



JFS Afghan Humanitarian Project

Host Organization Support Teams (HOSTs)

Host Organization Support Teams (HOSTs) organize to welcome and support newly arrived Afghan evacuees. HOSTs include both more general support from a group as well as a core group of volunteers from the group who will work as essential members of the team with JFS case managers. HOSTs provide continuity of relationship, connection, and support for new arrivals while also providing in-kind donation support, and work to prepare housing for new arrivals.

Jewish Family Service of Western MA is looking for organizations and organized groups to help welcome new arrivals from Afghanistan. We are looking for community partners to help these new arrivals meet the challenges they will face during their transition to their new lives. As HOSTs you will play a critical role by providing structured support that can facilitate independence and integration into the community.

HOSTs work to ensure their members acknowledge the intelligence and strengths of the family they are assisting. It is critical when working with newcomers that we understand their own biases, are culturally sensitive and non-judgmental, and are ready to learn from their family as much as we are prepared to teach. HOSTs must also be flexible and prepared to deal with ambiguity and uncomfortable situations along with hope, success, and resilience.

For each family, HOSTs nominate 5-6 volunteers that will work as a team with JFS staff to implement the case plan and meet the needs of new arrivals. One of these volunteers will be the point person communicating with the JFS team.

Each HOST will support the family through a minimum the first 6-8 months of their resettlement and integration. JFS expects HOST organizations to provide the following support:

1. Collect in-kind donations (both used and new) for an incoming family and store these donations locally while JFS finalizes travel booking and assurance for the family. A list of the necessary items will be provided by JFS.
2. Partner with JFS to search for and follow up on housing leads. If housing is not secured before arrival, identify members who are willing to host families until housing is found.
3. Identify and nominate 5 Core Volunteers to work directly with the family. Each volunteer will take on leadership roles in one of five pathways integral to initial resettlement:
 - a. Housing Pathway

- b. Community Connections Pathway
- c. Health Pathway
- d. Employment Pathway
- e. Education Pathway

These volunteers will undergo background checks and more in depth training with JFS. One of these five volunteers, or an additional sixth volunteer, will be the “lead” and communicate directly with the case manager. JFS views this work as a partnership between the HOST, the Core Volunteers, and JFS case managers. Volunteers will be able to bring in other community members as needed to volunteer (e.g. help with homework).

- 4. If members feel called, donations to the JFS Rental Support Fund to help arrivals pay for rent until they are on their feet would be incredibly appreciated. JFS estimates it will need to support each family with an additional \$3-4,000 of assistance to help get them on their feet.

We hope that all those involved in resettling our new Afghan neighbors will act as reliable and thoughtful guides and provide compassionate, non-judgmental support for families. JFS and HOSTs will work to listen to and empower the family to set goals and will help them work toward them.

The Lead within HOST organizations will work as a team with JFS staff and will communicate regularly via email, phone and in person meetings to coordinate services and support. HOSTs should not make decisions on behalf of the family and should consult with the Case Manager regarding any concerns or ideas. Trainings will be provided for all HOST organizations and volunteer leaders on general and task specific information prior to and after the family arrives.

If you are interested in becoming a HOST organization, start the process off with these steps!

- 1. The spokesperson or champion for the organization or group should [this form online](#) to sign up officially as a HOST with the group’s name and the lead contact person for this project within the organization/group.
- 2. Start to identify and nominate core group of five volunteers who will specialize in each of the areas listed above. Lead volunteers must be able to volunteer for a minimum of 6-8 months, be willing to work on one particular area, and have availability during the daytime. We estimate volunteers would need spend about 10 hours a week with the family in the first month or so, and less over time.
- 3. After you fill out the form, JFS will contact the lead for the HOST and will schedule an information session to learn more about what the partnership will look like, the responsibilities of the Core Volunteers, and next steps.
- 4. When the project is underway, JFS will be available to present to the larger organization about Afghan resettlement to educate and build a larger support network. JFS will also provide more intensive training for lead volunteers before families arrive.

We look forward to working with you to welcome Afghan evacuees to Western Massachusetts.