

Element 3: Community awareness and promotion	Resources	Audience	Impact
3a. Awareness about refugees in community	UNHCR poster ; display/promote refugee cultural heritage materials ; display/promote collections on refugees ; display/promote materials in refugee languages ; multicultural celebrations calendar	all	Sensitize and educate the community about refugees and their issues
3b. Awareness about refugees within library	Training ; community conversations with refugees	Library staff, trustees, volunteers (stakeholders)	Sensitize and educate library staff and volunteers about refugees and their issues
3c. Dialogue with and about refugees and experiences	Book discussions (e.g., <i>Funny in Farsi</i> ) ; English conversation circles	All, or select groups	Person to person understanding and relationship building
3d. Refugee culture and contributions (assets)	Panels ; book discussions; off-site events ; oral history and digital archiving ; exhibits	All, or select groups	Understanding and value of refugees to the community
3e. World Refugee Day	UNHCR poster, book display ; film presentation, panel ; participate in refugee community events	All	Understand the refugee experience and refugee crises
Element 4: Services	Resources	Audience	Impact
4a. Cultural programming	Book clubs ; movie night, human library ; off-site events ; digital resources and programming	All, or select groups	Enhance cultural respect, knowledge and inclusion; enrich identity
4b. Access to world language materials	Multimedia materials ; consult EMIERT ; ethnic LIS associations ; refugee organizations ; interlibrary loan ; digital newspapers ; donations from embassies	All	Heritage language preservation; learning new language
4c. English language learning	Collections, conversation circles ; tutoring programs ; Refugee Center Online ; intergenerational programs ; digital resources and programming	All, or select groups	Enhance English fluency; community integration; individual empowerment and confidence
4d. Refugee resettlement services and resources	Refugee services and resources database	All, or select groups	Social connectivity; individual and family support; complementary refugee supports
4e. Library membership	Off-site campaign ; attend Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) ; community festivals ; national library card sign-up month	All	Lifelong learning; third place; social cohesion; new opportunities; resource access
4f. Inter and intra-networking	Meeting space ; tours; public service orientations ; tailored book display	All, or select groups	Relationship building; building community connections
4g. Citizenship	Classes ; partner with local nonprofit citizenship ; citizen corner ; BIA (Board of Immigration Appeals) accredited ; practice citizenship tests online	Adult refugees eligible for citizenship	Full civic integration
4h. Know your rights	Legal information resources ; partner with refugee resettlement agency ; immigrant and refugee rights organizations	All	Reduce vulnerability

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# Project Welcome Guide: Public Libraries Serving Refugees

ALA Diversity and Outreach Fair

June 24, 2017

Special Events and Exhibits Hall

McCormick Place Convention Center

[publish.illinois.edu/projectwelcome](http://publish.illinois.edu/projectwelcome)

## Introduction

Project Welcome's integrated service approach engages refugees and non-refugees, is multilingual, works with community engagement librarians, shares information with relevant community organizations using email, and diverse and appropriate media, and is inclusive and interactive/engaging. It is made up of four areas:

1. Become knowledgeable.
2. Collaborate and partner.
3. Create community awareness, including learning about refugees.
4. Provide services.

## Background

Libraries in the United States (US) serve as a center point in the community, offering welcoming spaces and services to the newest members of society. Libraries support the successful resettlement and integration of refugees into all communities. Libraries serve both the universal and unique needs of their communities by offering tailored services, resources and lifelong learning opportunities.

The American Library Association (ALA) Policy (2006-2007 CD#20.2) recognizes America's immigrants as strong and valuable members of the social fabric of this nation, and the ALA Bill of Rights states that a person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background or views. Libraries are inclusive and endeavor to transform refugee lives.

## Refugees Are an Asset to Our Communities

**WHO:** Refugees come to the US out of a necessity, escaping oppression and persecution, to rebuild their

lives and are eager to contribute to their new community. Refugees are an asset in the US, providing cultural richness and are tax-paying community members. Refugees enrich the social, cultural and economic fabric of

society. In a refugee report on Franklin County, Ohio, it was discovered that the workforce participation rate is 81.8%; the national participation rate is 62%.<sup>1</sup>

"A refugee is defined by the US Immigration and Nationality Act as any person outside his or her country who has a 'well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.'"<sup>2</sup> Displaced persons hoping to resettle in the US as refugees can be referred by the office of the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) UN Refugee Agency, or petition directly outside or inside the US.

While their refugee status is under review, displaced persons are considered asylum seekers. The term refugee is used to refer to a person who has received this official classification, and an asylum seeker (or asylee) refers to a displaced person who has applied for asylum from within the US and is under review. For reasons of policy, process and scope, there is a distinction between the terms refugees and asylum seekers, but for reference purpose in this Guide, the term "refugee" will be used for both groups of people.

**WHEN:** Historically, the US has welcomed refugees since before World War II and has admitted 400,000

displaced Europeans after the Displaced Persons Act of 1948.<sup>3</sup> Later laws were created to admit persons fleeing Communist regimes, such as in Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, Korea, China and Cuba. Since 1975, the US has welcomed over 3 million refugees,<sup>4</sup> approximately half originating from Asia.

**WHERE:** The US government resettles refugees in almost every state. The states that have resettled the

most include California, Texas, Michigan, Washington, and New York.<sup>4</sup> To learn more about refugees in your area, contact your local state refugee coordinator: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/orr-funded-programs-key-contacts>. Also consider searching this Refugee Processing Center Directory for a local resettlement agency near you: <https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/SIVs/Public%20Affiliate%20Directory.pdf>.

### Project Welcome Guide: Public Libraries Serving Refugees

The Project Welcome Guide provides ideas and guides public libraries to serve refugees and inform all community members on issues affecting refugees. The Guide is for all public library staff and stakeholders, and other libraries can be informed by it. Libraries don't need to act alone and can better serve and understand the needs of refugees by working with refugee resettlement agencies, ethnic library associations and refugee community members.

An inclusive and sustainable approach is the cornerstone of the Project Welcome Guide; therefore, library services for refugees do not need to be developed separately, but are sensitive to refugee needs. They are core rather than add-on services. For example, services for newcomers and immigrants address many of the needs of refugees. As needed, unique programs may be tailored to refugee needs, such as overcoming trauma.

### Endnotes

1. "Impact of Refugees on Central Ohio," US Together, Community Refugee & Immigration Services, World Relief Columbus, and the City of Columbus, 2015, [http://ustogether.us/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/IMPACT-OF-REFUGEES-ON-CENTRAL-OHIO\\_2015SP.pdf](http://ustogether.us/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/IMPACT-OF-REFUGEES-ON-CENTRAL-OHIO_2015SP.pdf).
2. "Immigration," National Conference of State Legislatures, <http://www.ncsl.org/research/immigration/the-u-s-refugee-resettlement-program-a-primer-forpolicymakers.aspx#2>.
3. "History of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program," Refugee Council USA, <http://www.rcusa.org/history/>.
4. "Refugee Resettlement Facts," UNHCR, 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/us-refugee-resettlement-facts.html>.

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Element 1: Knowledge about refugees	Resources	Audience	Impact
1a. National refugee arrival trends	National refugee resettlement agencies ; US Government Agencies	Library staff	Increase knowledge/awareness; capacity to serve
1b. Local refugee arrival trends	Local refugee resettlement agency	Library staff	Capacity to serve; build partnerships
1c. In-depth knowledge about specific refugee populations impacting library community	Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange	Library staff	Raise awareness within community; capacity to serve
1d. Understanding adjustment phases ("5 stages of grief")	International Rescue Committee	Library staff	Increased empathy; capacity to serve; more effective interactions
Element 2: Engagement/partnerships	Resources	Audience	Impact
2a. Engaging with local resettlement agencies	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) list of affiliates ; one-page on initial engagement available	Community engagement librarian/contact person	Increased community engagement; enhancement of services for refugees; increased partnerships
2b. Direct service providers such as schools, health clinics, social services	Local resettlement agency ; tip sheet available	Community engagement librarian/contact person	Increased community engagement; enhancement of services for refugees; increased partnerships
2c. Non-direct service providers such as art museum, community service organizations	Local refugee service community meetings ; tip sheet of examples available ; community asset mapping	Community engagement librarian/contact person	Increased community engagement; enhancement of services for refugees; increased partnerships
2d. Mutual assistance associations/ethnic community-based organizations	Explanation sheet (what it is and how to find organizations) available	Community engagement librarian/contact person	Increased community engagement; enhancement of services for refugees ; increased partnerships
2e. Focus groups with refugees and asylum seekers	One-page tip sheet (what is a focus group, how to conduct, sample questions) available	Community engagement librarian/contact person in partnership with resettlement agencies and refugee leaders	Increased community engagement; enhancement of services for refugees