

They don't like us. Our religion is different. They bomb our churches and put us in prison.



Live in a place where people are persecuted because of their race, religion, ethnic affiliation, social group or political belief. Belong to one of these groups.



Flee your country when your life is threatened. Take only your immediate family members and the clothes you are wearing.

Will we get there safely? Will they let us in? What if they catch us? Will we be tortured?



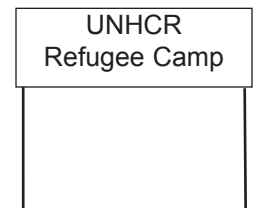
Find your way to the safety of a neighboring country.

UNHCR Application
Name _____
Address _____
Reason for leaving _____

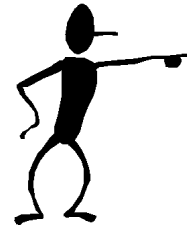
Apply to the United Nations High Commissioner (UNHCR) for Refugees for protection.

If the United Nations recognizes your need for protection, you may be given a card and allowed to live in a refugee camp. You may not even be safe there, especially if you are a woman or child.

I don't like it here. There are too many people and we don't get enough food.



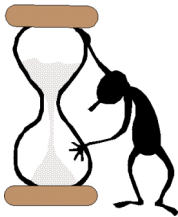
Ask UNHCR to refer you to the nearest Processing Post which can be a Joint Voluntary Agency (JVA) or U.S. Embassy.



Where is the Embassy? Where is the JVA? Will they let me in? I'm scared!

Assemble necessary documents.

I've been here six months and there is nothing to do. There isn't enough food and it tastes awful. Plus we don't get medical care.



WAIT

Assemble more documents.

This is really getting to be tedious. I have been here two years and my kids haven't been in school this whole time.



WAIT AGAIN

I'm so scared! What if they say no? Where will I go? What will become of me?



Interview with the United States government official. Convince that person that you should have refugee status.

I can't go home. They will kill me! And there is no life for me in this country.



If the answer is NO, you have other options.

- * Return home
- * Stay where you are
- * Try another country

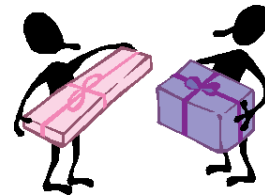
If the answer is YES, your application becomes a “case” and is assigned to an agency.



The agency will find a sponsor. If you have relatives who will help, they will sponsor you and you become an “anchor” case. If not, you are a “free” case and a church or civic group will be your sponsor.

In either instance, the prospective sponsor promises to do certain things to help you once you come to the United States.

Now let's see...who can help with housing?
How about clothing, food...



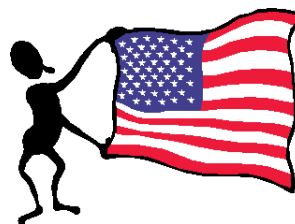
Again? I have spent half my life waiting!



- ✓ Meet new family at the airport.
- ✓ Provide clean, furnished housing for at least a month.
- ✓ Provide food or food allowance for at least a month.
- ✓ Provide health check-up within first 30 days.
- ✓ Provide any necessary clothing.
- ✓ Apply for Social Security Cards.
- ✓ Enroll children in public schools.
- ✓ Help adults learn English.
- ✓ Help employable adults become job ready and find employment.
- ✓ Maintain contact with LIRS.

YOU WAIT

I'm so excited!
I'm really here!



Finally, the time comes for you to travel to the United States!

If you have additional questions about co-sponsorship or how your church can become more involved in the LSS refugee resettlement efforts, please call Ako Hasegawa at: (414) 325-3063.

Who are refugees?

Refugees are people who flee political, religious or racial persecution seeking safety and freedom in a new land. They must leave homes, possessions, friends and country; many are forced to leave family as well. The flight to a new land is often fraught with fear, uncertainty and pain. Every refugee must endure the trauma of starting a new life.

What refugee populations need your help today?

Since 1975 Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan has resettled scores of refugees from Southeast Asia, Cuba, Africa, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. They continue to arrive, though the numbers may fluctuate from year to year depending on overseas political events and U.S. government decisions. This year LSS/Wisconsin will be welcoming refugees from regions as diverse as Afghanistan, Burma, Georgia (Meskhetian Turks), Laos (Hmong), Liberia, and Somalia. For those without relatives in the United States, their only hope is congregational or group co-sponsorship.

The United States is not the only country resettling refugees. Many other countries are also participating in this humanitarian action. In fact, several other countries have resettled more refugees per capita than the U.S.

What commitment do co-sponsors of refugees make?

We look for co-sponsors to assist refugees because we believe that refugees with full sponsors do better in their resettlement than those that have only the agency to help. Local churches or groups can provide much more than can otherwise be offered to the refugees - the most important of which is the human hand of kindness. Beyond the goods and services that co-sponsors provide, co-sponsors often serve as a “lifeline” for refugees, helping them with advocacy, tutoring them in English and providing friendship.

As a co-sponsor, you would work with the LSS refugee resettlement office to determine what exactly needs to be done. The basic tasks involved in getting a family resettled may vary depending on the size and needs of the family, the nature of the local community and local resources available.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) is our “umbrella” organization. LIRS works with refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented persons and immigrants in advocacy on their behalf, resettlement in U.S. communities, foster care, help for community-based asylum projects and counseling in immigration. For its resettlement work, LIRS has a contract with the federal government and works through local Lutheran agencies to ensure that basic services are provided to refugees within their first few months here.

When you agree to co-sponsor a refugee, you are promising to do your best to provide a gracious welcome and a good start for a family. LIRS and our agency will provide you with initial orientation, presentations and written materials, and assign your refugee family a caseworker whom you can call for assistance.

What steps should we take when considering co-sponsorship?

Meet with our agency

The first step in determining if co-sponsorship is for you is to contact our agency. A staff member will explain more fully what co-sponsorship entails. We may also share information about a particular family that needs co-sponsorship.

You can request that we do a presentation about refugees at your church service, adult forum or committee meeting. Individual families are encouraged to learn about ways they can contribute, such as befriending a family, housing them for a week or two, donating household items and assisting with transportation.

Consider these methods

There are several courses of action that a congregation can follow in refugee co-sponsorship. Your congregation can co-sponsor a family on its own, or in cooperation with one or more nearby congregations. You can also sponsor jointly with other denominations in the community, or with civic groups such as a Kiwanis or Woman's Club. Remember that refugee resettlement needs many people working together. It usually takes a nucleus of eight to twelve people to successfully co-sponsor a family

Organize your co-sponsorship efforts

Churches and community groups have used a variety of successful structures for co-sponsorship. Some organize full committees for each of the resettlement tasks, such as health, education and housing. In many cases, a few families or a core group of eight to twelve people share the major tasks according to the strengths and interests of the individuals.

Raise Awareness

Organizing pre-co-sponsorship activities such as having refugee speakers or special ethnic dinners is often a great way to get others in your church or organization interested and involved in refugee resettlement. Personal contact with refugees is often the most compelling way to arouse interest and compassion. Written material and bulletin inserts or flyers can also raise awareness. Call current churches that are co-sponsoring and inquire about their experiences with the refugees. Also, feel free to call our office for other suggestions.

How long does the responsibility of co-sponsorship last?

Co-sponsorship is a supportive commitment to assist in the resettlement of a refugee family. The goal is to help a family become self-supporting, contributing members of the community as quickly as possible. You should be prepared to assume financial responsibility for your refugee family for a minimum of four to eight weeks. A mentor relationship will continue for a total of six months. Some families become self-sufficient much sooner, and some need help for up to a year. Self-sufficiency is the primary goal of the resettlement program. Co-sponsoring churches should work to set short-term and long-term goals with their families to meet self-sufficiency.

Also, it is not uncommon for some families to join relatives living in other states or cities, or to be in closer proximity to people from their homeland. For these families, a co-sponsor's support and friendship may be needed for only a short time. For others, a friendship may develop that will last a long time.

What do co-sponsors do before the family arrives?

The length of time before arrival varies greatly depending upon the country where the family is processed for refugee resettlement and how far along they are in processing. Also, with the movement of people, things can go wrong. Several factors such as illness, pregnancy, conflict overseas or other unforeseen circumstances cause arrival delays. For this reason, final plans on financial commitments for housing, food or employment should be delayed until actual notification of arrival.

Orientation

Once you have committed to co-sponsoring a particular family, schedule a pre-arrival orientation with the Community Resource/Sponsor Developer. At this meeting, your roles and co-sponsorship responsibilities will be clarified. You will have an opportunity to discuss concerns and share ideas.

Interpreter

Often at least one person in the refugee family speaks English, with varying degrees of fluency. Even so, we prefer that you use an interpreter to get across the important points and to navigate through community agencies for employment, health, and education. Our caseworkers can help you find an interpreter. Also, please share with us if you find other interpretation resources in your community.

Furniture, household goods and clothing

You can begin to gather furniture, household goods and clothing. This is usually the easiest part for many churches or group co-sponsors. The items needed are basic and will vary according to the size and ages of the refugee family members. Generally, refugees need beds and bedding, dressers, a kitchen table and chairs, a couch, chairs, coffee table, lamps, a set of dishes and utensils, cookware, bathroom items and cleaning supplies. Use the basic needs checklist at the back of the co-sponsor folder to meet minimum requirements.

Housing

You can look for housing, but we advise you to **not** rent anything in advance. Sometimes there are delays, which can cause problems if you have signed a lease or paid a security deposit. But think about where the family will stay when they first come. Consider having them stay with an American family for a short period of time until permanent housing is available. The strongest bonds of friendship are often formed during this period. Since rent is the major cost of co-sponsorship, perhaps a member of your congregation has rental property and would be willing to donate one month or waive the security deposit. Consider that some landlords may give the first month's rent free during certain months of the year.

Arrival Information

Though you are anxious about the family's arrival, we sometimes do not know much about arrivals until one or two weeks before the family is scheduled to come, at which time we are given the expected arrival date. There are sometimes last minute medical holds or family problems that will delay a case. Because we work with so many people, we cannot call overseas to check on individual cases unless there is some emergency. As soon as we know the flight and time of the family's arrival, we will notify your committee.

When LSS receives a family, you may be provided with biographical information that includes family structure, ages and birth dates of family members, occupations, education levels, and language abilities. If there is significant medical information, that will be included in the biographical information forms. Unfortunately the information we get is sparse, but we are happy to share everything we know about the family.

What do co-sponsors do for arrival?

Welcome the family at the airport

This is often a highlight for co-sponsors and refugees alike. Coming to a new country is a very significant and emotional experience for many refugees. When the committee meets at the airport to welcome their new family, you will have the opportunity to meet with the caseworker. It is important to understand that most families will have traveled for several days and will be exhausted upon arrival. Please try to keep any welcoming activities to a minimum until families have had the chance to rest and readjust to new time zones and climates. The number of people at the airport should be limited to four or five individuals (in addition to interpreters, if necessary) who will transport the family to living quarters.

At this time you will also make arrangements with the caseworker to have an arrival orientation with the family. This orientation will most likely occur the next day. It is important that at this orientation, there is at least one member of the church committee present so that important details are not overlooked.

Food

The family will need to have food for their first day here. The co-sponsor will likely be responsible for supplying food for the first 30 days or until the refugee has some means of income. Ask us for suggestions on the type of foods you should buy. Although there should be nutritious and “ready to eat” food available upon arrival, it is important that you take your family to the supermarket during the first day, so that they may get a glimpse of items available. You may also want to consider providing the family with gift certificates to a nearby store, so that they can make their own selections and understand how much certain items cost.

What do co-sponsors do after arrival?

The three major areas of responsibility are 1) housing, 2) “core services” and 3) employment. Our community resource/sponsor developer and caseworker will guide, advise and make suggestions. You are not only encouraged, but expected, to communicate regularly with the caseworker during this time. Do not reinvent the wheel – almost every situation has come up at least once before. Also, the agency is accountable to the federal government through periodic reports and needs to know what has been accomplished.

The first step is to set up the refugees’ new home. This includes finding appropriate housing and making sure that they have at least all the needed furniture and basic household items listed on the basic needs checklist.

The second, called the “core services,” involves scheduling (and transporting) a number of appointments with local services such as the doctor, the school, the Social Security office and Human Services.

The third is helping families determine an appropriate plan for employment and education that will lead toward independence. In many cases, co-sponsors continue their friendship and connection with the family for a long time. However, the official co-sponsorship commitment is six months.

Orientation

Within one to three days, schedule an orientation with the family’s caseworker. There you will clarify roles and expectations. Within 24-hours of arrival, Lutheran Social Services will arrange to check that basic needs are being met.

Social Security Numbers

The family will need to get social security numbers to apply for other assistance and services. Be sure to bring their I-94 (alien) cards, which are important documents that identify them as refugees who have work authorization in the U.S.

Financial Assistance

Refugees usually enter this country with little or no money of their own. They need financial assistance until they can reach the goal of self-sufficiency. The cost of co-sponsorship can be minimal, depending on the size of the family, their employment potential and the local community's cost of living. This cost can be kept low when donations of goods and services are high.

Refugees, like other Americans, may apply for assistance through human service agencies. However, it is in the refugee family's best interests to become self-sufficient as soon as possible. Therefore, LIRS's goal is to equip refugees to seek early employment. When the refugee family arrives, LSS provides the families with a one-time grant to help with some of the costs involved in resettlement. In addition, refugee families should be given a minimal amount of cash for pocket money at their arrival.

Housing

Housing is often the most important decision that is made by the co-sponsor. It must be safe, clean and close to public transportation. It also needs to be **affordable** to a family whose income may be limited. Keep in mind that most refugees will find entry-level employment with a low wage. It is important to consider how many adults in the family are employable to determine how much rent they can afford. After the family becomes self-sufficient, they are free to look for another apartment on their own.

We strongly suggest that you do not sign a lease until the family arrives, and make sure they understand the legal implications of the lease. It is important to involve the refugees in this important decision.

Medical Screening

All refugees have a U.S. Public Health screening before departure. It is not a comprehensive physical examination, but it generally includes a VDRL blood test, chest x-ray for tuberculosis, and vaccinations.

An appointment should be made for the family members within the first ten days after arrival. Appointments may include TB skin tests, and vaccinations, but this depends on the requirements of the county in which the family lives. It may be necessary to schedule follow-up appointments as well. If families require additional medical care, they can do so through their medical benefits (title 19).

Employment Plan

Employment and cash assistance benefits are very important topics for refugees and co-sponsors. The goal of the LSS Refugee Resettlement Program is to help people learn to support themselves. There is a wide range of skill and English levels that refugees bring, so each family is different. We believe that refugees benefit greatly from working, not only by getting the experience but also because it helps them to learn English faster.

The co-sponsor's job is to work cooperatively with the refugees and the LSS caseworker to develop a reasonable employment plan. The Department of State expects refugee families to

become self-sufficient through employment. For refugee families arriving in the United States, all adults between the ages of 18 and 64 are considered employable. Women with children under the age of one year are not required to work. For children over the age of one, there are opportunities to apply for child-care assistance through the W2 program.

For refugees who are deemed employable, assist them in finding suitable work or employment programs. Your refugee's caseworker may enroll your refugee family in the Matching Grant Program in order to promote early self-sufficiency through intensive job development case management. In the event that a job is harder to find for the refugee, *short-term* assistance (food stamps and medical) is available to help them through the early days until wages and job insurance kick in.

School

Children are enrolled in schools by calling the local school district. Adults should have access to an English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) program or tutoring by the co-sponsor. When calling the school district, ask about evaluations and enrollment information. Sometimes, schools have specific ESL courses for new students. Also, Headstart offers school readiness programs for children ages three to five.

What if problems arise after the refugees arrive?

Often difficulties and misunderstanding may arise due to an obvious English language barrier that exists for many refugees. It is helpful to seek out the services of someone who can speak the refugee's language. Your LSS Case Manager will provide you with names of others in the community who can speak your refugee's language and can provide occasional interpretation services. Very often, misunderstandings arise due to cross-cultural differences. For example, some refugees may not feel comfortable expressing their dislike or saying "No." Please be aware that the refugee may be viewing the situation from a very different vantage point.

Cultural differences often become apparent surrounding specific areas such as childcare, hygiene, food preparation and storage, as well as, social etiquette. To prepare yourself, you can make use of resources describing the refugee's country and culture. Often, public libraries have children's books and adult non-fiction books describing ethnic groups and the history of specific countries. LIRS will provide printed materials regarding the refugee's culture. Also, contacting other co-sponsors who have resettled the same ethnic group offers insight and lessens the likelihood of misunderstandings. During the initial resettlement period, please exercise patience and take into consideration the refugee's recent hardships and trauma.

Can refugees become American citizens?

Yes, refugees are eligible for citizenship after they have been in the United States for five years. They follow the same procedures as all other immigrants to this country.

Should we encourage the refugees to attend our church?

The decision to attend and participate in religious services must be the personal decision of the refugee. Some will attend to show their gratitude to the co-sponsors. Though many come from non-Christian traditions, they may choose to attend a Christian church when given a welcome without pressure. However, please be understanding of your refugee's religious beliefs. Non-Christian refugees may be uncomfortable entering your church. Please respect your refugee family's beliefs and individual comfort levels. If you would like to introduce your family to your church, please do so during a social hour or picnic. An interpreter should be present during this type of group activity to ensure clear communication.

What are the costs associated with co-sponsorship?

The largest cost you can expect will be for housing. There should be little dollar outlay beyond the cost of rent and security deposit. Donated furnishings, clothing, food and services make it possible to co-sponsor at minimal costs. Even this cost can be substantially reduced in situations where congregations own suitable facilities, or when members offer an apartment rent-free for an initial resettlement period. Depending on the refugee family's employability and family size, they may need some financial assistance for the first few months. Therefore, promoting self-sufficiency through employment should be one of your committee's top priorities.

Please remember: The bottom line of co-sponsorship is not money. It is the willing donation of time, talent, patience and love.

The United States government provides a monetary grant for each refugee resettled in this country. This grant finances the resettlement operation of the LIRS national and field offices, including the refugee program in Wisconsin. A portion of the grant is passed through to refugees or their co-sponsors.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) provides an interest-free loan to cover refugee travel costs to the United States. After refugees are settled, arrangements are made through LIRS for the money to be paid back by the refugees. As a co-sponsor, you are not responsible for this loan. It is important that refugee families learn to include paying their loan by planning for it in their monthly budgets. By paying this loan, families can attain a good credit rating.

Please contact Ben York at (414) 325-3164 for more information or if you have any questions about becoming a co-sponsor.

1. Form a Refugee Task Force of eight to 12 people who mentor and co-sponsor a refugee family.
2. Teach Sunday School or Adult Education classes about refugee ministry and put together LIRS Welcome to America Backpacks, Welcome Boxes or Diaper Bag packs. *See page 13 for more information.*
3. Have a fundraiser or church collection of needed supplies for newly arrived refugee families. Greatest needs are: digital baby thermometers, fire extinguishers (all purpose – with a gauge), car seats (new) and disposable diapers (all sizes needed).
4. Invite a refugee speaker or LIRS/LSS representative to speak at your services and take a special collection for the Refugee Basic Needs Fund.
5. Invite a LIRS/LSS representative to sell House Pins at your church service to raise money for the Refugee Basic Needs Fund.
6. Encourage families in your congregation to volunteer one hour a week with LSS to mentor refugees in their community who do not have co-sponsors.
7. Speak with local businesses and companies about the advantages of hiring recently arrived refugees.
8. Request that members consider donating their used cars to refugees.
9. Set up an advocacy table at your church service. Ask people to sign letters to President Bush, encouraging him to reaffirm the United States' commitment to rescuing refugees from around the world.
10. If space is available (check with LIRS/LSS representative), organize a furniture drive for refugees with your youth ministry or social concerns committee.

If you have additional questions about co-sponsorship or how your church can become more involved in the LSS refugee resettlement efforts, please call Natasa Torbica at: (414) 325-3186.

Please pack each box **separately** and **label** it “Kitchen,” “Bathroom,” “Bed Box,” or “Cleaning Kit.” You may deliver the boxes to our Milwaukee office, and we will give them to refugees as needed.

Many of the items listed will need to be new. You may include used items IF they are in **good condition**.

KITCHEN WELCOME BOX

Tall wastebasket

Add:

4 plates
4 cups
4 glasses
4 forks
4 spoons
4 knives
4 soup bowls
2 cooking pots
1 frying pan
1 can opener
1 paring knife
1 carving knife
1 spatula
3 plastic containers
1 stove top teapot
2 pot holders
1 tablecloth
1 pkg. Paper napkins
2 dish towels
2 dishrags
1 dish soap
1 bar hand soap
1 large stew pot w/cover
1 scrub brush
1 pkg. Tall garbage bags

BED WELCOME BOX

Plastic bag

Add:

2 double sheets
1 blanket
1 quilt or bedspread
2 pillows
2 pillowcases

for singles:

1 pillow
1 pillow case
1 blanket
1 bedspread
1 set single sheets

CLEANING KIT

Bucket

Add:

1 Broom
1 Dustpan
2 rags
1 pkg. Sponges
1 scrub brush
1 White vinegar
1 Non-toxic soap
1 Baking soda

BATHROOM WELCOME BOX

Medium laundry basket

Add:

4 bath towels
2 hand towels
4 face cloths
4 toilet paper
2 bars soap
4 toothbrushes
1 tube toothpaste
1 deodorant
1 bottle shampoo
1 disposable razor
1 can cleanser
1 thermometer (digital)
1 laundry soap

ESSENTIAL FURNITURE

Double beds
Single beds
Kitchen table & chairs
Sofas
Chairs
Lamps
Vacuum cleaners
Dressers

**To deliver furniture, Welcome Boxes and all other items, contact:
Ben York at (414) 325-3164**

FOOD BASKET ITEMS

STAPLES

Flour
Sugar
Rice (5 or 10 lb. Bag)
Salt
Red Pepper
Black Pepper
Cooking Oil
Peanut Butter
Tomato Paste

FRESH PRODUCE

Potatoes (10 lb. Bag)
Onion (2 lb. Bag)
Cabbage
Hot Peppers
Carrots
Assorted Fruits

BEVERAGES

1 Box of Tea Bags
1 Jar of Instant Coffee
Assorted Juice

DIAPER BAGS

When refugees come to the United States they arrive with no money, no food, no home, and very few possessions. Many have small children and no means by which to provide items necessary in our culture for child care.

You can help these refugee parents by providing a “Diaper Bag.” Your gift will provide the items needed for baby care and hygiene. Your support during a refugee’s first week in our community greatly facilitates their transition and acculturation.

The following items should be included in a diaper bag:

- 1 package of disposable diapers*
- 1 box of baby wipes
- 1 tube baby ointment
- 1 digital thermometer (with Celsius)
- 1 small box baby detergent
- 2 baby bottles
- 3 extra nipples
- 1 bib
- 1 bar baby soap
- 1 bottle baby shampoo
- 3 soft cloths
- 1 soft towel
- 1 baby toy (rattle)

* Diaper Bags can be made with small, medium, or large diapers. A variety of sizes are needed for children of different ages. Please label the bag with the appropriate size of diapers.

**To deliver Diaper Bags contact:
Ako Hasegawa (414) 325-3063**

SCHOOL PACKS

PRIMARY

Backpack

ADD:

6 pencils, 6 pens
1 eraser, ruler, scissors (5" point, metal)
white glue, box colored pencils,
3 folders with 2 pockets
1 pkg. wide-lined loose leaf paper
1 tablet 3/8" ruling
1 tablet 3/4" ruling
8 crayola markers
24 crayons

SECONDARY

Backpack

ADD:

6 pencils, 6 pens
1 3-ring binder
1 pkg. loose leaf paper
2 spiral notebooks
8 folders with pockets

WRITING PACK

1 pkg. lined paper
2 pens, 2 pencils
U.S. postage stamps
1 box envelopes
Airmail stickers

ENGLISH CLASS PACK

1 notebook or pack of lined paper
2 pens, 2 pencils
eraser
1 folder

Please use new items.
Please label each package

**To deliver school packs please contact:
Lutheran Social Services/Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Ako Hasegawa at (414) 325-3063.**