

Checklist For Volunteers

The following are areas that you and your group can be a FRIEND to your refugee family. Friends make memories and laugh together and sometimes they learn things along the way as well as they experience a lot of “firsts” together. The agency is responsible for footwork and finances. Volunteers are responsible to be a support and encouragement and a faithful friend.

This is just a list of suggestions. It is imperative that the point person keep in touch with the case manager while working through this checklist. If you do one of these activities, please check it and estimate the number of hours you spent on this task.

This will be an easy way to communicate with the resettlement agency what is taking place and how often.

- ❑ If your family has not arrived yet, help the agency set up their apartment contributing any donations you might have collected.
- ❑ With permission from the agency, greet your family at the airport. You can take an American flag, flowers, welcome signs or balloons. The case manager and translator will be there as well. They may need help with transportation, but it is not necessary for everyone in your group to follow the family to their new home. Keep in mind that the family would have been traveling for a day or two, so will be tired and hungry and anxious to get to their new home.
- ❑ Have fun with your family! Many new families experience isolation and loneliness, but what they need is community and immersion. Take them to the zoo, the swap meet, street fair, Sabino Canyon, nearest Dollar Store, etc.
- ❑ Read to them. It develops their brain and learning skills and the kids will do better in school. Encourage men volunteers to read as well to model for the refugee men that they can do it too.
- ❑ Play games. Teach them some American games and songs. Our international friends can often learn some important cultural rules by playing games, such as taking turns. Ask them to teach you some songs and games from their home country.
- ❑ Teach the days of the week and practice using a calendar for appointments and bill due dates (especially rent and volunteer visits).
- ❑ Practice understanding U.S. currency and coins.
- ❑ The agencies provide an apartment living orientation, but our refugee friends could always use friendly reminders. Teach your family some apartment living skills: purpose of a smoke alarm, how to regulate thermostat, best ways to conserve energy in their home, what to keep in fridge and freezer, how to store food (introduce them to Tupperware), how to use stove and microwave, when to clean house, how to use washing machine, dryer and vacuum.
- ❑ To aid in learning English, help your family learn the vocabulary words for items in their own apartment. Go through the house and put English labels on everything, and include the word in their own language so that when they take it down it will still be a useful flashcard. (Keep in mind the family might not be literate, so do not expect that they will be able to read this. If they are not literate, start with only a few items.)
- ❑ Supplement English learning while your refugee family is attending English classes. Each client should be encouraged to attend ESL at Pima Community College. Their attendance record is often used for potential employers and is really important.
- ❑ Phone numbers: Make sure they have your phone number, the number for their resettlement agency and the name of their case manager. It also helps to explain how to use 911 (only in case of emergency!). Post names and address and other important info by the phone in case of emergency. Practice saying the cross streets or address in English, should they need to call for help.
- ❑ Help refugees understand and recognize what comes in the mail (i.e. bills, advertisements, junk mail, scams). Educate them about identity theft and other scams.
- ❑ Get State ID's for adults from MVD (motor vehicle department). The refugee family will need to pay \$12.00 for this ID because the resettlement agency generally does not pay for this.

- Orientation to a grocery store (great ESL activity!). Practice getting to the store, using food stamps card and entering PIN, choosing healthiest and cheapest products, pharmacy section (prescription vs over the counter drugs), and using discount cards (Fry's VIP card, etc.). See *"English As You Go"* document for helpful store orientation hints. Please note that food stamps DO NOT cover non-food items.
- Find the closest park. (Can they walk? Take the bus?)
- Visit the library together and help them obtain a library card and find out what services are offered there. See *"English As You Go"* document for helpful library orientation hints.
- Locate culturally appropriate market where they can get food from their country. (see RESOURCES FOR REFUGEES guide for stores)
- Visit the Post Office and do an orientation. How do you mail a letter? How do you use stamps? You may also need to get a key to their mailbox here (take rental lease agreement with you). See *"English As You Go"* document for helpful post office orientation hints.
- Some resettlement agencies provide bus orientations that show refugees how to get around town. As a volunteer you could participate in the orientation with your new friends, and then ride the bus around town for fun. You could show them how to take the bus to important locations like their resettlement agency, the closest grocery store, or ESL classes at Pima Adult Education. Visit <http://www.suntran.com> for route information or grab a schedule book at the library or bus garage.
- Help with checking and savings accounts. Do they have a bank account? Where is the best place to bank without extra charges? Some resettlement agencies have teamed with a local bank to provide financial literacy trainings. As a volunteer it would be helpful if you participate in the training with them and then practice check writing or how to interpret their bank statement. Possibly talk about a budget. Remind refugee friends NEVER to pay rent or bills with cash!
- National "do not call" registry (www.donotcall.gov or 1-888-382-1222). Advise refugees not to give out confidential information over the phone!
- Case managers set up the utilities for refugees, so helping your family to register for utility discount programs with Quest and Tucson Electric Power and Southwest Gas proves useful in times of need. Let your refugee friend do as much of the process as possible, especially since the companies will not give you any info without the permission of head of household. (see RESOURCES FOR REFUGEES guide or check company websites for information)
- Sign up family for WIC if they are pregnant or have children under the age of 5. (see RESOURCES FOR REFUGEES guide, but check with agency before you make the appointment)
- Take the family to the nearest diaper bank if there are babies/toddlers, and the nearest food bank if there are needs. Help them get signed up and then let them be the ones to return. (see RESOURCES FOR REFUGEES guide for locations)
- If your family is expecting a baby and you would like to throw a baby shower for her, contact denton@tucsonrefugeeministry.com to learn about how to throw a successful cross-cultural shower.
- Keep track of your mileage and hours spent with refugee family and record them for Matching Grant funds. Please turn these in to the agency at the end of the month.
- Case managers from the resettlement agencies are available for transportation to and from doctor's appointments, but often times do not have the time to stay. Wait with them at doctor appointments, as this is a good time to have a friend around. You can also help them write down the appointment in their medical log (provided by some agencies) for record keeping purposes.

Agency Responsibilities

The following are areas that the agency is responsible for. There is some crossover when the agency requests help, but the primary responsibility for volunteers is to be a faithful friend and offer encouragement and support as our new international friends start their new life in America. To give you a brief overview of responsibilities that the resettlement agency will complete within 90 days of arrival, see the list below:

- Set up apartment for not-yet-arrived refugee family.
- Meet refugee family at the airport and provide a translator if needed.
- Home orientation upon arrival.
- Provide orientations on different topics (in which the volunteer may actively participate), including:
 - Financial Literacy Orientation
 - Bus Orientation
 - Cultural Orientation
 - Employment Orientation
 - The US Health System Orientation
 - Apartment Living Skills
 - School Orientation (for families with children registering in TUSD schools)
 - Immigration Orientation (by appointment)
- Visit D.E.S. (Dept. of Economic Security) to secure benefits... food stamps, health insurance, and sometimes cash assistance.
- Obtain social security card.
- Schedule mandatory TB test and first doctor check-ups for family members.
- Determine Matching Grant eligibility (an employment assistance program and extra funds).
- Register adults for English classes.
- Enroll children in school.
- Ensure that the family has a copy of the apartment lease and understands apartment rules.
- Obtain low income bus pass. The agency pays for the first one and then the family is responsible to renew their own bus pass after the first one expires.
- Job Development specialists at the agency help employable family members secure a job. They create a basic resume and gather applications for employment opportunities.
- Transportation to first doctor's appointments.
- Connect refugees to community resources.



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