T employment
- For families: CalWORKs
 - Will last for up to 4 years
- *Notes: 1) must have less than \$2,000 in bank; 2) If they buy a car, it must be less than \$4650 to not affect their benefits*

CalFRESH/Food Stamps



1 person = \$194
2 people = \$357
3 people = \$511
4 people = \$649
5 people = \$771

Assistance Unit Size	Maximum Aid Payment Non-Exempt
1	\$350
2	\$569
3	\$704
4	\$840
5	\$954
6	\$1,072
7	\$1,178
8	\$1,283
9	\$1,387
10 or more	\$1,490

Self Sufficiency

The Welcome Team's overarching task is to empower the refugee family to take care of their own affairs. This goal will not be reached (by you or by them) if you are doing too much for them.

- It is essential to maintain realistic expectations of what you can do for the refugee family. They will always have unmet needs. As the **main goal of Welcome Teams is to empower the refugee family to do things on their own**, you should expect a successful Welcome Team experience to be relatively short.
- Within 3-6 months, if your team has done its job well, the family should be able to shop, use public transportation, attend classes, and work on their own.

Tips for Teaching Self-Sufficiency

Start early

Dependency is learned quickly when refugees are handed everything within the first few months. It becomes easy and natural for them to call someone from the Welcome Team, another volunteer, or agency to take them where they need to go and to handle their business rather than putting in the effort to do it on their own. With each appointment, teach the family what you are doing so that they are one step closer to doing it independently next time.

Tips for Teaching Self-Sufficiency

Set goals

Ask each member of the family what they would like to learn to do. Break down their goals into action steps that will help them achieve the goal. Set a time limit. Sign the goal sheet. When someone's goal is reached, congratulate that person and mark it on the calendar. When the entire family reaches their goals, celebrate and do something fun! Then start the process all over again!

Tips for Teaching Self-Sufficiency

Determine Where They Are Lacking Self- Sufficiency

Talk to the family to see where they feel they are not yet comfortable doing something independently. Also, you might notice a pattern of dependency in certain areas. For example, you might realize that the family always calls you when they have a renewal application for food stamps due, or when there is a problem with their food stamps. Tell the family you would like to help them learn about the DPSS office.

Examples of Common Dependencies:

- Paying bills (rent, electricity, water, travel loan, car payment, insurance)
- Making and keeping medical appointments
- Renewal appointments at DPSS (Cash Assistance, food stamps, Medi-cal)
- Transportation
- Attending ESL classes
- Communicating with their employer
- Taking and picking up children from school and/or childcare
- Reporting maintenance issues to the landlord

Setting Boundaries

It is okay to say “no.”

At some point, the family will ask you to do something that even they know is beyond your initial commitment. Even if the need is evident, you need to be okay with saying “no,” both for your own self-care and for the refugees

It is okay to say “I’ll get back to you on that.”

No individual member of the team should make above-and-beyond commitments without first consulting the welcome team.

Do not accept money from or loan money to the refugee family.

Financial Contributions should be made to IRIS

Do not engage in sexual or romantic relationships

Refer family members to medical professionals.

Do not get in the habit of answering phone calls late at night

IRIS' Expectations of Welcome Teams

- Background Checks
- Confidentiality
- Cultural sensitivity and refugee status
- Media
- Children
- Driving and accidents
- Reporting
- Commitment

Questions to think about....

- Why do I want to volunteer with refugees?
- What do I expect the refugee family's lives to be like at the end of our time together?
- How much time can I commit to the team?
- How will I know that we are making a difference?
- Am I prepared to say “no” to the family when I need to?
- When will I feel that I am no longer needed as a volunteer in the refugees' lives?

Q&A



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