

Lutheran Social Services (LSS) Refugee Resettlement FAQ - updated 12.7.21*

What items are being collected by LSS right now?

- Household kits for kitchen, bath, living and bedroom (Please see question below for details).
- Socks and underwear for men, women and children in all sizes. **Please note:** At this time we are unable to accept winter coats/jackets and boots. We will update this information should the need for these items arise.
- 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 we are in need of now, which people can assemble. They include the following:

1. Kitchen kits: pots and pans, tableware, mixing bowls, etc.
2. Linens kits: NEW bath towels, bed sheets, blankets, etc.

Please note: At this time, we are unable to accept toiletries/personal items (toothbrushes, soap, etc.) or cleaning supplies (dish soap, laundry detergent, 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?

Thank you for collecting complete kits of supplies for refugee homes as described on our website. These should be securely packaged as individual kits, taking care that any liquid items are sealed. Drop-off location address is:

LSS Refugee Resettlement Office

3974 Howell St., Ste. 2

Milwaukee, WI 53207

(This is on the second floor of the First Federal Bank at the same address.)

If you are dropping off a large quantity of items, please coordinate drop off times by emailing refugee@lsswis.org.

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

We are in great need of churches and other community groups to co-sponsor refugees and are collecting interest now. The goal of co-sponsorship is to resettle refugees into their permanent home as quickly as possible. This is different from being a temporary guest in someone’s home. When refugees (including Afghan evacuees) arrive at LSS, the Refugee Resettlement team will prioritize the needs of each individual and family to determine the best fit for co-sponsoring groups. The team then matches co-sponsors with the people needing support and will work with them to determine their level of involvement. Co-sponsors help with activities included but not limited to: furnishing apartments, scheduled check-ins to ensure needs are met and serving as a cultural navigator to help create a sense of belonging for newly arrived refugees. Securing sustainable employment for refugees is an important part of resettlement and the LSS team will work with both co-sponsors and refugees to find an appropriate job placement. Full co-sponsorship includes providing financial assistance for the support of a refugee individual or family. (Please see question below.) Training is provided. If your organization is interested in co-sponsorship, please contact Sarah at church.relations@lsswis.org. If you would like to join in with another group who is also co-sponsoring, let Sarah know of that interest.

Are you accepting Gift cards?

Yes. Gift cards can be mailed to: LSS Refugee Resettlement, 6737 W. Washington St., Ste. 2275, West Allis, WI 53214. Gift cards are useful for families to purchase items that may not have been donated.

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.

How does my group get started with co-sponsorship?

Every member involved in a co-sponsoring group must attend one initial virtual information session. If the group determines that co-sponsorship is a good fit for them, then the next step is to attend a virtual orientation meeting. Meetings are led by the LSS Refugee Resettlement team. If your group is interested in attending an initial virtual information session for your group, please have your group leader contact Sarah Halstead at church.relations@lsswis.org.

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

There are many ways that volunteers can help. 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. If you are interested in attending a volunteer information session, please contact Sarah at church.relations@lsswis.org. Sessions are held twice per month and provide information on volunteer opportunities as well as the volunteer application process.

Volunteer options include but are not limited to the following:

- 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 learn the bus system or learn to drive.
- 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.
- Be an English language tutor using LSS provided lessons and materials.
- Be a homework helper to kids.
- Sharing pro bono professional services or specialized skills that could benefit the program.
- Writing letters or cards of welcome to new families.

Are you looking for pictures of volunteer activities?

Yes, we would love to see pictures of your groups or individuals putting together kits, dropping off supplies or any other activities you would like to share. Photo releases will be needed for each person in the photo. You can find those [here](#). Please fill and sign and return to communications@lsswis.org.

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

Fort McCoy has received an abundance of donations for Afghan evacuees. They are now asking people to donate cash or other in-kind donations directly to resettlement agencies that are helping place Afghans in communities. To make an online gift, click on the Donate button at the top of this page. You may also text LSSREFUGEE to 41444 using your mobile phone.

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. Employment cannot be linked to co-sponsorship groups.

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.*