

Lutheran Social Services (LSS) Refugee Resettlement FAQ - updated 9.13.21*

What items are being collected by LSS right now?

- Personal and household kits. (Please see question below).
- Socks and underwear for men, women and children in all sizes. Please note: We are unable to accept any other clothing at this time.
- VISA gift cards and local grocery gift cards for use by refugee individuals and families.

Do you need hygiene kits or other items? If so, what does is needed?

There are various sets of items (or “kits”) that people can assemble. They include the following:

1. Toiletries kits: personal items such as shampoo, soap, toothpaste/toothbrushes, etc.
2. Kitchen kits: pots and pans, tableware, mixing bowls, etc.
3. Cleaning supplies kits: dish soap, laundry detergent, sponges, etc.
4. Linens kits: bath towels, sheets, blankets, etc.

In addition, various items such as fans, lamps, and furniture will be needed for each resettled family’s home. Please see the full list of items needed [HERE](#). Assembled kits are preferred to avoid the need for storage of single items. Coordination of collection for non-kit items (like furniture) is also preferred so furnishings can be delivered directly to the home. Often projects like these are great for groups.

When and where should I drop off items that have been collected?

We will have specific dates and times to drop off kits and home supplies in Milwaukee. More information will be forthcoming. Gift cards can be mailed to: LSS Refugee Resettlement, 6737 W. Washington St., Ste. 2275, West Allis, WI 53214.

What is refugee co-sponsorship and how can my group get involved?

We welcome churches and other community groups to co-sponsor refugees. Our goal is to resettle refugees into their permanent home as quickly as possible (which is different from being a temporary guest in someone else’s home). With the support of the LSS Refugee Resettlement team, co-sponsors can help with everything from furnishing apartments, checking in daily with the family to be sure needs are met and being a cultural navigator to help create a sense of belonging for newly arrived refugees. Full co-sponsorship includes providing financial assistance for the support of a refugee individual or family. (Please see question below.) Training is provided for co-sponsorship groups. If your organization is interested in co-sponsorship, please contact Sarah at sarah.halstead@lsswis.org. If you would like to join in with another group who is also co-sponsoring, let Sarah know of that interest.

How long does Co-Sponsorship last and what does it cost?

This can vary by individual case, but in general co-sponsorship is needed for six months to a year as self-sufficiency is achieved. The financial need is great; most Afghans who were recently evacuated will not be eligible for the benefits refugees normally receive until they get a job and can become self-sufficient. The subsidy provided by Co-Sponsors will help bridge that gap to provide for shelter and basic needs. The estimated cost for this is \$1,000/month. All funds for co-sponsorship must be donated directly to LSS and to be appropriately allocated, not paid directly to the family.

What volunteer support do you need? How can I help?

There are many ways that volunteers can help. Options include:

- Organizing a drive for supplies, collecting them and delivering them to LSS (see question above about drop off times and location).
- Assisting with grocery shopping for a new family.
- Providing transportation for a refugee until they can obtain their own.
- Serving as a cultural mentor to help a refugee acclimate to life in the US.
- Providing clerical assistance to the Refugee Resettlement staff.
- Helping to prepare a home before the arrival of the refugee family.
- Being part of the welcoming group at the airport when they arrive.
- Sharing pro bono professional services or specialized skills that could benefit the program.
- Writing letters or cards of welcome to new families.

These are just a few examples. Some roles require background checks, training and specific time commitment; others do not. Some may require local proximity to Milwaukee; others can be done from a distance.

While normally we have weeks of notice for the arrival of specific refugees, now we have just days. We are coordinating details and volunteer needs as quickly as possible. If you are interested in volunteering, send an email to Sarah at sarah.halstead@lsswis.org. You will be added to the volunteer list and contacted as LSS coordinates these efforts.

Can I help Refugees that are at Ft. McCoy right now?

You sure can! Refugees and evacuees are temporarily housed at Ft. McCoy before they come to resettlement programs like LSS. To learn how to assist them during this interim, visit the Ft. McCoy Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/FtMcCoy> or do a search for local media stories online that can provide the up to date information.

I have job openings available or I know of a company that is hiring. Could I offer a job to the people you are serving?

The LSS Refugee Resettlement team supports families and individuals through training and connections so they can become employed and self-supporting as quickly as possible. As soon as Afghans and other refugees receive employment authorization cards LSS Refugee Resettlement staff will work closely with them to find permanent stable employment. For some, it may take considerable time before they are authorized to work in the US and have the skills needed for employment. Please email refugee@lss.org for more information.

Where will the refugees be resettled?

The US Department of State requires that refugees be resettled within 100 miles of an affiliate Refugee Resettlement program, like Lutheran Social Services. There are currently six such affiliate programs in the State of Wisconsin. Refugees allocated to LSS will be resettled within 100 miles of its Refugee Resettlement Program office in Milwaukee. Jewish Social Services in Madison, World Relief Fox Valley in Appleton, Ethiopian Community Development Council in Wausau, International Institute of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, and Catholic Charities in Green Bay are the other affiliate programs in Wisconsin.

I want to foster an Afghan child who needs a home. How can I do this?

Any Afghan refugee children arriving without their parents are enrolled into the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program. For more information visit: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/refugees/urm>. That program does not have a provider site in Wisconsin. If this situation has opened your heart to serving children as a foster parent, please know that LSS has a continuing need for Foster Care homes for children and would welcome your questions about how to get involved. Please visit https://www.lsswis.org/service/children-and-families/foster-care/?parent_id=73 to learn more.

How many new refugees will LSS serve?

The exact number is not known. Prior to the arrival of Afghan evacuees, LSS was preparing for a large increase in serving refugees because the current administration lifted restrictions put in place by the previous one (we served 108 refugee cases in 2020 but over 300/year at the close of 2016). When this crisis occurred we were asked how many additional cases we could take on and we estimated 100. The actual capacity will be impacted by the level of financial support that is received by private donors. As previously described in this document, the costs are not covered by the usual means and the financial need is greater since it will take longer for these refugees to become employed and self-sufficient. Bottom line: we can serve more people if we receive more financial support. And as we all know, the need is great.

Are there other ways that I can help?

Yes. Cash donations of any size will help cover the cost of rent, utilities, household items and other basic needs provided during the initial 30-90 day resettlement period. Please visit www.lsswis.org to make an online donation or text LSSREFUGEE to 41444 on your mobile phone and follow the prompts. In addition, checks payable to Lutheran Social Services – Refugee can be mailed to Lutheran Social Services, P.O. Box 88868, Milwaukee, WI 53288.

Thank you for your love, compassion and belief in the infinite worth of every individual!!

**Please check back for updates to this list of FAQ's as new questions and/or needs arise.*