

Ethiopian Community Development Council, Vermont

Topic: Strengths and Challenges of Afghan
Resettlement in VT -the perspective of the
resettlement organizations



Presentation to medical providers

July 13, 2022

Who are Refugees?

- People who have been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.
- People who are refugees come from many different countries from around the world and most are hosted in neighboring countries.
- Of the 89.3 million displaced people (53.3 internally displaced, 4.6 million asylum seekers & 27.1 refugees Ref UNHCR) in 2022, only less than 1% of all refugees are resettled each year and the U.S. remains a beacon of hope for majority of people living as refugees. Btw 2021 to 22, about 76,000 Afghans were evacuated to US.
- ECDC has resettled 6,000+ Afghans to communities across the U.S. and only 107 in Southern Vermont between Jan to June, 2022



Who decides which refugees come to the US?

- The U.S. has a long history of welcoming refugees, even before its founding.
- In 1980 the Refugee Act was passed, which is the legal framework for refugee resettlement in the U.S.
- Each year the President, in consultation with Congress, sets the number of refugees allowed into the country, called the Presidential Determination. The # for 2022 is 125,000.
- An individual must first qualify as a refugee by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and then be referred to the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).
- Once approved, refugees are settled through the Reception and Placement (R&P) program which is under the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM).



What is the determination process like?

- Lengthy process that takes one to several years.
- Individuals go through
 - eligibility interviews
 - extensive background checks
- Once preliminary approval is complete they undergo
 - medical examinations
 - initial cultural orientation
- Individuals wait to be booked for travel by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).



How is it decided which city refugees go to?

- Most refugees coming to the US have “US tie” contact which influences placement.
- There are nine national refugee resettlement agencies, of which ECDC is one, who each have contractual annual targets.
- Each week there is a meet and decide meeting about which organization will take which arrivals.
- ECDC has an internal Weekly allocations process to determine, among the arrivals it will receive each week, where it will place individuals/families.
- Arrivals are placed across ECDC’s 15 sites across its network of affiliate organizations and branch offices, based on such as language capacity, housing availability, family ties, existing community, etc.



Strengths of Afghan Resettlement in VT

- Small State-Easy to reach key players.
- State and Federal Agencies technical & financial support.
- Public support (town admin., law enforcement, transport, employers, Academic Institutions etc). Good social services (Medicaid, 3square vt, Rental Assistance.
- Network of volunteers (for us co-sponsorship teams)
- Service providers (hospitals, pharmacies, schools etc) willingness to learn and play their part.
- Prior community (Afghan community, USCRI, AALV, Northern healthcare providers,) willingness to help and share lessons.



Challenges of Afghan Resettlement in VT

- Distance from Brattleboro to nearest airport
- Limited service providers with experience in refugees resettlement
- Clear roles of responsibility & limited communications between RAs and other providers
- Huge community interest and sometimes wanting to dictate how resettlement should be.
- Cultural competencies in service delivery
- Language accessibility
- Cultural competency (e.g female client do not want to see a male Doctor)
- Local politics
- Availability of healthcare providers with multicultural background (ex translation & interpretation, mental health etc).
- Recruiting qualified staff



Way forward

- The resettlement agency (ECDC) works with service providers, volunteers, and local organizations to deliver services and support refugee families to integrate successfully and become self-sufficient.
- Service providers, state partners, and other community stakeholder meet on a quarterly basis to provide updates, exchange information, and share best practices related to resettlement.
- Continue community volunteers involvement in the resettlement process and help newcomers with longer-term integration.
- Ongoing cultural competency trainings for providers- learning from the community itself.



Thank you for your support!
Together we can make an inclusive
and welcoming community for
newcomers in Vermont.

Questions?

Contact us: info@ecdcus.org

