



Overview of Refugee Resettlement and Immigrant Program

Jewish Family Service of Western Massachusetts (JFS) is a medium-sized and administratively sophisticated, social service non-sectarian, nonprofit that has an array of services to refugees. The mission of the agency is to provide professional services to assist all individuals and families with life's challenges and transitions, based on the Jewish principle of *Gemilut Chasadim* (acts of loving kindness). Founded in 1898 and incorporated in 1915, the organization has continually maintained responsive programs to meet the changing needs of individual, families and society. (Please see the agency history and timeline for more information).

JFS is a local affiliate of Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and is the only national Voluntary Agency (VOLAG) with headquarters in Springfield, MA providing a refugee program

Jewish Family Service is nationally recognized for its comprehensive array of refugee services: resettlement, family support assistance, education and social services, employment assistance, and citizenship classes. In 2002, JFS re-opened the refugee resettlement program to assist any refugee qualified by the U.S. Department of State. The majority of refugees have been from Sub-Saharan Africa, Former Soviet Union, the Middle East, South, and East Asia. In the last 10 years the agency has worked with our national VOLAG, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, to resettle about 1,421 refugees in the greater Springfield community.

Who is a Refugee?

According to the United Nations 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status and protection of refugees, a refugee is a person who "...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable or... unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his/her former habitual residence , is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

In accordance to the United States Immigration and Nationality Act, Section 101(a) 42, the term "Refugee" means: (A) any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, or (B) in such circumstances as the United States President... may specify, any person who is within the country of such person's nationality or... within the country in which

such person is habitually residing, and who is persecuted or who has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. The term "refugee" does not include any person who ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in the persecution of any person.

JFS Programs and Services

Below is a list of programs currently provided for refugees, asylees and other lawful immigrants to support their positive resettlement and eventual naturalization. Most of the programs are funded through state, federal and third party resources and there specific eligibility requirements for different programs.

Reception and Placement (resettlement of refugees through the U.S. Department of State)

- Prior to arrival, JFS locates, inspects and secures clean, safe private rental housing in greater Springfield. Refugees are housed where they have access to public transportation.
- JFS arranges for utilities and heat to be turned on.
- With the help of an extensive donor network, the apartments are furnished with gently-used furniture and new bedding and linens. The kitchen is stocked with tableware, cookware and basic utensils.
- The first meal is typically arranged by JFS in collaboration with a previously-resettled family from the same country or ethnic background to welcome the family.
- JFS provides seasonally appropriate clothes, outerwear and footwear to all clients upon arrival.
- As part of the reception process, JFS:
 - Helps the client secure entitlement programs such as MassHealth, transitional assistance, food stamps, fuel assistance, subsidized daycare, Supplemental Social Security Income (when appropriate) and other benefits.
 - Comprehensively reviews the client's benefits (with a translator, if needed), the medical, educational and employment history, and the path to self sufficiency through English as a Second Language (ESL), training and employment.
 - Arranges for necessary medical examinations.
 - Arranges to enroll school age (K-12) children in public schools.
- JFS escorts the client to the grocery store to purchase food for the apartment during on the second day of arrival, starts orienting the client to western culture, public transportation, shopping, etc.
- Eligibility for the Reception and Placement (R&P) services is limited to the first 90-days after refugee arrivals.

English As A Second Language (ESL)

JFS provides ESL instruction to refugees with limited English language skills. The program is geared to assist refugees to become gainfully employed. Classes are held four days per week, Monday-Thursday at our offices in Trinity United Methodist Church on Sumner Avenue in Springfield. ESL is an intense language immersion program for the employment ready adult, age 18-64, who will be working in three to six months. Students are expected to attend all classes and to acquire English language skills to become successfully employed and self-sufficient.

- Employable refugees within the first 5 years of arrival in the United States are eligible for a year starting from the date of their enrollment.

Employment Program

JFS employment services are for adults, 18-64 years old, who have no mental or physical disability. Once processed through the Reception and Placement program, the refugee is referred to the JFS Employment Program. Clients are interviewed and a Family Self Sufficiency Plan is written. The JFS job developer:

- Writes a resume with the refugee, as needed.
 - Provides training and education in workplace rules and etiquette.
 - Coaches the refugee with interview skills.
 - Helps the refugee with job applications.
 - Escorts the refugee to job interviews and coaches during the interview.
 - Works with the refugee to obtain reliable transportation to out of town employers. Bi-lingual translators are available if needed.
 - After hiring, JFS works with employers to provide post-employment services such as cultural diversity training, translation/interpreting and addressing any issues that employers or new employees might have.
 - JFSWM runs driver's education classes for employable refugees to assist on the path to obtaining an MA Learner's Permit and eventually a valid MA Driver's license.
- Employable refugees within the first 5 years of arrival in the United States are eligible for a year starting from the date of their enrollment.

Refugee Community Support (RCS)

The RCS program provides social adjustment services to a limited number of refugees. The JFS RCS program staff provides intensive social adjustment services to refugees who are in need of RCS services after the end of the first 30 days of refugee's arrival in the U.S until five years (as needed). Refugee women, with low proficiencies in their native languages and families with higher numbers of dependents, or with disabled members are particularly eligible consumers.

Program to Enhance Elder Refugee Services, "PEERS"

The JFS PEERS program is for refugee elders, aged 60 and above. JFS multi-lingual staff provides referral to programs and services that enhance and enrich the life of refugee elders. JFS staff refer the elder to service providers such as senior centers, elderly housing, DTA, immigration service providers for green cards and citizenship, fuel assistance providers and others. The JFS bilingual bicultural staff assists refugee elders in completing applications and paperwork as well as filing forms as appropriate.

- Refugee elders are eligible until they become United States citizens.

Community Support Program

Refugees, by the nature of their experiences, have experienced some type of persecution. Many have experienced torture, witnessed serious violence and/or have had prolonged substandard living experiences in refugee camps. Therefore, many struggle with mental health issues such as depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder as well as basic adjustment issues. The Community Support Program is a prevention and mental health diversion program helping eligible refugees to best adjust to their new lives. Bilingual, bicultural family support specialists provide intensive outreach case management services focused on accessing and coordinating resources, diverting crises and promoting family stability with the eventual goal of independent functioning.

- Refugees regardless of date of arrival are eligible.

Massachusetts Refugee Preventive Health Project (MRPHP)

MRPHP is a small program assisting refugees to obtain services related to preventive health. JFS staff support refugees to attend their medical appointments, fill prescriptions, translate and interpret at doctor offices, get and maintain Medicaid health insurance.

- Refugees are eligible during the first five years after arrival in the United States.

Refugee and Immigrant Safety and Empowerment (RISE)

RISE provides domestic violence (DV) prevention services to refugee women and their children. Trained agency program staff provide education and resources. In addition, we help refugee women and their children who are victims of domestic violence get out of unsafe environments and connect them with social services that are geared toward serving DV victims.

- Refugee women and their children are eligible during the first five years after arrival in the United States.

Refugee School Impact (RSI)

RSI is a small program providing bilingual/bicultural staff work with the Springfield Public Schools (SPS) to facilitate effective communication between refugee students (K-12), their parents, teachers, and school administrators. Effective communication provided in the native languages spoken by refugee school children and their parents is very important to support academic achievement of students.

- School age refugee children (K-12) and families are eligible during the first three years after arrival in the United States.

Citizenship and Naturalization Services (for Lawful Permanent Residents and Other Legal Immigrants)

JFS is accredited by the Board Immigration Appeals (BIA) of the United States Department of Justice. JFS staff provide citizenship and naturalization services to Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR). Immigration services provided include community outreach, citizenship information sessions, and assistance filing certain United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) forms such as the N-400 to support eligible immigrants to become naturalized U.S. citizens. Other U.S immigration benefits that the agency can help eligible lawful immigrants apply for include adjustment of status from refugee or asylee to permanent residency and family re-unification. From time to time, depending on funding, JFS may offer citizenship preparation classes. Modest fees are applied for some of these services.

- Any Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR), including former refugees are eligible.

DRIVE Program

DRIVE helps refugees learn the Massachusetts Driver's Manual so that they can pass Learner's Permit test and eventually earn a valid Massachusetts Driver's License. The goal of this program is to help employable refugees (between 18 and 65 years old with no disabilities) get reliable transportation so that they can get and retain gainful jobs. The program offers one-hour classes on Monday – Thursday.

- Refugees within the first two years after arrival are eligible.

Interpreter Services

The JFS staff is multi-lingual and multi-cultural. With advance arrangements, the agency can provide oral interpretation services in 18 different languages spoken by the staff: Russian, Ukrainian, French, Polish, Somali, Swahili, Arabic, Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, Vietnamese, Karen, Burmese, Karenni, Chinn, Bhutanese, Napali, Thai and Hindu. There is a typically a fee for this service if it is not covered by other sources.

Community Orientation

With advance arrangements, JFS bilingual/bicultural staff can provide cultural orientation about refugee populations that are resettled by the agency to community organizations, area colleges, and social service agencies. Typical orientation sessions may include who is a refugee, U.S. policies, refugee cultural profiles and histories, overseas life in refugee camps and processing.