Cultural Mentoring & Exchange Program

A TEAM APPROACH TO WALKING ALONGSIDE NEWLY ARRIVED REFUGEES & ASYLEES

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Welcome and Thank You!

Cultural mentorship helps in various ways to meet the practical, emotional, and logistical needs of a newly arrived refugee family. It is a commitment to welcome and embrace others by assisting with resettlement. Your warm welcome and practical help enable refugees to become self-sufficient and independent as quickly as possible.

This volunteer opportunity is not a matter of financial obligation but instead of time and energy that often brings life-changing friendships and a greater understanding of and respect for displaced people worldwide. It is a cultural exchange and, most importantly, a friendship!

The Lutheran Family Services Refugee & Asylee Program is committed to equipping volunteers to support newly arrived refugee families during their first few months in the United States. This manual will help guide mentors as they walk with a refugee family through their first adjustments.

We do not want you to go into this feeling that you’re not ready, don’t have the proper resources, and are being asked to do too much. Our hope is that this information will help with confidence and perspective as you take on this new opportunity.

Remember...

- To keep reasonable expectations. Make sure to balance your passion to reach out to others with your personal and family responsibilities and needs.
- To confidently direct your own learning process. Explore, research, and take advantage of our many resources in order to become as self-sufficient as your new refugee friends are working to be.
- Your life will be impacted by this experience. Even if you don’t become best friends, their lives and stories will change your life; this program is called an exchange program because the families who are matched with our teams have a lot to offer to you. Many mentors find that they receive much more than they give.

Please Note: The guidelines in the section entitled: LFS Volunteer Programming: COVID Policies and Procedures (pp. 21-22) will take precedence over any conflicting guidelines in this handbook in order to follow local, state, and federal health & safety regulations.
Section 1: Introductory Refugee Information

Important Definitions

The UNHCR gives the following definition for a refugee:

*A person who is residing outside the country of his or her origin due to fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.*

The UNHCR gives the following definition for an asylee:

*A person already in the United States who receives protected status and is unable to return home for the same reasons that refugees are unable to return home.*

LFSRM (and Cultural Mentoring Teams) serves several designations of documented refugees:
- UNHCR refugees
- Asylees
- SIV (special immigration visas exclusively for Iraq and Afghanistan)
- VOT (victims of trafficking)
- Cuban/Haitian entrants
- Amerasians

New Refugee Abilities & Needs

Refugees come to the United States with many different experiences, cultures, languages, and educational backgrounds. Each family and individual will have their own abilities, needs, and comfort levels. It is important to listen and be flexible when working to help them increase their skills culturally, linguistically, financially, etc.

Here are some examples of questions to ask or abilities/needs to observe:

- How independent do the different family members feel themselves to be?
- Is communication possible? Are patience and effort required? Is it a primary challenge?
- What is the level of proficiency in English? Low to high? Minimal to none?
- What level of education do the different family members possess? Basic to extensive? Minimal to none?
- How employable are the different family members? Low? Moderate? Overqualified?
- Is there a family/ethnic community in the city that can help them resettle?
Each family and individual that we serve possesses a unique and diverse culture. It is important to remember that they also have a personal journey that they have travelled to reach where they are today. This story will be just as different as each of ours is. Keep in mind that, regardless of the family’s background, needs, and abilities, your role is two-fold. You are to help the family become self-sufficient, and you are to be a welcoming friend who receives enriching knowledge and experience from your new friends.

**Additional Facts About Refugees**

- Refugees are the most highly screened immigrants coming to the USA.
  - 4 types of UNHCR background information gathering
  - US government screening including:
    - 8 U.S. government agencies
    - 5 separate security databases
    - 6 background checks
    - 3 in-person interviews

- There are 9 national resettlement agencies that operate in the USA:

  ![Resettlement Agencies](image.png)

- The Refugee Act of 1980 gives the Oval Office the responsibility of determining how many refugee visas to issue each fiscal year.

- Funding Supports for New Arrivals
  - Reception & Placement (R&P): $1025 per person
  - Eligible for Medicaid & SNAP
  - Families with children are eligible also for the TANF program

- According to a RISE survey, friendship with those outside the person’s own ethnic community was the greatest indicator and predictor of successful integration.

- For further information and resources, visit the LFSRM website:
Section 2: Cultural Mentoring Program

The mission of Lutheran Family Services is to help refugees resettle into a secure, stable environment and successfully move toward self-sufficiency. The best interests of our clients are our most important priority. Local volunteers (individuals, churches, and community organizations) are our most valued resources as we seek to accomplish this mission.

This mission and understanding is the foundation for the current partnership with Denver Rescue Mission to facilitate the Cultural Mentorship Program. This collaborative serves approximately 45 families each year with a 6-month program that provides initial assistance in four areas: financial literacy, employment, English, and life skills.

Partner Organizations

**Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains**

The Refugee & Asylee (R&A) Programs are seven programs within Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains (LFSRM). The R&A Programs are an affiliate of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS) based in Baltimore, Maryland. LIRS was organized in 1939 to resettle refugees fleeing the Nazi advance in Europe. Since then, LIRS has become recognized as a premier leader among refugee resettlement agencies in the U.S. and is the second-largest such organization in the U.S. The R&A Programs are based on the east side of downtown Denver and maintain sub-offices in Colorado Springs, Greeley, and Albuquerque, New Mexico.

*About 45 families per year are eligible to participate in our collaborative program with Denver Rescue Mission who provides rental support and incentives. Not all families are in the program.*

**Denver Rescue Mission**

Founded in 1892, the Denver Rescue Mission (DRM) is the oldest full-service Christian charity in the Rocky Mountain region. Its motto is “Changing lives in the name of Christ,” which it seeks to do through meeting basic needs and providing rehabilitation and transitional programs. Started in 1988, Family Rescue Ministry (FRM) is the Family Services branch of the Denver Rescue Mission. It seeks to place homeless families in the Denver area into housing and match each family with mentors to help guide them towards success and self-sufficiency. Seeking the opportunity to offer aid to more international families, Family Refugee Services began a partnership with the Refugee & Asylee Programs of Lutheran Family Services in 2003. The two organizations shared a similar vision, that refugee families could best be served by mentor teams who were willing to meet their needs at a personal and relational level. FRS helps recruit and support mentor teams and provides additional resources and cash incentives for each refugee family.
Program Overview

The cultural mentoring program is facilitated through a joint partnership between LFSRM and DRM. Each cultural mentoring team typically consists of a group of 3 to 6 volunteers. LFSRM matches this team with a client family with the goal of coming alongside them for a period of at least six months. Our hope is that the friendship endures long past the initial six-month period!

Following training and matching, the team will work directly with their assigned family in order to meet goals set for the incentive portion of the program. This part of the program is monitored by DRM and their Mentor and Refugee Coordinator (MARC) staff. The hope is that by the end of the six months, the family will have successfully achieved their program objectives and that the mentors will have established lasting friendships with their mentees.

The foundational objective of the Cultural Mentoring Program is to develop trustworthy and caring cross-cultural friendships. Building on this, there are four specific areas (listed below) in which teams are asked to lend their cultural expertise to the family. Becoming familiar with a new culture can be challenging for anyone; this program allows success for new arrivals while building rewarding and lasting friendships for all involved.
Program Objectives

LFSRM, DRM, and volunteers work together to achieve the following key objectives:

- Meet the basic needs of refugees.
- Improve English abilities.
- Achieve financial stability through gaining and maintaining employment. If employment is not immediately feasible, the refugees will be in compliance with all cash assistance requirements.
- Gain practical social and cultural life skills.
- Reach financial literacy

Mentor Roles

Team Leader -- One member of each mentor team will be chosen as the contact person for communication with DRM and LFS. This team leader is responsible for passing along information from DRM and LFS, sending updates to the MARC staff, as well as general team organization and motivation. He or she reminds other team members to log their volunteer hours and coordinate their visits.

Team Members -- It is mainly up to the team how visits and roles with the team are assigned. Each team needs to assess how individual team members can help support the specific goals of the family. Also keep in mind that there will be constructive and difficult elements to your experiences. Consistently check in with yourself, other team members, and the family about these potential issues:

- **Communication** - is information being passed along and understood? Do we have a willingness to repeat, explain differently, and think outside of the box? How is the language barrier impacting our communication? Do we miss the whole story because we’re missing key information?
- **Respect** - Is there conflict because of cultural differences? Does the family feel heard or pressured? Are you allowing them to communicate with the team regarding their needs or making assumptions about their needs? Does the family not express any needs or do they try to express too many needs for which boundaries are necessary?
- **Schedule** - Is scheduling set or sporadic? Is there a good balance between flexibility and functionality? Is communication about scheduling clear to all involved?
- **Knowledge** - Be challenged! Try new foods, perspectives, and practice patience. What seems important to you may not be top priority for the family. Is the team learning about a new culture? What posture do team members have? Are you actively trying to learn from and regard the family as peers? Or are you trying to save them from poverty, illiteracy, or other perceived deficiencies? Remember that this is a chance for all involved to make a difference in the lives of each other and develop lasting relationships.
Mentor Expectations

Time Commitments
- 6 months
- A minimum of 16 hours per team per month (approx. 4 hours per person)

Visits - During your visits, it is important to remember that your primary objective is to build culturally respectful friendships. It is also good to know what roles you are expected to fill, which are optional but helpful, and which are prohibited.

Follow-ups - Every month the MARC staff will e-mail or call the team leader to get an update on activities and progress. Responses can be brief. This is also an excellent time to ask any questions that you may have.

Timesheets - Every month, each team member will be asked to submit their volunteer hours, mileage, donations, and feedback. This record is EXTREMELY important to keep the program running. PLEASE be sure to submit your hours every month! You can do this online at

[Diagram of The Dos & Don'ts of Successful Mentoring]

- Be a friend (with good boundaries)
- Have fun with the family
- Value & seek understanding of family’s culture
- Patently practice English
- Teach financial literacy & practical life skills
- Share your experience of American culture
- Invite the family to your house for a meal
- Take family to do activities in the city like going to the zoo, park, library, museums, and sporting events
- Teach how to use the Denver RTD bus system
- Inform DRM or LFS about any problems or concerns
- Dress comfortably and modestly
- Submit a monthly record of time and donations

- Encourage a move to a different apartment
- Transfer children to new schools
- Call LFS case managers
- Give money, medicine, or medical advice
- Share medical or financial issues with people outside of the program
- Babysit, be alone with children or a refugee of the opposite gender
- Transports refugees without a valid driver’s license and auto insurance
- Give the family a crutch rather than working towards self-sufficiency
- Proselytize (i.e. invite refugees to your place of worship without their own initiative / request to visit)
Communication Protocol - Please follow these steps if you have a problem or question.

1. **Look for answers on your own.**
   a. Reference this training manual
   b. Go to our website and search for answers
   c. Do personal research

2. **Ask the MARC staff at DRM.**
   a. Email: MARC@denrescue.org
   b. If the MARC does not respond within 36 hours (excluding weekends), move to step 3

3. **Ask the LFS Volunteer Coordinator.**
   a. Email: volunteer@lfsrm.org
   b. Text or call: (720) 432-9852 *(only contact if there is no response from DRM)*

*At no time should anyone contact a case manager or other LFS staff member.*

Program Process

**Important Reminders**

- The timeline on page 9 gives a visual explanation of how volunteers are recruited, trained, introduced to their assigned family, and supported throughout their commitment period.
- You play an important part in this process:

- Many variables impact the length of time that teams wait before being matched with a family. Arrival numbers, pandemic regulations and complications, as well as family, staff, and team availability can impact how many weeks or months it takes to begin the 6 month period. LFSRM takes into consideration where team members live in relation to refugee families waiting for a team, as well as ages of children, mentor skill sets (language abilities, work or professional experiences, international travel or experience), as well as ages of children of both mentor families and refugee families. Sometimes the first team available isn’t the right team for a particular family, so program staff carefully evaluate which team is a good fit for each refugee participant family.
REFUGEE CULTURAL MENTORING & EXCHANGE PROGRAM

VOLUNTEER TRAINING, MATCHING, & LINKING PROCESS

Volunteers attend LFSRM training facilitated by DRM staff

DrM staff direct volunteers to complete LFSRM application and background check and notify LFSRM that the volunteers have completed their training.

Recruit mentor teams
Identify team leader (TL) + add team to shared master spreadsheet as ready for match

LFSRM matches team with refugee family & adds family documents to Better Impact (Bl).

LFSRM associates volunteer applications in Bl.

LFSRM sends co-sponsorship form to TL and DRM

LFSRM works to figure out dates for linkage visit with the family & translator as well as identifies particular needs and focus for mentors

DrM notifies entire team that they have "been matched!" with a family in the partnership program

Pre-linkage meeting
LFSRM meets with team lead (and other team members as available to discuss the particular family's needs, progress, and goals. Team leader is responsible to gather team availability for linkage and report back to LFSRM/DRM

Linkage Visit
LFSRM and/or DrM staff facilitate a linkage visit with the family with the help of an interpreter. At least the team leader must attend, but ideally all team members attend.

During the 6 months post-linkage
LFSRM provides the partnership family with case management & employment services. LFSRM communicates about ways in which mentors could help the family achieve self-sufficiency and their goals.

DrM provides the mentor team with the support & coaching they need to be successful in building a relationship with the family. DRm checks in with TL on a monthly basis to gauge team's effectiveness, morale, & progress.
Key Meetings

Pre-Linkage Meeting - LFSRM meets with the team leader (and other team members as available) to discuss the particular family’s needs, progress, culture, and goals. Team leader is responsible to gather team availability and report back to DRM & LFSRM. Each team leader must communicate the contents of the pre-linkage meeting to any member unable to attend.

Linkage Visit - This is the first opportunity for the team to meet and get to know the refugee family; the meeting consists of general introductions of the family and team (as well as any DRM or LFSRM staff that might attend). Some of the topics that will be covered are:
- Set boundaries and expectations
- Ask the family questions while an interpreter is present
- Discover needs and desires
- Schedule the next visit or series of visits

Closure Meeting - At the end of the 6-month mentoring commitment, DRM staff will request a meeting with the team or team leader (separate from the family) to evaluate the progress that was made. We value your feedback regarding the overall experience, challenges, successes, advice for future mentors, and program improvement. We also hope to hear any future plans to stay connected. After this meeting, we will no longer require updates or time sheets in connection to time spent with the family. By no means does this closure meeting dictate an end to your relationship with the family; however, it does wrap up the formal nature of your commitment and leaves room for the relationship to drop the mentor part of the title and move to purely a mutually-supportive friendship.

New Arrival Timeline

As LFSRM prepares to welcome and walk alongside newly arrived refugees, the following information explains what to expect and ways you may engage.

Pre-Arrival

- **Apartment Set-Up:** Help to move/arrange furniture and prepare for occupation.
- **Donations** - While we welcome donated household furniture or items, they are not required. Keep in mind that since self-sufficiency is the goal of this program, gifts may not be the best option in every situation. Evaluate if your gift will help or hinder the family’s pursuit of self-sufficiency before giving them items. Certain items like in the list on page 11, have already been provided through donations to LFSRM or with the family’s R&P money. Additional items can often be found through community resources.
- **Airport Pick-Up:** Join the case manager to welcome the family at the airport. At times, transportation from the airport to their new home is also needed.
- **First Meal:** Help LFS shop for initial groceries and/or prepare the first meal after arrival for the family. Typically if the family has a US tie (often a close family member or friend) this individual and his or her family will provide this since they often haven’t seen the new arrival for years. However, if the new arrival is a “free” case and doesn’t have friends or family already here, this meal can mean the world as it uniquely communicates welcome.
Household Items Families DO Have:

**Furnishings:**
- Mattresses
- Box springs and bed frames
- Drawers
- Kitchen Table
- Kitchen chairs (one per person)
- Couch
- Lamp (one per room unless there is already lighting)

**Kitchen Items:**
- One fork, knife, spoon, plate, bowl, cup per person
- Pots & pans (min. saucepan, frying pan, and baking dish)
- Mixing/serving bowls
- Kitchen utensils
- Can opener
- Baby items as needed

**Linens and Other Household Items:**
- Seasonally appropriate clothing (like winter coats)
- One towel, blanket, pillow, pillowcase per person
- One set of sheets per bed
- Alarm clock
- Paper
- Pens and pencils
- Light bulbs
- Cell phone

**Cleaning Supplies:**
- Dish soap
- Bathroom/kitchen cleaner
- Sponges/cleaning rags/paper towels
- Laundry detergent
- Two waste baskets
- Mop and broom
- Trash bags

**Toiletries:**
- Toilet paper
- Shampoo
- Soap
- One toothbrush per person
- Toothpaste
- Personal hygiene items as appropriate

Household Items Families Do NOT Initially Have:

- Vacuum
- Rice Cooker
- TV and DVD player
- Computer
- Additional furniture
- Bikes
- School supplies
- Bathroom or living room rugs
- Extra blankets
- Extra sweaters, snow boots, snow shovel, etc
Visit Ideas & Activities

*English Practice*
- Letters, numbers, colors
- Introductions (write & say) of self and family members
- Time, dates, & money (name, recognition, comprehension)
- Household vocabulary
- How to request an interpreter (spell language to avoid confusion, such as Karen/Korean)
- Basic directions (give & understand)
- Common prepositions (use & understand)
- Employment & interview vocabulary (practice completing job applications)
- Use of 911 (difference between an emergency & a maintenance/non-emergency call)

*Navigate City*
- Learn how to use public transportation (include vocabulary)
- Teach common street signs & map directions (stop, yield, hospital, school, etc.)
- Learn neighborhood & important places (take trips to the library, park, grocery store; after 2-3 times, the client should take the lead)
- Visit the farmer’s market, zoo, nearby thrift stores, famous landmarks, local sporting events (especially soccer or volleyball)
**Household Care**
- Use of appliances including washer & dryer, vacuum, garbage disposal, dishwasher
- Childproof home if needed
- Trash disposal
- Storing leftovers
- Drain/toilet care
- Difference in cleaning products (bathroom, kitchen, personal hygiene)
- What issues the landlord can/must fix
- Heating/cooling tips (ex.: do not use the stove for heat)
- Help them plant a garden (if they have a yard or balcony)

**Finances**
- Work through this financial handbook together (also available in Swahili & Burmese)
- Practice writing checks, balancing checkbook
- Make sure they know how to mail/deliver checks for rent, utilities, etc.
- How to organize important papers

**Fun Cultural Experiences**
- They teach you words or phrases from their language
- Play board or card games (from your culture or theirs)
- Attend the family’s place of worship one week (upon their invitation)
- Take turns teaching about holidays; participate in celebrations when appropriate
- Take pictures of them and give them copies
- Take turns teaching each other how to cook dishes from your culture

**Reminders**
- Learn cultural differences in body language; use actions when necessary to emphasize what you are saying.
- Think carefully about your words and use as few as necessary. Emphasize important words in the sentence and repeat them to make yourself understood. You may need to slow down your speech pattern but avoid increasing volume.
- Recognize & explain or avoid idioms.
- Phrase questions in terms of choice, since many refugees will agree or say nothing if they do not understand.
- Elicit and encourage feedback.
- Use a picture dictionary to help clients when naming household items, trying to explain something, or ask a question.
- Have reasonable expectations. Don’t always avoid silence; comfort levels with pauses in conversation are cultural.
- Not every visit needs an activity -- spending time with the family is enough.
- Children will most likely learn English quickly and although it is convenient for them to interpret, avoid using them to talk about important or sensitive topics. This puts undue strain on the children and their relationships with their parents.
An important note on time:
Many mentors' greatest frustrations with their refugee friends lies in the way Westerners view and experience time. Many cultures we work with do not regard time, timeliness, and appointments, in the same manner that Americans do. We ask our mentors to do three things:

1. Stretch your own understanding of how showing up for a social event “on time” indicates respect to you and ask yourself if the refugee family is indicating their respect for you in other ways. Don’t assume that if they change the plan at the last minute that it means they don’t want to be friends with you (it almost never does).

2. Once you’ve build some rapport with the family, don’t feel abashed about explaining to them how Americans view time and punctuality as a way of showing one another respect. Showing up to work on time, calling in when sick, and generally being a good communicator about commitments and/or availability will be important for the family’s wage earner(s) to be successful in their workplace. You can help the family learn expectations that their employers may have regarding timeliness.

3. Realize they may have a separate standard for punctuality when it comes to work versus social events. As a friend and mentor, you can help them delineate between the two.
**BUDGET**

### EXPENSES: MONEY YOU HAVE TO PAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOM loan</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus / Car</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hygiene / Laundry</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School / Baby Supplies</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### INCOME: MONEY YOU RECEIVE

**Hourly Wages**:
- **Before Taxes**: $ [ ]
- **After Taxes**: $ [ ]

**EBT**, **TANF**:
- **EBT**: $ [ ]
- **TANF**: $ [ ]

**Total Income**: $ [ ]

**Total Expenses**: $ [ ]

**Remainder**: $ [ ]

### Why is it important to make a budget?
- Helps you determine where you are spending your money
- Helps you decide what to spend money on in the future
- Helps you save money
- Puts you in control of your money
30-60 DAYS

Financial Literacy
- Learn how to cash a check
- Open a bank account
- Create a budget with work income

Employment
- Start working
- Check in with their Career Coach
- Continue to go to English classes

English
- Attend English classes regularly
- Kids should be learning English in school
- Continue to practice English

Life Skills
- Kids are attending school but may need a tutor or push in support
- Learn how to take public transportation
- Learn how to make maintenance requests
60-90 DAYS

**Financial Literacy**
- Start to pay back travel loan
- Open a bank account
- Learn how to save for larger items (car, better apartment, etc.)

**Employment**
- Consider enrolling in GED course, or higher education (tech school)
- Have a job that will pay expenses without assistance
- Continue to go to English classes

**English**
- Finish first English class, consider English class for specific trades
- Practice English with kids at home
- Continue to practice English with mentors

**Life Skills**
- Enroll kids in extracurriculars (soccer, dance, etc.)
- Everyone should know how to take public transportation
- Get a drivers license or permit
Incentive Program Information

*LFS Case Team staff and mentor teams will help refugee families to achieve the goals of the incentive program. However, the primary obligation and responsibility of improving in the four goal areas lies with the refugee family.*

**Purpose:** To encourage and assist refugee families in their initial integration after arriving in Denver, CO.

**Procedure:** Refugee families in the DRM/LFS partnership program receive $900 in rent and deposit assistance from DRM soon after a family has been accepted into the partnership program. In FYI 2021, acceptance to the partnership program is not contingent upon having a mentor team because of the global pandemic. However, if they are matched with a mentor team, the family can receive up to $300 in additional rent assistance at the conclusion of their 6 month partnership period based on assessment conducted by LFS case team staff. The assessment measures the progress of the refugee family in the following areas: employment, finance and budgeting, English, and life skills.

**Employment:** Can earn up to $100

**Main Goal:** *PA (Principal Applicant - otherwise known as head-of-household) and/or spouse has a full-time job*

- Full-time job: $100 (100%)
- Part-time job & school: $90 (90%)
- Part-time & looking for full-time: $80 (80%)
- Recently employed: $60 (60%)
- Part-time only: $50 (50%)
- Actively seeking a job: $40 (40%)
- Searching, but not actively: $10 (10%)
- Not interested in a job or training: $0 (0%)

As the data in this graph indicates, more than half of refugee cases within their first 5 years are earning $3 above minimum wage. Don’t assume that your refugee friends can’t earn more than they are because of their language abilities.
**Finance and Budgeting:** Can earn up to $75

**Main Goal:** The family is economically stable and knows how to use their money.

- Create and manage a working budget.
- Set up and use a bank account (including savings account)
- Understand applicable assistance programs (TANF, MG, Food Assistance, etc.) and basic financial knowledge (credit cards, loans, paying bills, savings vs. checking, etc.)

*Percentages of the $75 will be awarded based upon these actions and knowledge.*

- Achieved all three goals: $75 (100%)
- Manage budget, bank account, no savings: $67.50 (90%)
- Achieved 2 of the 3 goals: $60 (80%)
- Achieved 1 of the 3 goals: $45 (60%)
- Achieved none of the goals: $0 (0%)

**English:** Can earn up to $75

**Main Goal:** Improvement in English language ability

- Effort put into learning English listening/speaking (consistently attending ESL classes, showing effort if/when the mentor team assists them with English, etc.)

*English ability is evaluated at the initial intake and end of the sixth month of the partnership program, focusing primarily on the PA/head of household. Percentages of the $75 will be awarded based upon these actions and knowledge.*

- Excellent listening/speaking improvement: $75 (100%)
- Above average listening/speaking improvement: $67.50 (90%)
- Average listening/speaking improvement: $60 (80%)
- Below average listening/speaking improvement: $30 (40%)
- No listening/speaking improvement: $0 (0%)

**Life Skills:** Can earn up to $50

**Main Goal:** The family has gained practical, social, and cultural life skills/aptitude.

- Career development (job training, learning new skills, etc.)
- Health & Wellness (how to get to the hospital, when to stay home from school or work, pandemic safety, etc.)
- Male/female relationships (understanding domestic violence, gender equality, cultural norms, etc.)
- Culture (multiple topics)
- School systems (interacting with teachers, grades, importance of attendance, online learning, etc.)
- Transportation (RTD, traffic laws, etc.)

*Percentages of the $50 will be awarded based upon these actions and knowledge.*

- Excellent community integration and social skills: $50 (100%)
- Above average community integration and social skills: $45 (90%)
- Average community integration and social skills: $30 (60%)
- Below average community integration and social skills: $20 (40%)
- No improvement: $0 (0%)
This Speaking and Listening Evaluation Rubric is used during the initial intake to generally determine the English language level of the family members, particularly the Principal Applicant (PA). At the end of the family’s participation in the partnership program, they are evaluated again and scores are compared.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Listening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The candidate is unintelligible in English. S/he knows none or very few English words, and lacks understanding of English grammar.</td>
<td>The candidate indicates s/he has no understanding or comprehension of the English language and needs interpretation for the most basic of conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The candidate has very basic knowledge of individual words in English, but lacks the ability to use them in complete sentences. His/her speech is hesitant and pronunciation is poor.</td>
<td>The candidate understands basic words and ideas like greetings and numbers. S/he can pick these words out of a conversation, but does not grasp the overall meaning of what is said and still requires interpretation for communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The candidate can communicate basic ideas in English on very common subjects. His/her pronunciation is still emerging and gaps in understanding of grammar and vocabulary mean that communication in English is still difficult.</td>
<td>The candidate understands basic conversations and instructions. Rewording, repeating, or using context clues or gestures allow the candidate to understand basic conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The candidate communicates ideas somewhat clearly. While his/her speech may be hesitant or include significant grammar or vocabulary errors, nevertheless, s/he is still generally understood by native English speakers.</td>
<td>The candidate understands most conversations about everyday or familiar topics. While complex topics are still largely inaccessible at first, when given opportunity, the candidate can ask clarifying questions to grasp overall meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The candidate speaks fairly fluently and can communicate most ideas without difficulty. While occasional grammar or vocabulary lapses occur, they don’t detract from one’s ability to understand the candidate.</td>
<td>The candidate can understand nearly everything s/he hears in English. While occasionally new vocabulary words or complex topics give pause, s/he can normally understand conversations and only rarely needs clarification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The candidate speaks fluently with few obvious mistakes and a wide variety of vocabulary and expression. Pronunciation is consistently intelligible, and there is little difficulty in communication of ideas.</td>
<td>The candidate is able to understand everything that is spoken with no difficulty. S/he does not need to devote her/his full attention to complex ideas that are being talked about to understand them.</td>
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</table>
Note: On a case-by-case basis, the requirements for the incentive program can be adjusted. Family situations where adjustments may occur could include but are not limited to: having elderly person(s), disabled person(s), or many small children in the home. These and other situations (including pandemic challenges) will be left to the discretion of LFSRM or DRMFRS staff.

Section 3: Additional Information

LFS Volunteer Programming: COVID Policies and Procedures

LINKAGE VISITS

- Hold linkage visits outside in a park instead of inside the family’s apartment. No visits to any client’s apartment should occur for any volunteer at this time. This will be reevaluated as LFS starts to phase back in at work and increase client contact.
- All members of the linkage visit are required to be 6 feet apart (by household).
- Only the team leader and one additional team member present from the team instead of the whole team.
- Only the parents of the LFS family will be present (if kids are old enough to stay home alone), or one parent present if the number of family members exceeds 6. The group must not exceed 10 people, or current local public health guidance.
- LFS and DRM will have one staff member present and an interpreter; be sure the group doesn’t exceed 10 people including these two additional staff members.
● No food or drink will be shared during the linkage. Feel free to bring a water bottle with you!
● Spend time during the linkage visit explaining and setting guidelines not only about the mentor team, but new COVID-19 volunteer protocols.
● Help the family understand apps like Google Translate, WhatsApp, etc. and practice while in person how to use those methods to communicate with each other. Please try to limit contact as much as possible, however it may be necessary to get closer than 6 feet to explain. Make sure to wipe down any technology you use while at the park once you get home.
● Be creative with English and other activities!

POST LINKAGE VISITS
● Please meet with your families outside in a park or other open spaces and not in homes or enclosed spaces. At this time, LFS can only condone outdoor or remote meetings.
● Team leader will introduce team members who didn’t attend the linkage.
● Keep visits below the 10 people limit.
● Prioritize helping the family get internet & computer access.
● Ask the family if they use Viber or WhatsApp to communicate with their family overseas, and then use that as your platform for communication with them.
● Continue to practice using technology during in-person visits to gain familiarity with it.
● Be creative with English and other activities.
● Don’t drive families; try to meet in a park or area close to the family’s home to avoid the need for them to use public transportation to meet you.

Covid Override:
LFSRM follows all local, state. and federal protocols regarding COVID-19 health & safety. The guidelines in this section will override any conflicting directions found elsewhere in the handbook. You will be notified as these policies & procedures change or are lifted.
SOME THINGS REFUGEES MAY SAY

Below are some examples of different things refugees may say to volunteers and how to deal with these kinds of situations:

“I can’t afford my rent.”

**Reality:** Resettlement Agencies always place refugees in apartments where they can afford the rent. RA case managers know in advance what monthly income refugees will have here (cash assistance programs, employment programs) and rent accordingly.

**Why Refugees Say That:** Refugees almost always feel that the rent is too high (they may come from places where a person can live on $500 per year) and they may also be confused and insecure about where their money comes from. Case managers spend a lot of time educating refugees about rent payments, budgeting, and other basic financial issues, but the learning curve can be steep.

**Best Response:** “I’m sure it seems high, but you have enough money to pay it every month. If you are worried about it, you should talk to your caseworker.”

“Please call my caseworker and talk to him/her about X.”

**Reality:** Refugees know how to contact their caseworker and we communicate with them frequently, either on the phone or in person. They have the caseworker’s number and know how to get to the office.

**Why Refugees Say That:** They want as much help as possible. Maybe they didn’t understand the caseworker’s answer or maybe they didn’t like the answer. Maybe they had to wait to see their case manager. They may feel that as the volunteer you care more about them and may be able to advocate for them.
Best Response: If this is a situation or problem on which you can offer advice and strengthen their self-reliance, do so. If not, remind them that they can and should contact their caseworker directly (all refugees have the cell phone numbers of their case team workers).

Worst Response: Call the case manager on their behalf.

“I’m getting all these medical bills.”

Reality: Some bills may come before the family has Medicaid approval. Some papers may not be bills at all. Some papers are actually approval or denial of service forms.

Why Refugees Say That: Because they are in fact getting bills or they can’t read to tell the difference between an informational paper and a bill from a doctor or the insurance company.

Best Response: “It’s OK. Medicaid will cover some of your bills. Talk to your case manager if you are still concerned.”

Worst Response: “Don’t go to the doctor anymore!”

“I have an appointment, but need a ride to get there.”

Reality: Refugees who have Medicaid can use Logisticare at least 3 days in advance of medical appointments to schedule a shuttle or take the bus.

Why Refugees Say That: In the beginning, the caseworkers take refugees to their immediate and necessary appointments. After that, they may feel uncomfortable taking the bus or calling to schedule a shuttle with Logisticare. However, this is a necessary part of gaining self-sufficiency.

Best Response: Encourage the client to take the bus. Practice how to call Logisticare.

Worst Response: Take the client to every appointment.

“I need a television, new furniture, CD player, computer, etc.”

Reality: Lutheran Services is required to provide certain basics, e.g. beds, cooking pots, dishes, towels, sheets, toothbrushes, etc. Many of these things are provided through donations from volunteers like you. Anything that must be bought to meet the minimum requirement takes away from the money that is available for the family’s first months. When extras are donated, these are made available to families on a first come first serve basis.

Why Refugees Say That: Refugees may want these and many other things, as we all do. These things make life easier and more interesting. In fact, they may have had these things in their own home prior to becoming a refugee. However, it is unrealistic for any resettlement agency or volunteer to provide all these things.

Best Response: Encourage them to budget well and be patient until they can buy what they want for themselves.
Worst Response: “Let’s go shopping!”

“Can you come more often?”

Reality: You have agreed to meet with a family once a week or less. Volunteers who spend too much of their time with families may suffer burnout due to the stress of not being able to fix every problem.

Why Refugees Say That: Many refugees come from places where they are surrounded by friends and family who often stop in for several hour long conversations. Many of them also long to learn English as quickly as possible. They see you as someone who cares for them and can help them and want your company, time, and attention.

Best Response: “I’m sorry. I have other obligations, but I can meet you at our regularly scheduled time.”

Worst Response: Visit the family several times a week, then suffer burnout as you find the time commitment unsustainable.

Key Issues for Refugee Families Arriving in Colorado

What is Culture?

Culture is a tricky word. Though we all know what it means, it is difficult to define. Sometimes different cultures are thought of just in terms of ethnic dances, costumes or food. All of these are undeniably important and certainly fun, but do not come close to describing the all-encompassing nature of culture.

Many Americans believe that there is no American culture – until they spend time outside of the United States. There, they discover they have many deeply held beliefs and values that are in contrast with the thinking of the people in the host culture. Differences also exist in the many sub-cultures of any country, as determined by geography, history, ethnic background and even age.

For example, what we think of as the “generation gap” can be explained in terms of cultural differences. Grandparents grew up with different assumptions about the world than did their children and their grandchildren. In many cases, various generations of people don’t speak the same language!

Then what is culture? Culture is really our “map for life”. It is our perspective of where we are and where we are going in our lives. An anthropological definition of culture is “an integrated system of learned behavior patterns that are characteristic of the members of any given society. Culture refers to the total way of life of particular groups of people, and includes everything that a group of people thinks, says, does and makes.” Another definition is that
culture is a “set of behaviors, attitudes and values that is learned and shared by a group.”

Culture includes the following:

- Manners
- Ideas and Thoughts
- Knowledge
- Customs
- Language
- Values
- Beliefs
- Arts
- Concept of Self
- Ceremonies
- Tools
- Morals
- Laws (written and unwritten)
- Social Institutions
- Religious Beliefs
- Myths and Legends
- Ways of Behaving

*from Robert Krohl’s Survival Kit for Overseas Living

Culture is embedded in everything we do or say or think. It affects us outwardly in many ways, but also determines what we think is most deeply important. For example, the American culture highly values individuality. Other cultures place the greatest value on the group or the extended family and do not consider the rights of the individual as important. The American culture also highly values productivity, whereas many contrasting cultures believe that the process is more important than the ultimate product.

When we work with refugees, we are entering the realm of a different culture. Just as we can experience culture “shock” if we go and live in another country, we can also experience some shocks when we work closely with someone from a very different culture.

**Learning about our refugee friends’ food, arts and ways of dress are fun ways to begin to relate. But we are mistaken if we think that we have mastered the refugees’ culture at this level. Deeper cultural understanding comes with knowledge and experience of their most important values and a better understanding of our own value system.**

There are many examples of situations where Americans working with refugees have “bumped” into a significant cultural difference and felt the discomfort of not understanding the values of another person. In some cases, refugees are unable to fully discuss the issue in English, though articulating one’s deepest values is also challenging to the fluent. Consider these common scenarios:

1. The refugee friend does not keep appointments, which greatly frustrates the American volunteer who is always on a time schedule. In many cultures the concept of time is so different that the refugee might not realize that Americans generally keep very tight schedules and arrange their lives with their watch and calendar.

2. An American volunteer feels helpless when she says that she will bring the refugee’s three children to the park, but discovers twenty children waiting to go when she arrives. In many cultures, the rule is “the more the merrier” and it is difficult to leave anyone out.

3. A refugee complains bitterly about a 20 year old nephew who is living with them and bringing trouble to the family. The American strongly believes that the nephew must leave in order to protect the family, but the refugee says that this simply cannot happen or he will lose respect in the community.
**Differing Cultural Perspectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American Culture</th>
<th>Contrasting Culture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A friend is anyone from a passing acquaintance to a lifetime intimate.</td>
<td>A friend is someone with whom one is very close.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One schedules time to see friends.</td>
<td>Friends are available at any time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither a borrower or lender be.</td>
<td>Whatever I have that you need is yours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time is money.</td>
<td>Time is priceless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to develop the self.</td>
<td>It is important to develop selflessness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always be direct.</td>
<td>Public criticism should be avoided at all costs.</td>
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</tbody>
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In all of these situations there is no right or wrong, but there are different cultural perceptions. While you may disagree, don’t force your point of view (unless the refugees are doing something against the law in which case you should talk to the agency staff.) In other cases when you feel a cultural “rub,” talk with someone who might be able to interpret the cultural differences and, if necessary, help to communicate your expectations to your refugee friends.

Finding out about a refugee’s values can sometimes be distressing when you disagree. But ultimately it is the deeper cultural understanding that makes the experience of working with refugees so rich and rewarding.

**Refugees and Culture Shock**

The term “culture shock” describes the feelings of frustration and anxiety that often afflict people when they enter a different culture for a period of time. For refugees the feelings are even more intense because they’re not just going on a long vacation or studying abroad for a semester. They have fled persecution and have come to the U.S. to start a new life. The fact that most of them will not see their homeland again makes their culture shock much more profound. Their experience has been compared to the grief process that people go through when they experience great loss in their lives.

The cultural dissonance that causes a “shock” to the system stems from the differences that refugees face in their new home. First of all, they often have limited or no English speaking ability and thus have difficulty accomplishing the everyday tasks of life. The way that they have always done things is no longer appropriate in a new and strange environment. Refugees often do not understand or like the way that Americans do things or the way that they think. They often feel frustrated by the constant confusion of the new rules.
The Causes of Culture Shock

- Difficulty with the language
- Inapplicability of behavior
- A different complete set of values and rules
- Different ways of thinking and problem solving
- Dislikes about the culture and its people

Refugees also miss their past. They yearn for their country – its sights, its smells, climate and food. They miss the celebrations and the special holidays they used to have. Though they often try to incorporate pieces of their country into their new home, there is always something missing.

An even greater adjustment for refugees is living with the tremendous loss of family and friends. Refugees usually have left behind many people who are very important to their lives in their country of origin or in refugee camps. Some refugees do not know where all their loved ones are and whether they are safe. Still other refugees must grapple with the painful grief over the death of loved ones who died in the war during their escape to another country. This pain is intensified when refugees have been the victims of torture at the hands of oppressive governments.

When people live through such trauma, they often move into a survival mode during the times when they are fleeing and living as refugees. They “turn off” all of their emotions and are faced with great emotional pain many years after their initial trauma as refugees. This psychological phenomenon is called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and it affects many refugees once they are in an environment that is relatively safe. You don’t need to fear PTSD, but be aware that the emotional life of the refugee deeply affects their ability to cope in their new world.

Symptoms of PTSD

- General Anxiety
- Sleep Disorders
- Nightmares
- Loss of Appetite
- Fear and panic attacks
- Lethargy
- Loss of interest in life
- Headaches
- Dizziness

Similar to the stages of grief, the refugees go through a process of dealing with their loss and moving toward cultural integration. Many refugees must go through the cycle several times as they experience multiple losses and make several transitions from their country of origin to the refugee camp to the U.S.

Emotional Stages of Grief

- LOSS
- Initial: Disbelief, Numbness
- Depression, Guilt, Anger
- Idealization of Past
- New Patterns Emerging
The first stages of grief begin with initial shock where the bottom falls out of their world. They feel numb, disbelieving and deny the loss. As people fall into the deep grieving there is an emotional release such as crying or shouting, physical disruptions such as sleep loss, depression and panic. In this stage, people detach from their social network and enter a long, black psychological tunnel. They wonder if they will ever recover.

After the depression, refugees are often beset by guilt and anger over the loss. Many wonder if they could have saved certain family members or if they could have stayed in their village and eluded the danger they eventually fled. They are likely to experience generalized anger at their situation.

At the low end of the emotional curve, when the acute grief is over, the person idealizes the past. At this stage, refugees might not be able to envision their life in the U.S. and may express extreme anger or frustration in living here. As the grief is worked through, a new realization is forged and they begin to imagine a life in the U.S. They begin to see the pros and cons of both their country of origin and their country of asylum.

In the final stages of overcoming grief, they are able to establish new patterns of thought and behavior that reflect the hope of a new life. They will always feel the sadness of loss. But refugees who work through their grief can look again to their present and future life in a new country with hope.

How can you help refugees get through this period of cultural shock and grief? As a friend, you cannot speed up the process or cushion the sadness, but you can help by listening to the stories they need to tell. In some cases, they might need to have professional help. Though counseling is a foreign concept in many cultures, call the agency for possible appropriate resources in the mental health community. Concern and care are the basic principles to follow when helping people through the grief process.

**Cross-Cultural Adjustment**

When you leave your own culture and go to another, you naturally carry with you your own background and personality, sometimes called your cultural baggage. How you react to the new culture and how well you adjust to living in it will therefore depend upon you as a person. Here are some suggestions that others have made concerning adjustment.

1. Listen and observe. Since there are new rules, norms, and cures that may be unfamiliar to you, you need to listen to verbal communication and observe non-verbal communication carefully. Try to put them in the proper context.
2. Ask questions. You cannot assume that you always know what is going on or that you will always understand some communication. You may need to rephrase a question, check the meaning of something, or repeat what you have said.
3. Try not to evaluate or judge. You will see many things that are different from that of your own culture. It is important not to label everything as good or bad in comparison
with your own ways; most customs, habits, ideas are simply different from what you have known before. You might also be misunderstanding something and putting the wrong interpretation on it until you have more information.

4. Try to empathize. Try to put yourself in the other person’s place and look at the situation from that person’s perspective. There are very different ways to look at the same situation.

5. Be open and interested. To experience and learn from a new culture, it is important to be open to new experiences, to try new things, to be curious about the way things are done in a new place. The more you explore, the more you learn.

6. Cultivate a sense of humor. It is very likely that you will make mistakes as you explore a new culture. If you can laugh at them yourself, it will help you learn, and other people will respond with friendliness.

7. Expect some anxiety and frustration. Learning to function in a new culture is not easy, and it is natural to feel anxiety and frustration. If you recognize that these are a normal part of the experience, you may be able to deal with them more effectively. Your sense of humor and openness will also help.

8. Become involved. The more you put into the experience, the more you will learn from it. Make an effort to meet people, form friendships, get involved in activities, and learn about the people and their culture.

*from the Lutheran Social Service of South Dakota Mentor’s Handbook*

**Communicating Across Cultures**

Here are some skills and guidelines for successful cross-cultural communication.

- **Pay attention.** Try to clear our mind of its various preoccupations so you can concentrate on what is being said. Try hard to listen. If you really cannot pay attention, it is better to postpone the conversation.

- **Set your assumptions and values aside.** Try to hear not just what the other persons are saying, but what they mean by what they say. You may find that there are understandable reasons for their ideas and behavior. It is easier to understand those reasons if you set aside your ideas and try to explore theirs thoroughly.

- **Withhold judgment.** Remember that other people do not have to agree with your ideas. You will have more success in communicating with them if they know you are trying to understand them rather than evaluate them.

- **Be complete and explicit.** Be ready to explain your point in more than one way, and even to explain why you are trying to make a particular point in the first place. Give the background. Provide the context. Make clear “where you are coming from”. Much of meaning derives from the context. Communication is more successful when all involved know what the context is.

- **Pay attention to the responses of others.** You can usually tell whether you have blundered or been unclear by noticing the verbal and nonverbal reactions to what you’ve said. If you do not know what nonverbal sign reflects puzzlement on their part, ask them to show you. Then be alert for that sign when you are talking.
● Paraphrase. After someone has spoken, and before you respond, restate what you heard that person say and what you thought was meant; e.g. “As I understand it, you are saying...is that correct?” Add your comment only after the person has assured you that you have heard accurately. This helps prevent situations in which you and the other person are assigning different meanings to the same word or phrase.

● Ask for verification. After you have spoken, try to get confirmation that you have been understood. Ask the other person to restate what you have said; e.g. “I want to be sure I made myself clear, so would you tell me what you understood me to say?” It does not usually work to ask the other person “Do you understand?” Most people will say “yes” to that question whether they understand or not.

● Be alert for different meanings being assigned to certain words, phrases or actions. Sometimes you will think you are understanding what the other person is saying, and suddenly you realize you do not. When this happens, stop your conversation and discuss the apparent point of misunderstanding.