Geo-Inquiry Project proposal

Refugee Resettlement in Oklahoma

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Mustang Middle School
Empowering Today to Achieve a Better Tomorrow

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NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

INTRODUCTION

TO GEO-INQUIRY

More than ever, our world is interconnected and today's students need to understand how the complex and dynamic human and natural systems interact in order to make smart decisions and function effectively. The study of geography is essential to the comprehension of how our world works.

Geography, the study of places and the relationships between people and their environments, seeks to understand where things are, why they are there, and how they develop and change over time. Geography offers students two avenues to understand the world, human and physical geography. Human geography studies cultural, political, technological and social systems, and physical geography studies Earths physical and natural systems.

Geographers, those who study geography, observe the world in spatial terms, and are interested in three basic questions: *Where is it? Why is it there? Why care?* They seek to describe the world using the knowledge, skills, and tools of the discipline, such as maps, globes, graphs, photography, video, and remote sensing images. These instruments are suited for different purposes and illustrate a range of information including showing patterns, interactions and change over time.

The Geo-Inquiry Process endeavors to help students develop the skills, knowledge, and tools of a geographer. It provides a systematic way to investigate and understand the world through the patterns, processes, and interactions between human and natural systems and then to act on their conclusions.

The Geo-Inquiry Process is a five-step method designed to teach the skills necessary to think and reason geographically, and includes asking Geo-Inquiry Questions, acquiring geographic information, organizing and analyzing information, and using the information to answer Geo-Inquiry Questions for informed action. The Geo-Inquiry Process relies on geographic perspective as a foundation, offering students a unique lens to analyze space, place, and the interconnections of systems in our world. Geographic perspective is interdisciplinary and allows for the examination of complex issues at various scales. Think of scale as being the "zoom lens" of geography. The scale can be local, regional, or global. By using a geographic perspective with the Geo-Inquiry Process, students begin to connect complex components, see patterns, and make connections as they look at the world differently in order to make informed predictions, well-reasoned decisions, and take action.

GEO-INQUIRY PROCESS

Oklahoma Academic Standards Addressed & Lesson Connections:

- Standard 7.3.3: Evaluate the impact of a region's major religions, including geographic hearths, major beliefs, customs, and the significance of religion in contemporary societies; explain how religion can both unify or divide people.
    - In the context of refugee resettlement, students can examine the impact of religion on the experiences of Vietnamese and Afghan refugees in Oklahoma. They can explore the geographic hearths, major beliefs, and customs of the predominant religions in these regions, such as Buddhism in Vietnam and Islam in Afghanistan. Students can analyze how religion plays a role in shaping the identity, culture, and social cohesion of these refugee populations. They can also explore how religious differences may contribute to both unity and division within and between refugee communities and the broader society.
- Standard 7.3.4: Evaluate and summarize the impact of geography on population distribution, density, growth, change, settlement patterns, the availability of resources, and migration, including push and pull factors.
    - This standard focuses on the influence of geography on population dynamics, including migration patterns. Students can analyze how geographic factors such as climate, landforms, and resources have influenced the distribution, density, and settlement patterns of Vietnamese and Afghan refugee populations in Oklahoma. They can examine push and pull factors that have motivated refugees to leave their home countries and settle in Oklahoma, considering the geographic factors that contribute to these decisions. Students can also evaluate how population growth and changes in settlement patterns impact resources and the environment in both the home and host communities.
- Standard 7.3.5: Describe reasons for and analyze from multiple perspectives the challenges and benefits of migration on indigenous and immigrant populations.
    - This standard emphasizes understanding the challenges and benefits of migration for both indigenous and immigrant populations. Students can examine the experiences of indigenous populations in Oklahoma and how the arrival of Vietnamese and Afghan refugees has impacted their communities. They can analyze the social, cultural, economic, and environmental effects of migration, considering both the challenges and the benefits that arise from interactions between indigenous and immigrant populations. By analyzing multiple perspectives, students can develop a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of migration and its impact on different groups.
- Standard 7.4.1: Analyze the impact of climate events, weather patterns, and natural disasters on human populations and the environment, resulting in forced migrations, scarcity of consumer goods, economic activities, and loss of life.
    - This standard focuses on the impact of climate events, weather patterns, and natural disasters on human populations. Students can examine how these factors have affected the Vietnamese and Afghan populations, leading to forced migrations and the resettlement of refugees in Oklahoma. They can analyze the consequences of climate-related events on consumer goods, economic activities, and human lives, considering the challenges faced by refugees in adapting to a new environment. Students can also explore the environmental implications of these events and the efforts to mitigate their effects on both the refugees and the host communities.
- Standard 7.5.6: Analyze reasons for conflict and cooperation among groups, societies, and countries, including the creation and involvement of supranational organizations.
    - This standard emphasizes understanding the factors that contribute to conflict and cooperation among different groups and societies. Students can analyze the reasons behind conflicts that have led to the displacement of Vietnamese and Afghan refugees, considering political, ethnic, religious, and economic factors. They can also

explore the role of supranational organizations, such as the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, in addressing the challenges faced by refugees and promoting cooperation among nations. By examining these factors, students can gain insights into the complex dynamics of conflicts and the importance of cooperation in resolving them.

- Standard 7.5.7: Describe how political, economic, and cultural forces challenge contemporary political arrangements leading to the devolution of states (civil wars, terrorism, genocide, and ethnic separatism).
    - This standard focuses on the challenges posed by political, economic, and cultural forces that can lead to the devolution of states. In the context of refugee resettlement, students can analyze how these forces have played a role in the displacement of Vietnamese and Afghan refugees. They can explore the political factors, such as civil wars, terrorism, and ethnic separatism, that have contributed to the need for resettlement. Students can also examine the economic factors that have influenced migration patterns, including the impact of economic instability and limited opportunities in their home countries. Additionally, they can analyze the cultural forces that have shaped the experiences of refugees, including the preservation of cultural identity and the challenges of assimilation into a new society. By understanding these forces, students can gain a deeper appreciation for the complex geopolitical dynamics that underlie refugee resettlement and the impacts on both the home and host countries.

Afghan Refugee Resettlement Narrative

The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 triggered a large-scale humanitarian crisis as Afghans scrambled to flee the country. The United States government and its allies began a massive evacuation effort to transport as many Afghans out of the country as possible, including those who had worked with the U.S. military or government in some capacity. Many of these refugees have been resettled in cities across the United States, including the Oklahoma City Metro area.

In the days following the fall of Kabul, a number of Afghan refugees began to arrive in Oklahoma City. Many were processed through the Will Rogers World Airport, where they were greeted by volunteers from the local community who had organized to provide food, shelter, and other necessities. These volunteers worked closely with resettlement agencies such as Catholic Charities and the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) to ensure that the refugees were provided with the support they needed to begin their new lives in America.

The resettlement process for Afghan refugees is complex and involves multiple steps. First, refugees must be processed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which is responsible for screening them for security risks and conducting background checks. Once they have been cleared by DHS, refugees are then assigned to one of nine resettlement agencies that work with the federal government to provide support services. These agencies are responsible for finding housing, providing basic necessities such as food and clothing, and helping refugees navigate the complex process of integrating into American society.

In the case of Afghan refugees, the resettlement process has been complicated by a number of factors. Many refugees have fled the country with little more than the clothes on their backs, making it difficult for them to begin their new lives in the United States. Additionally, the political and social climate in the United States has become increasingly hostile toward refugees and immigrants in recent years, which has made it more difficult for resettlement agencies to provide the support and resources that refugees need.

Despite these challenges, the resettlement process for Afghan refugees in the Oklahoma City Metro area has been largely successful. The community has rallied together to provide support for the refugees, with local churches, mosques, and other organizations offering assistance in a variety of ways. This support has included everything from providing housing and furniture to offering language classes and job training.

One of the most important factors in the success of the resettlement effort has been the work of resettlement agencies such as Catholic Charities and USCRI. These organizations have played a critical role in providing the support and resources that refugees need to begin their new lives in America. They have helped refugees navigate the complex process of obtaining documentation, enrolling in school, and finding employment. They have also provided crucial social services such as mental health counseling and trauma therapy, which are essential for refugees who have experienced the trauma of displacement and persecution.

One of the biggest challenges facing Afghan refugees in the Oklahoma City Metro area has been finding employment. Many refugees have limited English proficiency and may not have experience working in the United States. This can make it difficult for them to find jobs that pay a living wage and provide the stability they need to begin their new lives. To address this issue, resettlement agencies have partnered with local businesses and employers to provide job training and placement services. This has helped refugees find employment in a variety of industries, including healthcare, manufacturing, and hospitality.

Another challenge facing Afghan refugees in the Oklahoma City Metro area has been the trauma of displacement and persecution. Many refugees have experienced violence and trauma in their home country, and may be struggling with mental health issues as a result. To address this issue, resettlement agencies have provided mental health counseling and trauma therapy.

The Afghan refugees were brought to the U.S. under a special humanitarian program known as humanitarian parole, which allows them to enter the country for a temporary period of time due to extraordinary circumstances. Once they arrived in the U.S., they were temporarily housed in military bases and other designated locations while they underwent a health screening and received COVID-19 vaccinations.

After being cleared by the medical authorities, the refugees were then relocated to various cities across the U.S., including the Oklahoma City Metro area. Local resettlement agencies in collaboration with faith-based groups and community organizations provided assistance to the refugees in finding housing, enrolling their children in school, securing employment, and accessing medical care and other social services.

Despite the challenges of resettlement, the Afghan refugees have received a warm welcome from the local community in the Oklahoma City Metro area. Many Oklahomans have opened their homes and hearts to the refugees, donating household items, clothing, and other essentials to help them settle in. Additionally, several businesses and employers in the area have stepped up to provide employment opportunities for the refugees, recognizing their skills, talents, and potential contributions to the local economy.

The resettlement process for the Afghan refugees has not been without its challenges, however. One major issue has been the language barrier, as most of the refugees do not speak English and require interpretation services to communicate effectively. Some have also faced cultural barriers and difficulty adjusting to the American way of life, as well as trauma and emotional distress from their experiences in Afghanistan.

To address these challenges, resettlement agencies and community organizations have provided language and cultural orientation classes, counseling services, and other forms of support to help the refugees adapt to their new environment. Additionally, local volunteers and mentors have stepped up to provide friendship and guidance to the refugees, helping them navigate their new surroundings and build connections within the community.

Overall, the Afghan refugee resettlement process in the Oklahoma City Metro area has been a testament to the compassion and resilience of the American people. Despite the many obstacles and challenges faced by the refugees and their host community, they have come together to support one another and build a brighter future for all.

Short Narrative of The History of Refugee Resettlement in Oklahoma

The history of refugee resettlement in Oklahoma dates back several decades. In the 1970s, Oklahoma became home to many refugees from Southeast Asia, including refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia who were fleeing violence and persecution in their home countries. These refugees were initially resettled in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, where they received assistance from nonprofit organizations and community groups.

In the following decades, Oklahoma continued to welcome refugees from around the world, including refugees from the former Soviet Union, Bosnia, and Somalia. Nonprofit organizations such as Catholic Charities, the International Rescue Committee, and the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants have played an important role in providing assistance and support to refugees in Oklahoma.

Today, Oklahoma remains a destination for refugees from a variety of countries, including refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The state government and nonprofit organizations continue to provide assistance to refugees, helping them to find housing, employment, and education as they build new lives in their new communities.

The history of refugee resettlement in Oklahoma reflects the broader history of refugee resettlement in the United States, as well as the state's commitment to welcoming and supporting refugees from around the world.

The situation in Afghanistan has been rapidly evolving since the Taliban's takeover of the country in August 2021. As a result, the United States and other countries have launched efforts to evacuate and resettle Afghan refugees who are at risk of violence and persecution.

The United States government has launched Operation Allies Welcome to support the resettlement of Afghan refugees. The operation is focused on evacuating and resettling Afghans who worked with the U.S. government or military during the war in Afghanistan, as well as other vulnerable Afghans such as women and girls, journalists, and human rights activists.

The resettlement effort involves multiple government agencies, including the Departments of State, Homeland Security, and Defense, as well as nonprofit organizations and private individuals. The U.S. government has authorized the admission of up to 125,000 refugees from Afghanistan for fiscal year 2022.

The resettlement process begins with the evacuation of refugees from Afghanistan to a network of military bases and other locations overseas. At these locations, the refugees receive medical screenings, security checks, and other services to prepare them for resettlement in the United States.

Once they have been cleared for resettlement, the refugees are transported to communities across the United States, where they receive support and assistance from nonprofit organizations and other groups. This support may include housing assistance, employment assistance, language classes, and other services to help refugees adjust to their new environment.

Nonprofit organizations such as the International Rescue Committee, Catholic Charities, and World Relief are playing a key role in the resettlement effort, working with the U.S. government and other partners to provide support and assistance to Afghan refugees.

The resettlement effort is ongoing, and there are still many Afghans who are in need of assistance. The situation in Afghanistan remains uncertain, and there are concerns about the safety and well-being of those who are left behind.

Overall, the resettlement effort in the United States reflects the country's commitment to providing refuge and assistance to those who are fleeing violence, persecution, and instability in their home countries. It is a complex and challenging process, but one that is vital for the safety and well-being of vulnerable populations around the world.

SIX MYTHS ABOUT RESETTLED REFUGEES:

MYTH #1: Refugees want to leave their home country.
Refugees are forced to flee their homes due to war, violence, or persecution. Refugees leave their country because they have no other choice. They fear for their lives and those of their families when their governments will not or cannot protect them from war, sectarian conflict and serious human-rights abuses. Leaving their home country is a last resort.

MYTH #2: We have never faced a refugee crisis like this before.
Since the birth of the United States, we have shown leadership during world crises and have been welcoming to refugees. Most recently, some 1.3 million Southeast Asians fleeing conflicts in the mid-twentieth century were resettled in countries around the world, including more than 800,000 in the U.S.

MYTH #3: Refugees are not highly vetted.
Refugees considered for resettlement in the U.S. are subject to the highest level of security checks involving the National Counter-Terrorism Center, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Defense Department, the State Department, and the Department of Homeland Security, among other intelligence, security, and law-enforcement agencies.

MYTH #4: Refugees are mostly men.
Fears that most refugees are young men who support terrorism are unfounded. Nearly half the world's refugees are children, that's nearly one in every 200 children in the world, and the United States predominantly admits refugee families.

MYTH #5: Refugees take more than they give.
The U.S. has proudly played a leading role in welcoming people in need. Refugees like former Secretary of State Madeline Albright, Google co-founder Seregy Brin, and Nobel Peace Prize winning Physicist and IRC founder Albert Einstein came to the U.S. to rebuild their lives. The vast majority of newly resettled refugees quickly find jobs. Refugees start businesses, pay taxes, and contribute to their communities.

MYTH #6: Refugees come here illegally.
Refugees are people who cannot safely return to their homes and are seeking protections from dangerous situations. The term "refugee" comes with a specific legal context that does not apply to all migrants. It is a political status issued by the UNHCR. When someone arrives in the U.S. under this status, they are 100% legal residents under the authority of the United States Government.

THE SPERO PROJECT

Background Information:

In August 2021, the U.S. withdrew its military forces from Afghanistan after a 20-year conflict. As part of the Doha agreement, signed by then-President Trump in February 2020, the U.S. agreed to a complete withdrawal of military forces by September 2021. As the Afghan government collapsed, the Taliban quickly seized control of the Kabul and instituted martial law. Thousands of Afghans – those who worked alongside the U.S. military or other forces, as well as ethnic and religious minorities already under threat – have been forced to flee their homes in fear of kidnap, torture, and execution. Since January 2021, an estimated 680,000 have been displaced inside the country, and 2.2 million Afghan refugees have found refuge outside the country.

Typically, refugees apply for legal status while residing outside the U.S.; however, the rapid withdrawal from Kabul necessitated a different process for the 65,000 Afghans being evacuated by the U.S[1].

Afghan arrivals come to the U.S. and undergo background checks, security screening, and health checks. Most Afghan arrivals are on temporary legal status of humanitarian parole for up to two years. They must then apply to adjust their status after being resettled in their new homes in order to stay in the U.S. permanently. Applying for permanent legal status is a long and challenging process, and if they are not able to secure it before their temporary status expires, they risk being returned to the hands of the Taliban. In addition, asylum applications require an interview in an asylum court. The nearest asylum office is in Houston, over 400 miles away – a journey that is onerous, if not impossible, for families and their advocates to manage. The federal government has said it will expedite these applications, but the current legal pathways available to Afghan arrivals leave many uncertainties to obtaining permanent legal status. An Afghan Adjustment Act would help alleviate those uncertainties and provide a better legal pathway for adjustment of status.

Currently, the American immigration system is severely backlogged. There are nearly 400,000 affirmative asylum claims in processing[2] without counting the tens of thousands that will be added if an Afghan Adjustment Act is not passed.

Congress has previously passed similar legislation to help refugees secure legal status in the U.S. The Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966 allowed Cubans who fled the regime of Fidel Castro to become lawful permanent residents after one year.[3] Since its passage, over 1.2 million Cubans have obtained lawful permanent resident status and built communities, businesses, and families, making incredible contributions to their communities. A similar act would allow Oklahoma to lead the way in securing futures for our Afghan friends and helping them to start new lives as our Oklahoma neighbors.

An asylum office could easily be set up here in Oklahoma using existing resources. Oklahoma accepted 1,800 Afghan newcomers – more per capita than any other state – and now we need assistance to be able to secure a future for every single one of our new neighbors.

[1]https://www.reuters.com/world/who-are-afghan-refugees-coming-us-what-happens-when-they-arrive-2021-08-26/

[2] https://www.newsweek.com/why-congress-must-pass-afghan-adjustment-act-opinion-1644120

[3] https://immigrationforum.org/article/explainer-what-we-can-learn-from-prior-adjustment-acts-and-what-they-mean-for-afghan-resettlement/

Refugee Resettlement per Capita: Which States Do the Most?

MAR 7, 2023 IMMIGRATION RESEARCH INITIATIVE

https://immresearch.org/publications/refugee-resettlement-per-capita-which-states-do-the-most/

> The United States refugee resettlement program helps people from some of the most dramatically troubled situations around the world to find a home in the United States.

Refugees are people who the government has determined have a well-founded fear of persecution, have gone through an extensive vetting process, and who have typically waited many years before arriving in the United States. Among the top countries of origin for refugees over the past decade are Myanmar (Burma), Iraq, Bhutan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Iran, Syria, Cuba, and Ukraine. In the U.S., the refugee resettlement program is a public-private partnership of the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, the Department of Health and Human Services, and nine national resettlement agencies.

Over the past 10 years, the states that have received the most refugees have been Texas (44,000), California (40,000), New York (27,000), and Michigan (23,000).

These are all states with a large population. A different way to consider the state role in resettlement is to look at refugee arrivals as a share of the state population.

Taken this way, the states with the highest share of refugees placed may seem surprising. Measuring refugee arrivals as a share 100,000 people in the current state population, are: Nebraska (379), North Dakota (378), Idaho (346), Kentucky (325), South Dakota (312), Vermont (310), and Arizona (274).

A different way to think about resettlement is to calculate refugee arrivals as a share of a state's overall immigrant population. In some states, refugees are a very substantial part of the overall picture of immigration. In other states, when local residents think about immigrants, refugees are likely to be a small part of that picture. There is a good deal of overlap at the top of the table: Nebraska, North Dakota, Idaho, Kentucky, South Dakota, and Vermont are all among the top states for refugee arrivals per capita and for refugee arrivals as a share of immigrants. But in

many states there is a substantial divergence. Maine, for example, is 15th on the list for refugee arrivals per capita, with 181 refugees per 100,000 in the total state population, but 7th for refugees as a share of immigrants, with 4,425 refugees per 100,000 immigrants living in Maine. Missouri is 20th per capita, but 8th as a share of immigrants, and Tennessee is 27th per capita and 16th as a share of immigrants.

Refugee resettlement has also changed dramatically over the past ten years. The president, without action from congress, has a great deal more influence over refugee resettlement than over other aspects of immigration policy. Each year, a cap on the number of refugee arrivals is set by presidential determination. Other factors have an impact on how many refugees are actually resettled, but the total number cannot exceed the cap set by the president.

During the Trump Administration, the number of refugee arrivals plummeted from 85,000 in 2016 to just 12,000 in 2020. The 2022 total was 25,000, as resettlement agencies and the overall program picks up the pieces and rebuilds gradually after a precipitous decline.

The ranking of state resettlement per capita has shifted some over this time, but the states generally maintained roughly the relative positions they had before the reduction in numbers. In 2022, Kentucky is the top state for resettlement per capita, Idaho is second, and Nebraska is third.

The Spero Project is a local non-profit organization that welcomes resettled refugees by connecting our new neighbors to people, resources and learning opportunities that make Oklahoma City a place of belonging.

Spero began in 2009 after what was expected to be a six-week conversational English class in the Burmese community expanded into multiple nuanced partnerships and programs to welcome newly resettled neighbors.

In response to the leadership of the refugee community, Spero has evolved in substantial ways every year. We are proud of the quality and depth of programs offered to our new neighbors, but we will always hold these programs with open hands because they are designed to respond to the expressed needs of the community. Each year we add, evolve, and end programs and functions because the community has grown and evolved as well. Programs are not at the heart of Spero-- authentic, loving and welcoming relationships are.

It has been our honor to be part of this community over the years, both in offering and in receiving hospitality and welcome. Real welcome is concerned with the unique ways a person can both give and receive in the process of moving beyond guest and into family. The wonder of welcome is when we are fully free to be ourselves, we know our contributions are valued, and we are safe to express any needs that we have in return.

Because of this understanding, Spero has been postured to offer welcome to new neighbors with a unique understanding of U.S. systems, of language, and of cultural norms. And we have in every way been postured to receive welcome from our new neighbors with their unique expression of hospitality, community, wisdom, and strength.

Spero’s story is one of experiencing the wonder of welcome that happens when we are all welcomed into each other’s story and to each other’s tables. Being moved by the hope and hospitality modeled by the refugee community, we strive together to see Oklahoma City become the most welcoming city in the world.

Report on Afghan Refugee Resettlement

Read the below report on what support we have been able to provide our new Afghan neighbors as they settle in Oklahoma, including items distributed through our Refugee Resource Center. This report will be updated on an ongoing basis.

CAIR Oklahoma has been instrumental in working alongside Catholic Charities to **welcome 1,006 Afghan newcomers** to the Oklahoma City metropolitan area, with 1,806 resettled statewide. More than fifty percent of these new arrivals are under the age of 18, and there have been more than a dozen Afghan babies born in our state. Forty-four percent of these families are settled in permanent housing, with twenty percent of the heads of the household employed. All school-age children in permanent housing have been enrolled in school.

February 2022 Update

Below are the numbers that reflect the services and support we were able to provide for our new Afghan neighbors in February 2022. In February, we welcomed our final Afghan family bringing the total number of Afghans resettled in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area to 1,006 and the total number of Afghans resettled in Tulsa to 800 for a grand total of 1,806.

March 2022 Update

Below are the numbers that reflect the services and support we were able to provide for our new Afghan neighbors in March 2022.

April 2022 Update

Below are the numbers that reflect the services and support we were able to provide for our new Afghan neighbors in April 2022. In April, we worked alongside partner groups such as Catholic Charities, The Spero Project, Surayya Anne Foundation OKC, and Refugee Support Group to ensure that the first Ramadan for Afghan Refugees in Oklahoma would be a spiritually uplifting and memorable one.

In the month of April, we had a total of 67 volunteers who assisted us for 342 hours for a total value of $8,562 in volunteer time contributed. In preparation for the Holy Month of Ramadan, we were able to meet our fundraising goal to put together Ramadan Mubarak Kits for our new Afghan neighbors that consisted of Ramadan stickers and coloring books for the kinds, candy, a thermos for coffee/tea, a Ramadan prayer schedule, and much more. Along with the Ramadan Kits, we distributed Ramadan food boxes from Islamic Relief USA provided through Khan Ohana Foundation to all Afghans in permanent housing.

May 2022 Update

Below are the numbers that reflect the services and support we were able to provide for our new Afghan neighbors in May 2022. In May, we partnered with Catholic Charities Oklahoma City and The Spero Project to host a special Eid Festival for our new Afghan community, which close to 1,000 people attended. This was one of the year's highlights for the Afghan community as kids celebrated with games and gifts, and adults danced and congratulated one another on the successful completion of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Additionally, CAIR Oklahoma opened a new Refugee Resource Center at St. John's Episcopal Church and School on North Brookline Ave in OKC. The Center is open to visitors Mondays and Wednesdays 11:30-3:30 and provides clothing, household items, hygiene items, back-to-school supplies, and much more.

CAIR Oklahoma staff also visited 83 Afghan children at Tulakes and Wiley Post Elementary Schools during their last week of classes and distributed candy in recognition of the Eid Al-Fitr holiday.

June 2022 Update

Below are the numbers that reflect the services and support we were able to provide for our new Afghan neighbors in June 2022. June saw a huge showing of volunteer efforts from two local groups, ICNA Relief and Tinker Air Force Base. Although fewer items were distributed in June due to limited openings at our resource center (which closed for two weeks because of a music camp in our shared space), we were excited to know that more than 500 of our Afghan neighbors transitioned to temporary housing with only a handful of families left in hotels.

July 2022 Update

Below are the numbers that reflect the services and support we were able to provide for our new Afghan neighbors in July 2022. In July, we partnered with Catholic Charities of Oklahoma City to provide back-to-school hygiene kits for 400 students in Oklahoma City and Putnam City schools. The kits include body wash, shampoo, conditioner, bar soap, and deoderant. Also, in July, we were honored to host U.S. Senate candidate Madison Horn for a visit to tour our Refugee Resource Center and learn more about our new Afghan community.

August 2022 Update

Below are the numbers that reflect the services and support we were able to provide for our new Afghan neighbors in August 2022. In August, we were open for nine days with a total of 24 families visiting. We welcomed 28 individual volunteers and a volunteer group from Tinker Airforce Base, saving CAIR-OK $3,712 in the month of August through their efforts. We also had the opportunity to work with our amazing community and interfaith partners in distributing 226 backpacks to all Afghan children enrolled in the Putnam City School District and 111 prayer rugs to the OKC, Putnam City, and Stillwater school districts for use by Afghan children.

September 2022 Update

Below are the numbers that reflect the services and support we were able to provide for our new Afghan neighbors in September 2022. In September, we were open for six days with a total of 54 families visiting, representing 337 individuals. We welcomed 25 individual volunteers, saving CAIR-OK $2,918 in the month of September through their efforts. We also had the opportunity to work with our amazing community and interfaith partners in distributing 82 sewing kits to our Afghan neighbors.

October 2022 Update

Below are the numbers that reflect the services and support we were able to provide for our new Afghan neighbors in October 2022. In October, we were open for seven days, with a total of 73 families visiting, representing 502 individuals. We welcomed 89 individual volunteers and volunteer groups from The Church of Jesus Chris of Latter-Day Saints, saving CAIR-OK $5,106 in the month of October through their efforts. We also had the opportunity to work with our fantastic community and interfaith partners to distribute 31 sewing kits to Afghan families and provide 27 families with diapers and other baby items.

November 2022 Update

Below are the numbers that reflect the services and support we were able to provide for our new Afghan neighbors in November 2022. In November, we were open for three days with a total of 33 families visiting representing 231 individuals with an average of 11 families per day.

We welcomed 92 individual volunteers and volunteer groups from the following organizations saving CAIR-OK $8,512 in the month of November through their efforts.

- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Oklahoma City University
- St. John's Episcopal Church
- St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral
- OKC First Church of the Nazarene
- Disciples of Christ

In addition to the volunteers, CAIR-OK partnered with over 20 interfaith and community groups who made financial contributions, donated winter gear, and gave time to provide over 800 new warm winter coats, hats, scarves, gloves, and socks to Afghan neighbors who have made the OKC metro area their home.

December 2022 Update

Below are the numbers that reflect the services and support we were able to provide for our new Afghan neighbors in December 2022. In December, we were open for six days, with a total of 30 families visiting, representing a total of 236 individuals. We welcomed 17 individual volunteers, saving CAIR-OK $1,900 in the month of December through their efforts. The CAIR-OK volunteer team delivered 13 Urban Mission food requests to our Afghan neighbors providing food for 81 individuals. We also had the opportunity to work with our fantastic community and interfaith partners in distributing 850 coats, hats, scarves, gloves, and socks to Afghan households in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area.

RESETTLEMENT EFFORTS

https://catholiccharitiesok.org/refugee-services

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City is the resettlement agency for the state of Oklahoma, organizing partners and staff to welcome the newly arrived refugees to find safety, stability, and self-sufficiency into our community.
Catholic Charities is dedicated to helping refugees who have fled their countries to escape war, crisis and conflict. This complex work often involves fragile survivors. Case managers, job developers and housing navigators help them find work, learn English and make a new home.

Due to the influx of refugees, we have taken in since 2021, we have immediate and ongoing needs to assist in setting up homes and providing the resources. To assist us in these endeavors, please consider a donation or visit our Amazon Wishlist.

OKC's Immigrant and Refugee Community

More than 100,000 of OKC residents, or 8% of the population, is foreign born. This adds to the growing, diverse cultural experience.
Our history of supporting refugees predates the recent influx of Afghan arrivals. Oklahoma City welcomed a vast number of Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s after the communist government of North Vietnam captured Saigon. Those cultural influences are still present in our community, and represent sales revenues in excess of $225 million in the Oklahoma City metro area.

Afghan Refugee Response

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City is a statewide resettlement agency in Oklahoma and is working closely with Catholic Charities of Eastern Oklahoma in the Tulsa area to provide initial resettlement services.
Over 1,800 Afghan refugees have been resettled in Oklahoma through Catholic Charities from September 2021 - February 2022. This was the highest number of refugees resettled by Catholic Charities OKC in its history.

Resettlement Process

Housing
Catholic Charities of OKC works with Champion Hotels to immediately serve as temporary transitional housing for the Afghan refugees. Permanent housing solutions are identified through case management at Catholic Charities. Local community groups and churches have been sponsoring the housing setup for those moving into permanent housing covering the cost and providing the labor for the setup.
Food
Two hot, culturally appropriate meals are being provided twice daily at the hotels by Benchmark Foods. A partnership with Super Cao Ngyuen grocery is supplementing this food service and helping clients in permanent housing with grocery assistance.
Transportation
Transportation is provided by volunteers who are cleared of a background check through Catholic Charities. Trips include visits to the doctor, trips to the store and various other needs.
Legal Services
The Spero Project, in partnership with C.A.I.R, identify pro bono or low bono attorneys to assist in filing adjustment status applications. Because of the expense, Catholic Charities and its

partners are advocating for the Afghan Adjustment Act to provide a streamlined and cost-effective path to citizenship.
A bi-partisan bill was introduced on August 9th, 2022 to establish pathway to permanent legal status for Afghans brought to the United States. To read more on how this will streamline the resettlement process,

Schools/Children Activities

All children who have been moved into permanent housing are successfully enrolled in public schools.

Social Integration

Upon arrival, families are immediately provided with welcome kits from C.A.I.R. (Council on Islamic-American Relations) that include items such as the Quran, prayer rugs and hygiene items. One of the ways we help get them acclimated is allowing them to worship at one of the mosques Oklahoma City, who provides transportation on Fridays for prayer.
ESL classes are held at the hotel in partnership with Oklahoma City Community College. The Oklahoma City Police Department train officers on how to interact with the refugees and educate them on their customs.

Employment

Catholic Charities employs a job developer who conducts intakes with arrivals and works to match them with employers, keeping in mind housing and transportation challenges as well. The long term success of refugees hinges on successful long-term employment. 90% of individuals who identify as the head of household who are in permanent housing are employed.

English Language Classes

In our state, around 4 in 10,000 people speak a Persian language. The Spero Project, a long-term refugee resettlement organization, is helping families communicate with those living in Oklahoma. ESL classes are being offered on site at two apartment complexes where multiple families have resettled. Volunteer translators have helped since the refugees started arriving. Through our relationship with United Way of Central Oklahoma, we have access to a telephone translation service.

Oklahoma City Welcoming Efforts

Catholic Charities has partnered with other nonprofit organizations such as the the Boys & Girls Clubs of Oklahoma County, the Council on American-Islamic Relations Oklahoma (CAIR), The Spero Project, Oklahoma City Public Schools, Putnam City School, United Way of Central Oklahoma and many local churches and faith-based organizations to ensure the families are well received and feel welcome.

THE OKLAHOMAN

Quick facts about refugee resettlement in Oklahoma

Juliana Keeping

Contributing: Tiffany Gibson

A refugee is a person whose race, religion, political opinion or membership to a particular social group has sparked persecution or a credible fear of persecution.

And in a world fraught with violence, persecution and war, the number of displaced people has skyrocketed. A fraction of those refugees eventually land in Oklahoma.

Here are facts and info about the largest groups to call Oklahoma home lately:

The U.S. has been admitting refugees with humanitarian concerns since the end of World War II, according to the Refugee Council USA, a coalition of U.S. nongovernmental organizations focused on refugee protection.

A diaspora of South Vietnamese who fled after Saigon fell in 1975 to Communist forces reshaped the fabric of Oklahoma City; at least 12,000 Vietnamese people now call Oklahoma City home, according to the latest U.S. Census data.

Lately, refugees from a different Southeast Asian country are making a big mark in Oklahoma.

Continued clashes between the Myanmar national army and nonstate groups in the country formerly called Burma have caused fresh displacement as the Burmese seek safety at camps in Malaysia and other countries, according to the latest Global Trends report issued by the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

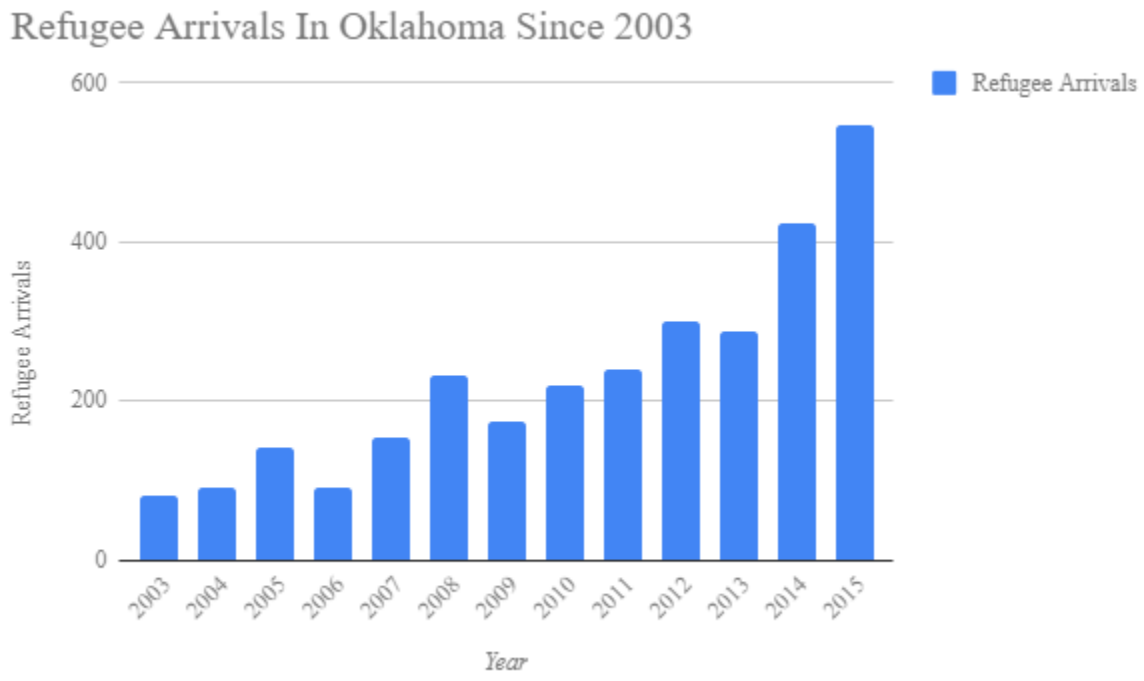
Per State Department data, 80 percent of the refugees, or 2,091 of 2,986, who have arrived in Oklahoma between 2003 and 2015 are Burmese.

Iraqi refugees come in at a distant second to the Burmese with 246 refugees who have arrived since 2003, followed by Russia (128); Somalia (78) and Eritrea (64).

The number of refugees resettling in Oklahoma has skyrocketed in the last few years, a trend reflected around the globe, as spiraling crises continue to displace millions. Nearly 60 million people were uprooted in 2014, according to the latest data from the United Nations refugee agency. That's 8 million more people than the year prior (51.2 million) and the largest single-year increase ever recorded.

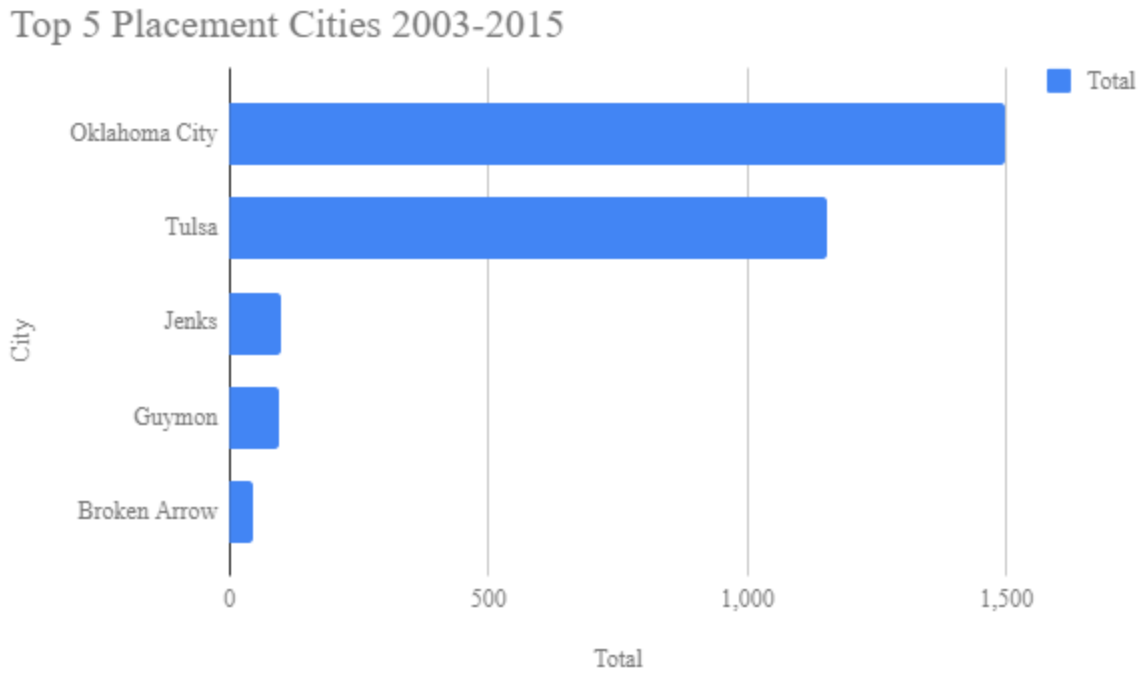
Syria is the biggest recent driver of displacement, but far from the only one, according to the latest United Nation refugee agency report.

Only 5 Syrian refugees made Oklahoma home between 2003 and 2015, according to the State Department.

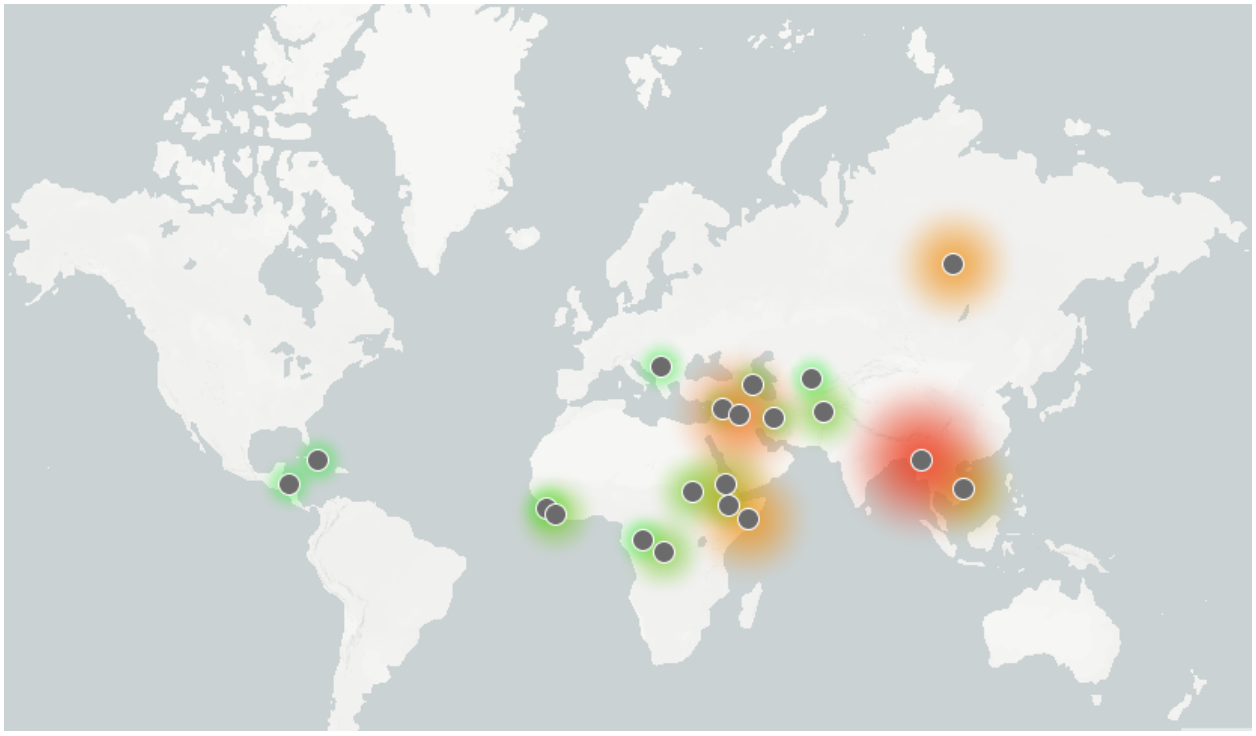


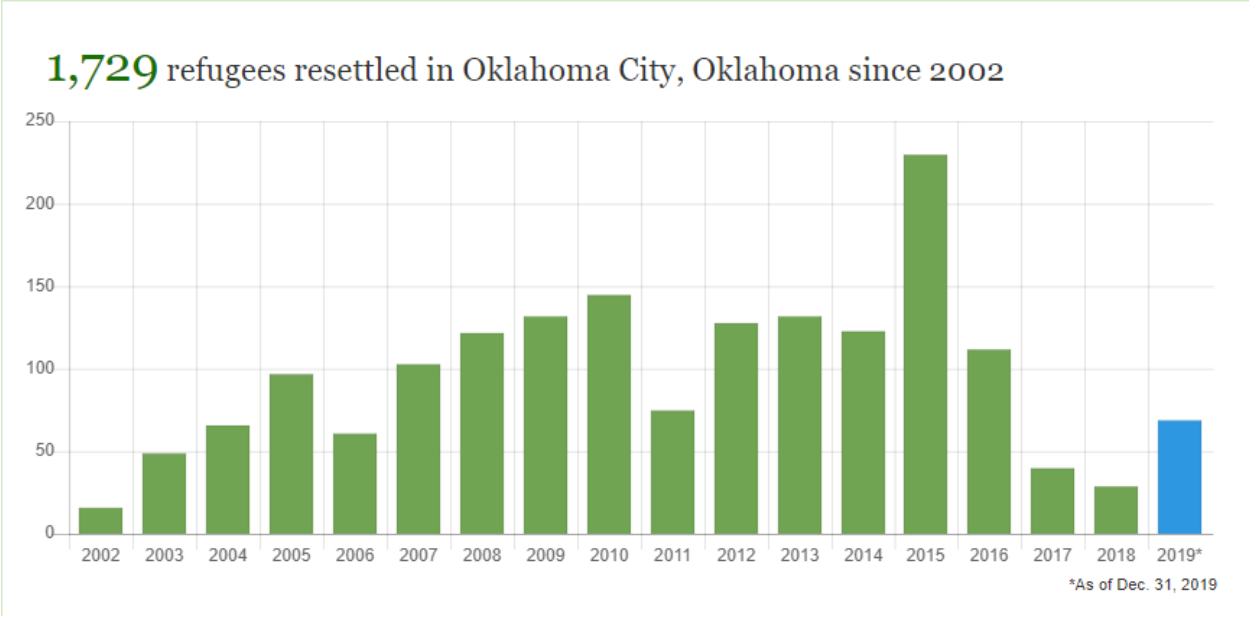
Oklahoma City is tops for refugee resettlement in the Sooner State, according to State Department data, with 1,495 people resettled in the state capital between 2003 and 2015.

Tulsa comes in second with 1,152 refugees, followed by Jenks (99); Guymon (95) and Broken Arrow (44).



Where did they come from?

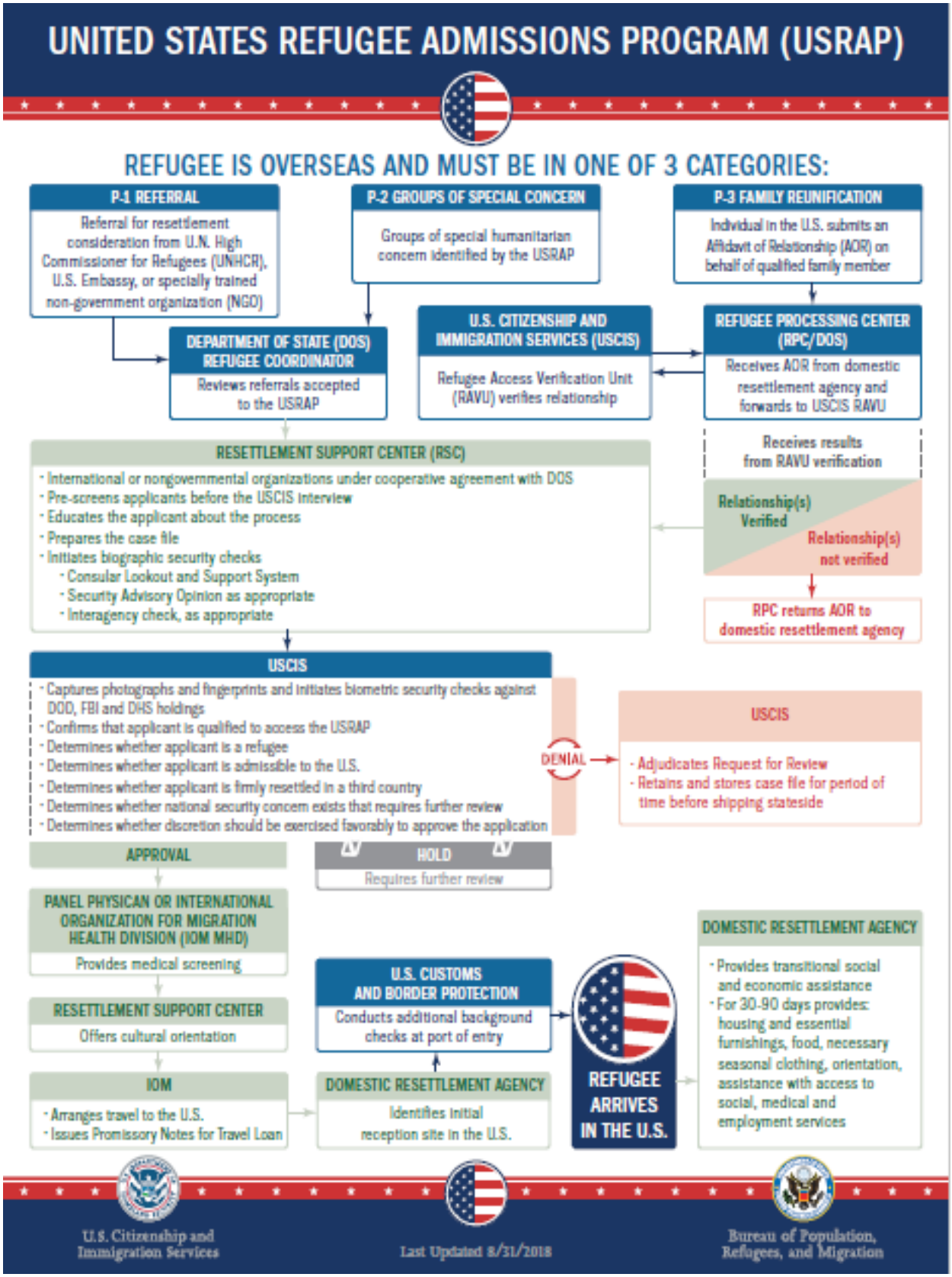




Under United States law, a refugee is someone who:

- Is located outside of the United States
- Is of special humanitarian concern to the United States
- Demonstrates that they were persecuted or fear persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group
- Is not firmly resettled in another country
- Is admissible to the United States

A refugee does ***not*** include anyone who ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in the persecution of any person on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.



https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/charts/USRAP_FlowChart.pdf

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN Oklahoma

Refugees In Oklahoma

The United States has been a leader in welcoming refugees who seek safety from persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Following World War II, the U.S. began welcoming refugees and over time the system has evolved to have a strong infrastructure centered on public-private partnerships. Communities across the U.S. have recognized the important economic and social benefits of resettling refugees. Oklahoma residents have played a vital role in the resettlement program and refugees have positively contributed to Oklahoma communities. In 2016, organizations and communities across Oklahoma welcomed 1% of refugees arriving in the U.S. In 2016, Oklahoma welcomed 534 refugees and 301 unaccompanied children who were released to the care and custody of sponsors.

Where are most refugees in Oklahoma from?

Burma
Iraq
Eritrea
Syria

Services Available to Refugees in Oklahoma

In addition to programming to support refugees when they first arrive to the United States, the federal government provides monetary aid through grants to the state, Voluntary Agencies, and other refugee aid organizations for community and short-term refugee support. The Department of Human Services serves as the refugee resettlement office for the state. Primary program services include cash and medical assistance, access to English language classes, vocational and employment assistance. Discretionary grants are also awarded to private agencies for various other self-sufficiency programs.

Federal FY16 ORR Funding to Oklahoma for Refugee Programs		
Total	Cash & Medical Assistance	Refugee Social Services
$1,907,126	$1,441,744	$465,382

Another service available to refugees in Oklahoma is the Employment Matching Grant Services, administered by Voluntary Agencies in the state. An alternative to public cash assistance, private agencies match federal contributions and provide intensive case management services to help refugees get employed and become self-sufficient within 120 days of arrival.

After having been through all that, the father of the family came home and helped other refugees to get their beds and salvage furniture. Lewis summed it up: "Generosity goes in one and goes out to the other."

–Catholic Charities

Refugees make Oklahoma Strong

Tluang Bawi grew up as a Christian in Myanmar where his family could neither celebrate holidays nor worship without the fear of being killed. Bawi knew that if he stayed in Myanmar, he and his family would likely be killed so they decided to flee, finding themselves on a year-long journey to safety. First, they tried to go to India but were denied entry. They then trekked back across Myanmar to Thailand, followed by Malaysia, where they stayed for nearly five years. Almost six years ago, his family was among the first from Myanmar to be resettled in Oklahoma City. Bawi is now a homeowner and works as an electrician. He helps Catholic Charities of Oklahoma City translate and welcome refugees from Myanmar to his new home.

Local Refugee Resettlement Offices and Affiliates in Oklahoma

- **USCCB, Catholic Charities,** Oklahoma City
- **USCCB, Catholic Charities,** Tulsa

In addition to these agencies, many ethnic community-based organizations (ECBOs) exist throughout the state to help various refugee communities integrate and succeed in their new homes. These organizations are run by refugees to aid in the resettlement of fellow refugees by providing a variety of direct services, increasing civic participation, and preserve the community's cultural identity and history.

An Oklahoma city prepares for an unprecedented influx of refugees

September 30, 2021

When 40 Afghan families arrive in Stillwater, they will need help with everything from housing to finding work.

THE FRONTIER ZACH KLUVER

In the basement of the old St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, a small tan brick building near downtown Stillwater, Catholic Charities of Eastern Oklahoma Operation Manager Mike FitzGerald has been working 12-hour days to find clothing, housing and food for the estimated 40 Afghan refugee families that will begin to arrive in Payne County in November.

“Imagine all the things you need to live,” FitzGerald said. “Just to sleep, you need an apartment, a bed, a mattress … Where are all those things going to come from?”

About 1,800 Afghan refugees are headed to Oklahoma. The group is mostly comprised of people who worked in some capacity for the U.S. government over the course of the 20-year war in Afghanistan, as well as their families. The state will receive the third-highest number of Afghan refugees in the nation, behind California and Texas, according to data compiled by Axios.

About 800 refugees will settle in Oklahoma City and outlying areas, and another 1,000 will go to the Tulsa area and Stillwater, according to Catholic Charities, which is contracting with the U.S. State Department for the resettlement in Oklahoma. Catholic Charities is the only refugee resettlement agency in Oklahoma.

The U.S. government is providing a lump sum of about $1,000 per refugee to Catholic Charities. Refugees will receive a one-time payment of $1,225 and most of that money will go to cover housing costs. The rest of the money needed for the five-year resettlement process will come from Catholic Charities’ budget, according to Catholic Charities of Eastern Oklahoma CEO Kevin Sartorius.

Under federal law, refugees are entitled to hold jobs after they enter the United States, but there’s often a wait until the government can process the work permits. It could take up to two months before many of the refugees can legally work. Catholic Charities will help the refugees find jobs once they receive their permits.

It may be more of a challenge for refugees to find jobs in a smaller city such as Stillwater, which has a population of about 50,000 people, FitzGerald said.

Initial plans called for Stillwater to host about 25 families instead of 40. But the availability of housing in Stillwater enabled Catholic Charities to increase the city's allotment to 40 out of the estimated 200 families coming to the Tulsa area. The resettlement will be the largest in the city's history.

After a hurried evacuation from Afghanistan, most of the refugees will arrive in the United States with nothing but the clothes they are wearing and whatever they can carry, which means that Catholic Charities needs to find housing, clothing, furniture, food, and transportation before they arrive.

The first priority for resettlement is finding long-term housing for the refugees. But with a housing market under the strain of a lengthy pandemic in many areas around Oklahoma, even that basic need has proven difficult to fulfill.

"As we started to investigate both Oklahoma City and Tulsa, we found that there's a pretty severe shortage of long-term housing," Sartorius said.

FitzGerald has so far been able to secure about 40 apartments in Stillwater, allowing him to shift his focus to acquiring other necessities for the incoming refugees. Oklahoma State University has agreed to lease 25 apartments for reduced rent, and several private landlords have agreed to work with the refugees. The refugees will arrive with no Social Security numbers or credit history, which can be a significant barrier to renting.

FitzGerald is a retired U.S. Army colonel who previously managed networks of translators for the military. He has worked for Catholic Charities of Eastern Oklahoma for two years, and the Afghan resettlement effort is by far the largest project he's undertaken.

FitzGerald admits the amount of work required during the early stages of resettlement can be overwhelming, but he believes it will be worth it in the end.

"To be able to help this many people and make such a difference in so many people's lives, it's truly incredible," he said.

Resettlement efforts have caused some controversy in Oklahoma.
While Gov. Kevin Stitt has expressed support for Afghan resettlement in Oklahoma, state GOP Chairman John Bennett has criticized the process, releasing a video to voice concerns that there is no way to "properly" vet the refugees. But all refugees undergo a seven-step screening process that includes a background check and biometric checks, according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Stillwater Mayor Will Joyce said the city is ready to welcome its new Afghan residents.
"We have a strong international community and a local culture that values and supports people and families, no matter where they call home," Joyce said. "I think Stillwater would be an ideal destination, in that it combines a smaller, slower-paced environment that also incorporates familiar faces, international markets, and welcoming neighbors."

The first Afghans arrived in Oklahoma City and in Tulsa last week. Refugees will begin to arrive in Stillwater from military bases across the United States in early November.

“The resettlement will begin with one or two families, and once we feel like we’ve gotten the process down, the rest will slowly start trickling in.” FitzGerald said.
FitzGerald is the only Catholic Charities of Eastern Oklahoma employee working on the resettlement on the ground in Stillwater, but he has managed to build a network of more than 100 people to assist the refugees, including student translators from OSU, drivers, and volunteers from almost every church in the city.

“Virtually everyone I’ve talked to has said ‘what can I do, how can I help,'” Sartorius said. “Catholic Charities is kind of the coordinating agency, the glue that holds it all together, but we’re by no means lifting this all by ourselves.”

Catholic Charities is also partnering with other nonprofit organizations such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations Oklahoma, The Spero Project, and local Catholic churches such as the St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Stillwater. The organizations will help with funding, soliciting donations, and finding volunteers to assist the resettlement effort.

Very Rev. Brian O’Brien of St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, who has been helping gather donations for the refugees, said he and the church will welcome Afghan families to Stillwater.

“Depending on the political situation in Afghanistan, some might return, some might move to big cities like New York, but most will give back to the community for years to come,” O’Brien said.
FitzGerald has special plans for when he welcomes each Afghan family to Stillwater. A rice cooker, basic furnishings, a variety of spices, hot tea, and a hot meal will await them at their new apartments.

“What says love more than a hot-cooked meal?” FitzGerald said.

Blumenauer, Meijer, Nadler, Kinzinger, Lofgren, Miller-Meeks, Crow, Upton, Peters Introduce the Afghan Adjustment Act in the House

August 9, 2022

Press Release

Bill Establishes Pathway to Permanent Legal Status for Afghans Brought to the U.S.

WASHINGTON D.C.– Today, U.S. Representatives Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Peter Meijer (R-MI), House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Adam Kinzinger (R-IL), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA), Jason Crow (D-CO), Fred Upton (R-MI), and Scott Peters (D-CA) introduced the *Afghan Adjustment Act*. This bipartisan, bicameral bill establishes a legal adjustment process for tens of thousands of Afghan evacuees currently in the United States who have been relocated from Afghanistan and resettled into local American communities since the U.S. withdrawal from the country in August 2021, including those who supported the U.S. mission in Afghanistan over the past 20 years. After completing additional vetting required during the application process, this adjustment of status would provide eligible Afghans in need of protection with stability as they continue to rebuild their lives in the United States.

A Senate companion bill was introduced by Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Chris Coons (D-DE), Roy Blunt (R-MO), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK).

Currently, Afghans who were admitted to the United States under temporary humanitarian parole can only pursue permanent legal status through the asylum system or, for those who are eligible, the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program. Both options face severe backlogs, long processing times, and logistical obstacles for these Afghans who were brought to the United States under emergency circumstances. Congress has passed similar adjustment legislation in the wake of other wartime evacuations and humanitarian crises, including the Vietnam War.

Specifically, the *Afghan Adjustment Act* would:

- Allow Afghans on temporary humanitarian status in the U.S. who submit to additional security vetting to apply for permanent legal status.
- Establish an Interagency Task Force, led by the U.S. Department of State, responsible for creating and implementing a strategy to continue the relocation and resettlement of eligible Afghan partners from Afghanistan over the next ten years.
- Require the U.S. Department of State to respond to congressional inquiries related to SIV applications or U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) referrals.

- Expand SIV eligibility for Afghans who worked and served alongside U.S. forces, including members of the Afghan National Army Special Operations Command, the Afghan Air Force, the Female Tactical Teams of Afghanistan, and the Special Mission Wing of Afghanistan.

"The Afghan Adjustment Act is critical for tens of thousands of U.S.-affiliated and at-risk Afghans, many of whom are already living in the United States," **said Rep. Earl Blumenauer.** "We must keep our commitment to provide safe, legal refuge to those who willingly put their lives on the line to support the U.S. mission in Afghanistan. Congress has provided a legal adjustment process for previous wartime evacuations and humanitarian crises and should do so once again, without delay."

"As we reflect on the last year without a U.S. presence in Afghanistan, it is clear that our mission there is not yet complete," **said Rep. Peter Meijer.** "We still have thousands of interpreters and other Afghan partners who put themselves and their loved ones at risk remaining in Afghanistan, and thousands more who were evacuated to the U.S. now facing legal uncertainty as they try to rebuild their lives. I am proud to help lead this bipartisan, bicameral effort to enhance security vetting procedures, support our allies overseas, and keep the promises we made to our Afghan partners by providing a pathway for them to obtain legal status to stay here in the United States. Our credibility with our allies and our moral standing in the world depend on the completion of this mission."

"We must honor the commitment we made to our allies in Afghanistan who put themselves in harm's way." **said Rep. Jerrold Nadler, Chairman of the House Committee on the Judiciary**. "The vast majority of those who made it to the United States were granted only temporary protection. The Afghan Adjustment Act, a bipartisan, bicameral bill, will ensure that these Afghans and their families are granted permanent status and safety in the United States. I am proud to co-lead this important legislation. We have a moral obligation to do right by those who risked their lives for us in Afghanistan."

"A year ago, I committed to remedying the shortsighted failures of the Trump and Biden Administrations' decision to withdraw from Afghanistan. This bipartisan, bicameral legislation is the culmination of nearly a year's effort to begin to right the wrongs caused by that failure. By establishing this adjustment process, we not only fulfill the promises we made to our Afghan allies and partners over a decade ago, but also show all our allies that the United States stands by their word," **said Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-IL).** "While I am still heartbroken and angry over the fact that our withdrawal reversed decades of progress in the country, I can take some relief knowing that so many Afghan families will be able to find safety in the United States. I am thankful to both my House and Senate colleagues who worked so hard to produce this legislation."

"Congress has a responsibility to help our Afghan allies," **said Rep. Zoe Lofgren, Chair of the House Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship.** "There are thousands of Afghans who demonstrated allegiance to the U.S. during the war in Afghanistan currently in legal limbo. That uncertainty is unacceptable. Our bipartisan, bicameral Afghan Adjustment Act will provide stability for the people who put their lives on the line helping our troops and supporting America's mission overseas. This bill should became law without delay."

"It's our duty to protect our Afghan allies—particularly those who were forced to flee their homes and relocate during the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan last summer," **said Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks**. "Our legislation will alleviate burdensome regulations, expedite the permanent legal resident application process, and provide support for our partners while ensuring enhanced vetting and screening."

"In Iraq and Afghanistan, I worked closely with local translators and contractors who were critical to our safety and the success of our mission. For over a year, I've been proud to lead efforts to honor our promises and protect Afghan partners who aided the US mission and other at-risk Afghans. The Afghan Adjustment Act is an important next step to get vulnerable

Afghan families to safety and ensure they can lead productive lives here in the United States**," said Rep. Jason Crow.**

"Relocating our Afghan allies to safety is only the first part of our commitment to these brave men and women," **said Rep. Scott Peters**. "Now, we have an obligation to provide our Afghan partners stability through temporary humanitarian status and access to other critical resources. The bipartisan and bicameral support for the Afghan Adjustment Act proves we are united in our conviction to support vulnerable Afghans who are starting a new life in the U.S."

"The Evacuate Our Allies coalition thanks Reps. Blumenauer, Meijer, Nadler, Kinzinger, Lofgren, Miller-Meeks, Crow, Upton, and Peters and Senators Klobuchar, Graham, Coons, Blunt, Blumenthal, and Murkowski for introducing the Afghan Adjustment Act; it is a powerful step toward welcoming Afghans to the United States," **said the Evacuate Our Allies Coalition**. "The act will go a long way toward fulfilling America's promises to those Afghans who would otherwise struggle to find permanent homes in the United States, and EOA will do everything we can to support its passage."

"A year has passed since Afghanistan fell to the Taliban. 300,000+ Afghan wartime allies (interpreters & their families) remain left behind. They need our help. IAVA will not abandon them," said **Matt Zeller, Senior Advisor for IAVA.** "The Afghan Adjustment Act (AAA) is a vital piece of legislation because it will fix the structural flaws in the SIV program and provide a pathway to secure residency for those Afghans needing protection. We will fight to ensure that our country keeps its promise to those who served us. IAVA proudly endorses the AAA and urges Congress to pass it as soon as possible."

"The U.S. mission in Afghanistan depended on brave Afghans serving as interpreters, democracy advocates, and women's rights advocates – they were vital to the twenty-year mission. But despite their valiant and dutiful service to America, many Afghans arrived in the U.S. during last year's evacuation with no clear path to stable residency," **said Rye Barcott, Founder and CEO of With Honor Action**. "The Afghan Adjustment Act fixes that problem and ensures America keeps its promise to its Afghan allies. With Honor Action is proud to join Congressman Peter Meijer and Congressman Earl Blumenauer in supporting our Afghan allies, and we hope to see broad bipartisan Congressional support for the Afghan Adjustment Act."

"We are so encouraged to see the bipartisan introduction of the Afghan Adjustment Act in both houses of Congress this week," **said Shawn VanDiver, Founder of #AfghanEvac.** "The Afghans who have arrived here since last August deserve stability and a path forward to realize their American dream. We are hopeful that the AAA will pass swiftly and with continued strong bipartisan support."

"This act will provide a pathway to legal status for tens of thousands of Afghans who were forced to flee conflict and humanitarian disaster," **said Homaira Hosseini, Board Member of the Afghan-American Community Organization.** "The passage of the act will be a meaningful step towards fulfilling America's promise to the Afghan people and we urge both chambers of congress to pass this bipartisan legislation without delay."

"In the last two decades Afghans have sacrificed their lives with a mere dream that the U.S. will deliver on their promise of peace and prosperity," **said immigration attorney Spojmie Nasiri.** "We owe justice to these Afghan parolees and the Afghan Adjustment Act can be one of the best ways to pay back and put an end to their legal limbo. The Afghan Adjustment Act will enable a pathway for over 76,000 Afghans to attain permanent legal resident status in the United States. Indeed, it is one of the fastest ways to help Afghan parolees reunite with their families. In the last year, thousands of my fellow Afghans, young and old, left their homes with merely the clothes they were wearing. It is the United States' moral obligation to keep up with their promise of helping Afghans, who have stood shoulder to shoulder with our government, and their mission in Afghanistan through thick and thin."

The legislation has also received the endorsement of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), The American Legion, Student Veterans of America, Veterans for American

Ideals, With Honor Action, Association of Wartime Allies, Church World Service, National Immigration Forum, International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), Afghans For a Better Tomorrow, Voice for Refuge Action Fund, Afghan-American Community Organization, Immigrant ARC, Afghan-American Foundation, Human Rights First, the Advocates for Human Rights, Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations and **more.**

Potential Geo-Inquiry Prompts

These Geo-Inquiry prompts encourage students to analyze and interpret geographic data, engage in critical thinking, and develop a deeper understanding of the social, economic, and environmental aspects of refugee resettlement in Oklahoma.

- How has the influx of Afghan refugees impacted the demographic composition of Oklahoma City and the surrounding areas? Analyze population data and trends to understand the changes in the foreign-born population and the cultural diversity of the region.
- Investigate the distribution of Afghan refugee settlements in Oklahoma City. What factors have influenced the spatial patterns of their resettlement? Analyze maps and demographic data to identify the locations of Afghan refugee communities and explore the social, economic, and cultural factors that have shaped their settlement patterns.
- Evaluate the economic contributions of Afghan refugees in Oklahoma. How have they influenced the local economy and job market? Analyze employment data, business developments, and economic indicators to assess the impact of Afghan refugees on the labor force and entrepreneurial activities in the state.
- Examine the social integration of Afghan refugees into the Oklahoma City community. What initiatives and programs have been implemented to promote their integration and well-being? Conduct interviews or surveys with community organizations and refugees themselves to understand the efforts made to facilitate social connections, access to services, and cultural exchange.
- Assess the environmental factors that have influenced the resettlement of Afghan refugees in Oklahoma. How has climate, geography, and natural resources played a role in their choice of destination and their ability to adapt to the new environment? Analyze climate data, geographical features, and access to resources to understand the environmental context of refugee resettlement.
- Analyze the impact of refugee resettlement in Oklahoma City over the years. How has the influx of Vietnamese, Burmese, Iraqi, Russian, Somali, and Eritrean refugees transformed the city culturally, socially, and economically?
- Investigate the challenges and opportunities faced by refugees settling in smaller cities like Stillwater, Oklahoma. How does the city handle the resettlement process and address the housing shortage? What role do local organizations and community members play in supporting the refugees?
- Examine the recent Afghan refugee resettlement efforts in Oklahoma, specifically in Tulsa and Stillwater. How does the community respond to the arrival of Afghan families? What support systems are in place to help them integrate into society and find employment opportunities?
- Compare and contrast the refugee resettlement experiences in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. What factors contribute to Oklahoma City being the top destination for refugees? How does Tulsa's approach differ, and what unique challenges and successes has it encountered in welcoming and integrating refugees?
- Explore the legislative efforts to establish a pathway to permanent legal status for Afghan evacuees in the United States. Analyze the Afghan Adjustment Act and its potential impact on the Afghan community in Oklahoma. How will this act provide stability and support for Afghan refugees, and what are the implications for their long-term integration into American society?
- Analyze the impact of refugee resettlement in Oklahoma City over the years. How has the influx of Vietnamese, Burmese, Iraqi, Russian, Somali, and Eritrean refugees transformed the city culturally, socially, and economically?

- Investigate the challenges and opportunities faced by refugees settling in smaller cities like Stillwater, Oklahoma. How does the city handle the resettlement process and address the housing shortage? What role do local organizations and community members play in supporting the refugees?
- Examine the recent Afghan refugee resettlement efforts in Oklahoma, specifically in Tulsa and Stillwater. How does the community respond to the arrival of Afghan families? What support systems are in place to help them integrate into society and find employment opportunities?
- Compare and contrast the refugee resettlement experiences in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. What factors contribute to Oklahoma City being the top destination for refugees? How does Tulsa's approach differ, and what unique challenges and successes has it encountered in welcoming and integrating refugees?
- Explore the legislative efforts to establish a pathway to permanent legal status for Afghan evacuees in the United States. Analyze the Afghan Adjustment Act and its potential impact on the Afghan community in Oklahoma. How will this act provide stability and support for Afghan refugees, and what are the implications for their long-term integration into American society?

How does one become a refugee?

Seeking refugee status involves a complex process that varies depending on the country of origin and the country in which the individual is seeking asylum. However, there are some general steps that individuals typically take when seeking refugee status.

- Leave the home country: The first step in seeking refugee status is to leave the home country. This is typically done in response to persecution or violence in the home country. Individuals may leave on their own or with the assistance of a smuggler.
- Cross the border: Once an individual has left the home country, they must cross the border into another country. This may involve traveling through dangerous terrain or crossing a border illegally.
- Apply for asylum: Once an individual has entered another country, they can apply for asylum or refugee status. This typically involves filling out an application and submitting it to the appropriate government agency. In the United States, for example, asylum seekers must file Form I-589, Application for Asylum and for Withholding of Removal.
- Attend an interview: After an individual has submitted their application for asylum, they will typically be scheduled for an interview with a government official. The purpose of the interview is to determine whether the individual has a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country
- Wait for a decision: After the interview, the government agency will review the individual's application and make a decision about whether to grant asylum. This process can take several months or even years, depending on the country and the complexity of the case.
- Appeal a decision: If the individual's application for asylum is denied, they may be able to appeal the decision. In the United States, for example, asylum seekers can appeal to an immigration judge or file a motion to reopen their case.

The process can vary from country to country though. Below are some different procedural pieces the Refugee Resettlement Process has in The United States.

- The definition of a refugee: In the United States, a person seeking refugee status must meet the definition of a refugee as defined by the Refugee Act of 1980. This definition requires that the individual have a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. This definition is more narrow than the definition used by some other countries, which may also include those fleeing environmental disasters or other forms of violence.
- The asylum application process: In the United States, individuals seeking asylum must submit their application within one year of arriving in the country. This is a relatively short timeframe compared to some other countries, which may allow individuals to apply for asylum at any time during their stay.
- The role of the immigration court system: In the United States, asylum seekers who are denied asylum may have their case heard by an immigration judge. This is different from some other countries, which may have a separate appeals process for asylum seekers.
- The role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs): In the United States, NGOs such as Catholic Charities and the International Rescue Committee play an important role in

assisting refugees and asylum seekers. These organizations may provide refugees and asylum seekers with legal assistance, housing, and other services.

How are locations chosen as relocation centers?

The selection of locations for refugee resettlement centers is a collaborative process that involves multiple government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and local stakeholders. Here are a few factors that may be considered in the selection process:

1. Available resources: One of the primary considerations in selecting a location for a resettlement center is the availability of resources to support refugees. This may include access to affordable housing, employment opportunities, language classes, and other services.
2. Community support: It is important to select a location where there is strong community support for refugee resettlement. This may involve engaging with local leaders and organizations to build awareness and support for the resettlement effort.
3. Access to services: Resettlement centers are often located in urban areas where there is access to a wide range of services and resources, such as healthcare facilities, public transportation, and educational institutions.
4. Geographic proximity: Resettlement centers may be located in regions where there is already an established refugee community, which can provide a support network for new arrivals and help them to adjust to their new environment.
5. Government policy: The selection of resettlement center locations may also be influenced by government policy and priorities. For example, the U.S. government has historically prioritized the resettlement of refugees in areas where there is a shortage of affordable housing and a need for workers in specific industries.

Overall, the selection of locations for refugee resettlement centers is a complex and collaborative process that involves many stakeholders. The goal is to identify locations where refugees can receive the support and resources they need to rebuild their lives and integrate into their new communities.

How could a community properly prepare to serve as a refugee resettlement community?

1. Educate yourself: Learn about the refugee resettlement process and the challenges that refugees face as they adjust to life in a new country. Educate yourself about the cultures and backgrounds of refugees, and work to dispel common misconceptions and stereotypes.
2. Volunteer: Many nonprofit organizations and community groups rely on volunteers to support their work with refugees. Consider volunteering your time to provide language tutoring, transportation, or other services to refugees.
3. Donate: Nonprofit organizations that support refugee resettlement often rely on donations to fund their programs. Consider making a donation to a local or national organization that works with refugees.
4. Advocate: Speak out in support of refugee resettlement and work to build community support for refugees. Advocate for policies that support refugees, such as increased funding for resettlement programs or changes to immigration policy.
5. Build bridges: Help build connections between refugees and the broader community. Organize cultural exchange events or community dinners to bring people together and build understanding.
6. Offer employment opportunities: Refugees often struggle to find employment when they first arrive in a new country. Consider offering job opportunities or internships to refugees in your community.

7. Be welcoming: Finally, one of the most important things individuals can do to support refugee resettlement is to be welcoming and inclusive. Reach out to refugees in your community and offer your support and friendship as they adjust to their new surroundings.

DOK level 2 questions:

1. What are some of the challenges that refugees face as they resettle in a new country? (This question asks students to summarize and interpret information about the challenges that refugees face, requiring them to apply their understanding of the topic.)
2. How do nonprofit organizations support the resettlement of refugees in local communities? (This question asks students to explain and describe the role of nonprofit organizations in supporting refugee resettlement, requiring them to apply their knowledge of the topic.)
3. What factors are considered in selecting locations for refugee resettlement centers? (This question asks students to summarize and interpret information about the factors that are considered in selecting locations for refugee resettlement centers, requiring them to apply their understanding of the topic.)
4. How do government policies and priorities influence the resettlement of refugees? (This question asks students to explain and describe the role of government policies and priorities in refugee resettlement, requiring them to apply their knowledge of the topic.)
5. What is the role of the United Nations in supporting refugee resettlement efforts around the world? (This question asks students to explain and describe the role of the United Nations in supporting refugee resettlement, requiring them to apply their knowledge of the topic.)
6. How can communities work to build support and understanding for refugees? (This question asks students to interpret and evaluate information about the ways that communities can support and build understanding for refugees, requiring them to apply their understanding of the topic.)
7. What are some of the economic impacts of refugee resettlement in local communities? (This question asks students to summarize and interpret information about the economic impacts of refugee resettlement, requiring them to apply their understanding of the topic.)
8. How do language and cultural barriers impact the resettlement of refugees? (This question asks students to explain and describe the impact of language and cultural barriers on refugee resettlement, requiring them to apply their knowledge of the topic.)
9. What are some of the ways that refugees can contribute to the communities where they resettle? (This question asks students to summarize and interpret information about the ways that refugees can contribute to their communities, requiring them to apply their understanding of the topic.)
10. How can individuals get involved in supporting refugee resettlement in their communities? (This question asks students to evaluate and interpret information about ways that individuals can get involved in supporting refugee resettlement, requiring them to apply their understanding of the topic.)

DOK level 3 questions:

1. Evaluate the impact of language and cultural barriers on refugee resettlement, and propose strategies to address these barriers. (This is a DOK level 3 question because it requires students to analyze and evaluate information related to the impact of language and cultural barriers, and to propose solutions or strategies based on their analysis.)
2. Compare and contrast the economic impact of refugee resettlement on urban and rural communities, and evaluate the factors that contribute to these differences. (This is a DOK level 3 question because it requires students to analyze and evaluate information about the economic impact of refugee resettlement, and to compare and contrast different scenarios to arrive at a conclusion.)
3. Analyze the role of nonprofit organizations in supporting refugee resettlement, and propose changes to improve the effectiveness of these organizations. (This is a DOK level 3 question because it requires students to analyze and evaluate information related to the role of nonprofit organizations, and to propose solutions or changes based on their analysis.)
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of government policies in supporting refugee resettlement, and propose changes to improve these policies. (This is a DOK level 3 question because it requires students to evaluate and analyze information related to government policies, and to propose solutions or changes based on their analysis.)
5. Analyze the impact of community support on the success of refugee resettlement efforts, and propose strategies to increase community engagement and support. (This is a DOK level 3 question because it requires students to analyze and evaluate information related to the impact of community support, and to propose solutions or strategies based on their analysis.)
6. Develop a plan to address the housing needs of refugees in your community, considering factors such as affordability, accessibility, and cultural appropriateness. (This is a DOK level 3 question because it requires students to analyze and evaluate information related to housing needs, and to propose a detailed plan that addresses these needs.)
7. Evaluate the impact of refugee resettlement on the healthcare system in your community, and propose changes to improve healthcare access and quality for refugees. (This is a DOK level 3 question because it requires students to analyze and evaluate information related to healthcare access and quality, and to propose solutions or changes based on their analysis.)
8. Analyze the impact of climate change on patterns of global migration and refugee resettlement, and propose strategies to address the root causes of displacement. (This is a DOK level 3 question because it requires students to analyze and evaluate information related to the impact of climate change, and to propose solutions or strategies based on their analysis.)
9. Develop a plan to increase employment opportunities for refugees in your community, considering factors such as language barriers, skill levels, and discrimination. (This is a DOK level 3 question because it requires students to analyze and evaluate information related to employment opportunities, and to propose a detailed plan that addresses these needs.)
10. Evaluate the effectiveness of current immigration policies in the United States, and propose changes to improve the refugee resettlement process. (This is a DOK level 3 question because it requires students to evaluate and analyze information related to immigration policies, and to propose solutions or changes based on their analysis.)

Title: The Spero Project: A Journey of Compassion and Empowerment

Introduction:

The Spero Project, a non-profit organization founded in 2009, has been instrumental in making Oklahoma a more welcoming place for refugees. What began as a modest conversational English class for the Burmese community quickly evolved into a multifaceted initiative with a focus on partnership, support, and education. Over the years, The Spero Project has adapted its programs based on the needs and input of the refugees they serve. This narrative description aims to provide an overview of The Spero Project's work, highlighting its commitment to empowering refugees and building a more inclusive society.

Partnership and Listening:

The Spero Project believes in the power of community collaboration. Through partnerships and programs, the organization listens to the voices of newly resettled neighbors and incorporates their advice and perspectives into its initiatives. Volunteers have played a vital role in shaping The Spero Project's journey, contributing their time, skills, and passion to create a supportive environment for refugees.

Supporting Students:

A core aspect of The Spero Project's work is supporting refugee students in their educational journey. The organization hosts a daily after-school program for elementary school-age children, offering personalized support for post-elementary students, and leading a summer program focused on language acquisition and academic skills. Acting as a liaison between schools and the refugee community, The Spero Project provides translation services, transportation assistance, and works to overcome any barriers that hinder parental involvement in their children's education.

Empowering Adults:

Recognizing the unique challenges faced by adult refugees, The Spero Project offers comprehensive support to help them navigate their new lives in Oklahoma. They provide free weekly classes and

support for English language learning, citizenship, and driving. Moreover, they coordinate one-on-one tutoring, ensuring tailored instruction and support. The Spero Project also offers trauma-informed therapy services, emphasizing cultural sensitivity and ensuring language is not a barrier to care.

Partnering with Community Leaders:

The Spero Project values the insights and expertise of refugee community leaders. They actively collaborate with these leaders, resourcing them for community-wide events, connecting them with supportive networks, and providing platforms for them to share their unique experiences and aspirations. By amplifying their voices, The Spero Project fosters a sense of belonging and empowerment within the refugee community.

Educating the Community:

A crucial aspect of The Spero Project's mission is to educate the wider Oklahoma City community about refugee issues. They lead workshops, training sessions, and seminars to provide accurate information on forced displacement and refugee resettlement. By creating interactive experiences, they aim to foster personal understanding of the refugee journey, dispelling myths and promoting empathy and compassion.

Making a Difference:

The impact of The Spero Project's work is profound. In a world where less than 1% of displaced individuals find the opportunity to resettle in a new country, The Spero Project's dedication to welcoming refugees is commendable. By providing crucial resources, support, and education, they empower refugees to overcome adversity, build new lives, and contribute to their communities. The Spero Project's commitment to inclusivity, compassion, and advocacy sets a shining example for the entire community.

Conclusion:

The Spero Project's history and work exemplify the transformative power of community collaboration and empathy. Through their programs and partnerships, they support and empower refugees,

helping them navigate the challenges of resettlement and build a brighter future. From supporting students and resourcing adults to partnering with community leaders and educating the broader community, The Spero Project has made a lasting impact on the lives of refugees in Oklahoma. By fostering understanding, embracing diversity, and promoting inclusivity, The Spero Project serves as a beacon of hope and resilience in creating a more welcoming society.

The Spero Project's commitment to refugee resettlement extends beyond immediate needs. They recognize that refugees are not just recipients of aid, but individuals with unique skills, experiences, and dreams. By providing platforms for refugee community leaders to share their stories and aspirations, The Spero Project empowers refugees to shape their own destinies and become active contributors to their new communities.

The impact of The Spero Project's work can be seen in the lives of those they serve. Refugee students find a safe and nurturing environment where they can thrive academically and emotionally. Adult refugees are equipped with the tools and resources necessary to navigate the complexities of their new lives, enabling them to achieve self-sufficiency and resilience. The provision of trauma-informed therapy services ensures that the mental and emotional well-being of refugees is prioritized, recognizing the unique challenges they have faced.

Beyond direct support, The Spero Project understands the importance of fostering connections and understanding between refugees and the wider community. By educating Oklahoma City residents about forced displacement and refugee resettlement, they break down barriers and misconceptions, promoting empathy and cultivating a culture of inclusivity and acceptance.

The Spero Project's impact is not limited to their immediate programs and initiatives. They strive to create a ripple effect in the community by inspiring others to get involved and make a difference. Their emphasis on volunteerism and engagement encourages individuals to extend a helping hand and contribute their time, resources, and expertise to support refugees. By mobilizing collective action, The Spero Project creates a network of compassionate individuals dedicated to building a more inclusive society.

In conclusion, The Spero Project's history and work exemplify the transformative potential of compassion, partnership, and education. Through their unwavering commitment to welcoming refugees, they have provided vital support, resources, and empowerment to those forced to leave their homes and rebuild their lives. The Spero Project's collaborative approach, listening to the voices of refugees and valuing their contributions, fosters a sense of belonging and resilience. Their dedication to educating the community and inspiring collective action amplifies the impact of their work, creating a more compassionate and inclusive society. As Oklahoma continues to be enriched by the presence and contributions of refugees, The Spero Project remains a beacon of hope, demonstrating the power of unity and empathy in transforming lives and communities.

Title: Reflective Analysis: CAIR Oklahoma's Impact in the Refugee Community

Introduction:

CAIR Oklahoma, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, plays a significant role in supporting and advocating for refugees in the state. Through our recent visit with Jennifer Hund, the refugee coordinator for CAIR, we gained insights into the organization's work and its impact on the refugee community. This reflective analysis aims to delve deeper into CAIR's efforts, exploring the key aspects of their work and highlighting their contributions to refugee resettlement.

Understanding Refugee Challenges:

CAIR Oklahoma recognizes the multitude of challenges faced by refugees on their journey. Our discussion with Jennifer Hund and subsequent reflections revealed that hunger and the search for a safe and stable home are common obstacles refugees encounter. Additionally, refugees often grapple with language barriers and the need to adapt to new cultures. CAIR's commitment to understanding and addressing these challenges allows them to provide crucial support to refugees during their resettlement process.

Navigating Difficulties:

As we explored the role of CAIR Oklahoma in assisting refugees, we discovered that language support and cultural guidance are vital services offered by the organization. Jennifer Hund shared her experiences in helping refugees develop language skills, understand American customs, and integrate into the local community. CAIR's efforts in navigating these difficulties enable refugees to overcome communication barriers and foster a sense of belonging in their new environment.

Activities and Accomplishments:

During our visit, it became evident that CAIR Oklahoma has been actively involved in numerous activities that have had a positive impact on refugee resettlement. One noteworthy accomplishment is the organization's collection and distribution of donated clothing for refugees. This initiative not only addresses a practical need but also symbolizes a warm welcome and a sense of community

support. Moreover, CAIR has successfully assisted refugees in their resettlement process, helping them find housing and providing access to vital resources. These achievements reflect CAIR's commitment to empowering refugees and facilitating their transition to a new life.

Strategic Resource Allocation:

A key aspect we explored was how CAIR Oklahoma strategically utilizes and dispenses the resources at their disposal. We learned that the organization maintains a resource center where essential items are made available to refugees. By ensuring fair distribution during meetings, CAIR emphasizes equity and inclusivity, aiming to assist as many families as possible rather than focusing solely on individual cases. This approach aligns with the values of compassion and collective support that are essential in refugee resettlement.

Community Involvement and Support:

Our discussion with Jennifer Hund shed light on the various ways individuals can engage with CAIR Oklahoma's refugee resettlement project. We discovered that people can contribute by donating money, clothes, school resources, and regular essentials. Additionally, volunteering plays a crucial role in supporting the organization's initiatives. The students recognized the significance of community involvement and its impact on fostering a welcoming environment for refugees.

Conclusion:

CAIR Oklahoma's work in the refugee community showcases their dedication to alleviating the challenges faced by refugees during the resettlement process. Through our visit and subsequent reflections, we witnessed the organization's efforts in addressing language barriers, cultural adaptation, and resource provision. CAIR's commitment to equitable resource distribution and their inclusive approach demonstrates their commitment to supporting multiple families rather than just a few individuals. By actively engaging the community through volunteer opportunities and encouraging donations, CAIR Oklahoma fosters a sense of solidarity and compassion in the pursuit of a more inclusive society. Their contributions in refugee resettlement are a testament to their impactful work and dedication to serving the needs of refugees in Oklahoma.

Step-by-Step Plan: Becoming a Refugee Resettlement Community

1. Assess Community Readiness: Begin by assessing the community's readiness and capacity to serve as a refugee resettlement community. Evaluate existing resources, infrastructure, and services that can support the needs of refugees. Consider factors such as housing availability, healthcare facilities, educational institutions, language services, employment opportunities, and social support networks.
2. Research Legal and Regulatory Requirements: Familiarize yourself with the legal and regulatory requirements associated with refugee resettlement. Understand the laws, policies, and procedures at the local, state, and national levels that govern the resettlement process. Identify any licensing, accreditation, or certification processes necessary to engage in refugee support activities.
3. Establish Partnerships: Forge partnerships with local organizations, community groups, faith-based institutions, and government agencies that can provide support and collaborate on refugee resettlement efforts. These partnerships may include refugee resettlement agencies, social service providers, schools, healthcare providers, employers, and volunteer networks.
4. Identify Resettlement Agencies: Connect with established resettlement agencies that have experience and expertise in working with refugees. Collaborate with these agencies to understand their processes, requirements, and best practices for resettlement. Determine if there are any opportunities for collaboration or potential gaps in services that the community can address.
5. Conduct Community Education and Awareness Programs: Educate the community about refugees, their experiences, and the benefits of welcoming and supporting them. Organize workshops, seminars, and community events to dispel myths, promote cultural understanding, and build empathy. Foster an environment that values diversity and promotes inclusion.
6. Mobilize Volunteers: Recruit and train volunteers who are willing to dedicate their time, skills, and resources to support refugees. Establish volunteer programs that provide orientation, training, and ongoing support to ensure volunteers are equipped to address the diverse needs of refugees. Develop a database of volunteers and their areas of expertise to match them with appropriate roles.
7. Build Supportive Services: Create or enhance existing services that cater to the specific needs of refugees. This may include language classes, employment assistance, healthcare access, mental health support, legal aid, and cultural orientation programs. Collaborate with local service providers to ensure culturally sensitive and responsive services are available.
8. Secure Housing and Basic Needs: Identify available housing options that meet the needs of refugee families. Coordinate with landlords, housing authorities, and nonprofits to secure safe and affordable housing. Establish partnerships with organizations or community members willing to donate furniture, household items, and other basic necessities to help refugees establish their new homes.
9. Develop Employment Opportunities: Work with local employers and businesses to create job opportunities for refugees. Facilitate job training programs, vocational skills development,

and language support to enhance refugees' employability. Establish connections with workforce development agencies and organizations that specialize in refugee employment.

10. Foster Social Integration: Promote social integration and community engagement for refugees. Encourage participation in community activities, clubs, and events. Foster connections between refugees and local residents to foster mutual understanding, cultural exchange, and social cohesion. Create platforms for refugees to share their skills, talents, and cultural heritage.
11. Establish Long-term Support Systems: Recognize that successful resettlement is an ongoing process. Develop long-term support systems to ensure refugees continue to receive assistance beyond their initial resettlement period. This may include mentorship programs, ongoing language and skills development, and access to community resources.
12. Monitor and Evaluate: Continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the community's efforts in serving as a refugee resettlement community. Seek feedback from refugees, volunteers, and service providers to identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments to programs and services.

By following this step-by-step plan, a community can work towards becoming a welcoming and supportive refugee resettlement community. The engagement of the community, collaboration with various stakeholders, and the establishment of comprehensive support systems will contribute to the successful integration of refugees into the community. It is crucial to maintain open lines of communication and adapt strategies based on the evolving needs of refugees. Regular evaluation of the resettlement programs and services will ensure their effectiveness and enable continuous improvement.

Becoming a refugee resettlement community requires collective effort, empathy, and a commitment to inclusivity. By following this step-by-step plan, the community can lay a solid foundation for providing refugees with the support they need to rebuild their lives and thrive in their new home. Through collaboration and understanding, the community can create an environment where refugees are welcomed, valued, and empowered to contribute to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of the community.

The step-by-step plan aligns with the expectations of a Geo-Inquiry Project in several ways:

1. Geographic Perspective: The plan recognizes the importance of understanding the geographic context and dynamics of both the community and the refugee crisis. It emphasizes the need to gather data and analyze the community's capacity and resources, as well as considering the unique circumstances and challenges faced by refugees.
2. Asking Geographic Questions: The plan encourages asking relevant geographic questions, such as understanding the demographic makeup of the community, assessing infrastructure and service availability, and considering the spatial distribution of resources. These questions help to guide the planning process and ensure that the community is adequately prepared to support refugee resettlement.
3. Acquiring Geographic Information: The plan highlights the importance of gathering accurate and up-to-date geographic information about the community, including demographic data, infrastructure maps, and resource inventories. This information enables informed decision-making and resource allocation, ensuring that the community can effectively meet the needs of refugees.
4. Organizing Geographic Information: The plan emphasizes the need to organize and analyze geographic information in a meaningful way. This could involve creating maps, conducting spatial analyses, and visualizing data to identify patterns, gaps, and opportunities within the community. Organizing information geographically helps stakeholders understand the spatial implications of their actions and make informed decisions.
5. Analyzing Geographic Information: The plan incorporates the analysis of geographic information to assess the community's readiness for refugee resettlement. This analysis involves evaluating existing infrastructure, identifying areas of strength and weakness, and understanding the spatial distribution of resources. By examining this information, the community can identify areas that require improvement and develop targeted strategies to address those needs.
6. Acting on Geographic Understanding: The plan emphasizes the importance of taking action based on geographic understanding. It outlines concrete steps for community engagement, resource mobilization, stakeholder collaboration, and the establishment of support systems.

By acting on geographic understanding, the community can effectively implement the necessary initiatives to become a resilient and inclusive refugee resettlement community.

Overall, the step-by-step plan aligns with the expectations of a Geo-Inquiry Project by applying geographic perspectives, asking relevant questions, acquiring and organizing geographic information, analyzing spatial data, and taking action based on geographic understanding. It promotes an informed and comprehensive approach to preparing a community for refugee resettlement, considering the geographic context and leveraging spatial knowledge to guide decision-making and support effective implementation.