

SPONSORING A REFUGEE FAMILY

Bureau of Refugee Services
Iowa Department of Human Services

**ANSWERS TO THE
MOST COMMON QUESTIONS
ABOUT SPONSORSHIP**



Photo by UNHCR, A child from Bosnia & Herzegovina.

Iowa's Resettlement Philosophy

The Bureau maintains the philosophy that refugees need to become self-sufficient as quickly as possible. Our focus is on placing refugees into jobs, which promote economic independence, generate tax dollars and help local economies. We discourage the use of welfare-type funds, except in emergency situations.

What Is The Bureau's Mission?

Since 1975, the Bureau of Refugee Services has had a two-fold mission:

****To assist refugees in becoming self-sufficient as quickly as possible, thereby, enabling them to enrich our state through the sharing of their talents, skills, gifts and culture.**

****Offering a home and a future for those who have been persecuted through the resettlement of refugees in Iowa.**

What Is Sponsorship?

Sponsorship is a **MORAL COMMITMENT, NOT A LEGAL OR FINANCIAL COMMITMENT.** Sponsors provide the support and friendship necessary to ease the transition between cultures. Sponsors are not responsible for any legal or financial obligations. Most of the major responsibilities, such as food, housing, orientation and paperwork occur in the first three months, though ties of friendship may last for years.

What Are The Sponsor's Responsibilities?

Pre-arrival orientation. Meet with Bureau staff to prepare for the family's arrival.

Food, housing, clothing. Arrange for suitable housing. Donations or used merchandise stores can be helpful in finding household goods and clothing. Basic food items help the families get through the first days.

Airport arrival. Meet the family at the airport and help them get settled in their new home. A bilingual case manager from the Bureau will accompany you.

Medical and dental check-ups. Make appointments for check-ups as soon as possible after the family arrives.

Post-arrival orientation. Meet with Bureau staff and your refugee family to go over plans for a successful resettlement.

In What Other Ways Can A Sponsor Help?

(90 Day Commitment)

Each sponsorship experience is different and the sponsor must adapt to the needs of each family. The Bureau assigns a case manager to help the sponsor and refugee family throughout the resettlement period.

Other areas in which the sponsor can help are:

Grocery shopping

Setting up bank accounts

Getting a driver's license

Learning bus routes

Understanding utility and other bills

**Transporting refugees
to medical appointments**

Teaching English

The most important role a sponsor can play is that of a friend and advocate. Loving, non-judgmental support and availability are the most important qualities of a good sponsor.

How Can YOU Be the Key To Freedom?

The key to accomplishing our mission is **YOU**: individuals, churches, service groups, schools, and other organizations who are willing to join in partnership with the Bureau of Refugee Services in the resettlement of refugees by serving as a sponsor.

Refugees can not enter the United States without a sponsor, so YOU are literally the key that can unlock the door to freedom, hope, a future and a new life in America.

Who Are Refugees?

A refugee is a person who has fled or is being forced to flee their homeland because of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

Refugees must apply for the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program and then be interviewed and approved by the Immigration and Naturalization Service before they can be admitted into the United States. Some refugees in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East have lived in camps for years waiting to be resettled.



Photo by UNHCR, Family from Bosnia & Herzegovina in a displacement camp.

Where Are The New Arrivals Coming From?

In recent years, the world has witnessed monumental changes in its global structure. As countries disintegrate and as new governments emerge, the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program is confronted with new waves of refugees.

In order to address the changing needs of refugees from around the world, the President designates each year the number of refugees who may be admitted into the United States by region and nationality.

At the local level, the Bureau of Refugee Services reviews its resettlement goals annually in order to plan for the arrival of incoming refugees. Refugees represent diverse groups such as Amerasians and former political prisoners from Vietnam, Liberians who have been uprooted by their country's civil war, pro-democracy students and dissidents from Burma, victims of the "ethnic cleansing" in the former Yugoslavia and the Hmong from the highlands of Laos.



Photo by UNHCR, Children from Bosnia & Herzegovina.

How Does The Bureau of Refugee Services Assist Its Sponsors?

The Bureau is a sub-division of the Iowa Department of Human Services and is the state agency responsible for resettling and serving refugees in Iowa.

The Bureau receives funds from the U.S. State Department to assist in refugee resettlement. Out of those funds, sponsors will receive **\$250 per refugee to cover expenses** such as utility and rent deposits, rent, food, and household goods. For example, \$1,000 would be available to assist sponsors with expenses for a four-person family.

All resettlement funds distributed to the sponsor must go to benefit the refugee. Sponsors are responsible for documenting all expenditures.

In addition to the financial assistance, the Bureau will also assign a bilingual case manager to each refugee family. They will be available to work with the sponsor and the family on a continuing basis.

The Bureau is responsible for placing the refugee into employment, obtaining social security numbers, applying for medical coverage and food stamps and school enrollment.

The Bureau will also act as a liaison between families and other community and governmental agencies.

Is Sponsorship Rewarding?

YES!!! Just ask Carol and Sid Dykstra who have sponsored 19 refugees. This is what they had to say about sponsorship. "As community volunteers, we have found sponsorship to be our most rewarding volunteer experience. It is so exciting to work directly with families who have so little as they begin their new lives in a land of freedom and many opportunities".

Where Can I Find Out More About Sponsorship?

For more information, call the Bureau of Refugee Services at the number below and we will gladly arrange a presentation for you or your group to explain the program in detail.

BUREAU OF REFUGEE SERVICES

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