



ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT
of CHILD SAFETY
Parent Advisory
Collaborative

Parent Voice AZ

Did You Know? Refugees

Refugees are people fleeing from wars or ongoing conflicts, violence against religious or ethnic minorities, political instability, and oppression. Refugees are regular people who are trying to find safety for themselves and their families. There are over 25 million refugees worldwide and approximately 80% of refugees are women and children. The average stay in a refugee camp is at least 10 years and 98% of refugees are never resettled in a third country.

Where do refugees come from? Refugees come from countries that are experiencing conflict or instability. For example, warring factions in the Democratic Republic of Congo target civilians and ethnic minorities. Another example of the instability is the government in Eritrea persecutes ethnic minorities and forces young men into unending involuntary military service. As well as in Burma, ethnic and religious minorities have experienced attempted genocide and violence from the government for decades. Some refugees assisted United States military troops in exchange for the promise of protection and safe passage to the U.S. for themselves and their families.

Why come to the United States? Why don't they stay in the host country they originally fled to, and make a life there? Most want to go back to their homes and would, if it was safe. They are also willing to integrate into the country they fled to, but due to laws and other restrictions, it is not usually possible for refugees to integrate fully into their new host countries. Many host countries do not allow refugees the same rights as their citizens. There may be restrictions on refugees' access to work, education, housing, movement within the country, or citizenship. When there is no hope of returning home, no way to build a new life in their host country, and the refugee or family are considered especially vulnerable, then the United Nations may refer them for resettlement in another country.



PARENTING TIP

Having difficulty with children putting away their toys? Try these tips:

Make it a game to see who cleans up the fastest or first.

Provide positive reinforcement if they clean up in a certain time or if they do it on their own.

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How do they get here? What happens when they arrive? Once the United Nations refers a person or family for resettlement, the refugee or family goes onto a waiting list until a government decides to take their case. The United States' screening process includes interviews, background checks with eight different federal agencies and takes years to complete. Once the screening process is completed, the refugee is assigned to a city to live in and an agency to assist in resettlement. The United States government contracts with a resettlement agency to provide basic needs such as housing, obtaining social security cards and employment authorization, enrolling their children in school, free English classes, and assistance finding a job. It is required that most refugees are working and paying their own bills within three months after arriving in the United States. Refugees can return to their resettlement agency for services up to five years after arrival.



After five years in the United States, refugees are eligible to apply for citizenship.

Upon arrival in the United States, refugees find life and rules in their new home may be different from where they originated from. Refugee parents learn that corporal punishment is not acceptable. In some countries, preferred discipline methods may include spanking kids to teach

“In some countries, preferred discipline methods may include spanking kids to teach them right from wrong.”

them right from wrong. As with any parent, if you take away their main discipline method without replacing it with other techniques, it creates a situation where parents do not know what to do. Parents will either feel helpless to control their children's behavior or they will revert to what they know works, despite the risk.

Different cultures have different ideas about gender roles, expectations of parents and children, and parenting practices. Faith is often deeply important to refugees and these parenting practices may be reinforced by religious teachings such as, “Spare the rod, spoil the child.” In many cultures refugees come from very large families, mothers are responsible for childcare and household work, and older daughters are required to assist in performing these tasks. Children may be expected to take care of themselves or siblings at much younger ages than we would permit in the United States. Part of what makes it safe for parents to let younger children be alone, or wander freely, is the cultural expectation that all adults are keeping an eye on the children and may help or discipline children as needed. There is no need for a designated babysitter or for constant supervision by an adult, since all adults are watching all the children. This village style parenting mentality may also assist families that struggle. If a parent is struggling due to issues such as single parenting or mental illness, the village or ethnic community may step in to help care for the children.

Different cultures also have different ideas about standards of living. Depending on where they come from, things like multiple bedrooms, electricity, or indoor plumbing may not have been available. Many rural families lived in one-room huts and refugee camps often provided a single small shelter for the entire family. Food insecurity is common, especially in places where rations are the only source of food. When life is uncertain, one lives in the moment. When you never know what tomorrow will bring, people do not plan beyond today. The idea of making appointments and scheduling everything is very American.

When refugee families become involved with DCS, there are often extra barriers that make it difficult for them to work with DCS. The language barrier may cause problems for parents who want to attend programs or who are required to attend classes. Often the only interpretation available is Spanish, leaving out parents who speak different languages. Additionally, previous education levels can vary widely. Refugees often have not had the opportunity to attend school or may only have attended a few years of primary school. They may not be literate in their home language, which means even with a document translated into their home language, they still may not be able to read it. Lack of education and lack of English also limits employment opportunities. Another barrier faced is a lack of understanding of American government systems and courts. As one mother said, "I didn't go to court because I didn't do anything wrong." Parents may not understand why they must do certain things like attend classes or get an apartment with more bedrooms. They may not be able to work and attend required meetings or court dates due to lack of experience in juggling schedules.

What can DCS do to help refugees? Child abuse prevention programs and required DCS programs need to be more inclusive of multiple languages and educational levels. Programs can include outreach to the refugee communities through the resettlement agencies, ethnic community leaders, and other organizations that have established relationships with refugee communities. Just as we do for other families, we must include trauma informed care. While many of the adverse childhood experiences relate to all people, refugee parents have experienced additional traumas such as war, genocide, or torture. We also need to be extra understanding that cultural differences affect parents' ability to understand and comply with expectations. *Michelle Buttrum*

Poem by Warsan Shire

*You have to understand,
no one puts their children in
a boat
unless the water is safer
than the land.*

*No one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a
shark.*

*You only run for the border
when you see the whole city
running as well.*

To learn more about refugees, see <https://www.lss-sw.org/refugeeservices>, <https://des.az.gov/services/basic-needs/refugee-resettlement>, and <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/refugees>.



Resource -The Welcome to America project (WTAP)



The Welcome to America Project celebrates refugees and accelerates their self-sufficiency by providing personal, meaningful welcomes and continued connections. We share transportation, technology and transformational resources to enhance success, so that refugees do not just resettle in our country, they find community and flourish.

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No matter what we share, the welcome matters most. Ask a refugee who we welcomed 15 years ago what they remember. They'll be appreciative of the furniture and household items but the real energy they share comes from the welcome itself. They'll never forget the many people who came to their door, smiling faces who said, "Welcome to America," a trajectory-setting hello. Yes, we share furniture and household items to make a house a home. The same sort of items that family/friends shared with you when you got your start at independence. Independence is in fact, interdependent. But the welcomes, human-to-human welcomes matter most changing lives for refugees and for our volunteers.

WTAP also shares very strategic items. We share clothes to ready refugees for job interviews, allow school kids a change of outfits and properly attire families for their faith services. We share toiletries and cleaning kits, not wanting families to choose between soap and soup. We share computers to seek/secure jobs and bikes for transportation to work, shopping and school, freedom for the newly freed.

Beginning in 2021, we will share the greatest gift of all, an online language program designed to improve refugee English-language skills and digital literacy. Yes, we will welcome with words. Arizona State University's Education for Humanity has partnered with WTAP to offer language programs to our Arizona refugee community. No doubt, this is our most important initiative since the days of our very first welcomes. Refugee integration and ascension in community can be enhanced with these new language abilities. We've always wanted to welcome in ways that refugees talk about. With your help, they'll talk about us in English!

So how can you and your family be a part of our welcoming community? (We are very family friendly with all ages welcome to welcome!). You can reach out for assistance or you can learn our urgent needs at wtap.org and also find ways to stay current - Instagram, Facebook, newsletter. Maybe your family can organize a drive in your neighborhood, school, club, place of work or place of worship. As COVID quarantines clear, we'll be adding volunteer events that you might wish to join. We are all a part of the welcome. What role will you play? *Mike Sullivan, The Welcome to America Project*

THE WELCOME TO AMERICA PROJECT

Imagine yourself in a place you've never been, where they speak a language you do not know. You arrived with a single suitcase, no savings and need to find work to support yourself - housing, food, clothing, etc. - within 6 months of your arrival. Plus, you might even have read news stories suggesting you are not welcome in your new land, already having faced similar trauma in your old land. Feeling overwhelmed?

*That's where **WTAP** comes in, providing welcomes that last lifetimes and resources to connect to community.*

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Parent advisory bio– Michelle Buttrum



I worked in banking before becoming a stay at home mom for 13 years. During that time I volunteered for 2 years as a Board Member and Treasurer with WVSA Booster Club and earned my B.S. in Family & Human Development, with a minor in Sociology, at ASU. Summer of 2016, I went to Lesbos Island, Greece for an international internship through ASU, where I spent my time in a refugee camp. Upon returning, I knew that working with refugees was my passion and interned at LSS-SW during my final semester in their Children’s Services department. In 2017, I began working at LSS-SW as the Children’s Services Specialist and am now the Education Coordinator. In my job, I’m the school liaison working with over 10 different local school districts, supervise the interpretation staff with over 17 languages, and oversee adult education classes including Cultural Orientation for newly arrived refugees. One of my goals is to offer the refugee community programming that not only supports their children, but also supports the whole family in learning skills to thrive in the U.S.

I have 3 wonderful children, ages 11, 14, and 17. I’ve lived in the metro-Phoenix area for most of my life. I grew up in an abusive household, but there was no outside intervention. I always knew I wanted to give my kids a better childhood than I had, so I sought out resources to help me. I learned to become the mother I wanted to be. I learned coping skills for when my emotions were triggered and went to therapy to deal with trauma. I joined the PAC because I wanted to become more involved in child abuse prevention, learn how people like me who had few parenting skills could be supported locally, and to advocate for refugee families, which are often left out of community activities due to language and other barriers .

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