



# People Organized to Welcome Refugees

*Guidebook*



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## Introduction

Pope Francis recently highlighted the issues of immigration, and the global refugee crisis. As a church, he has reminded us of Christ's teaching in Matthew:

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome."



*A refugee family arrives at a U.S. airport<sup>1</sup>*

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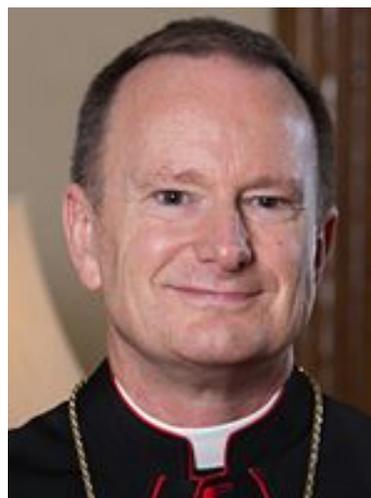
<sup>1</sup> Photo courtesy worldreliefnashville.org.

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## Foreword

Last September I was in Rome and personally heard the Holy Father ask every parish and monastery in Europe to sponsor a refugee family. Wouldn't it be great if we become the first diocese in the USA where every parish co-sponsored a refugee family? I say "co-sponsor" because it's hard for a parish to sponsor a family all by itself, but together we can combine with Catholic Charities to support a number of families. Whatever a parish is able to provide: whether it's furnishing a small apartment, providing clothes, cooking a meal, meeting the family at the airport, providing rent, etc., will be welcomed and be considered co-sponsorship. Catholic Charities of our diocese already sponsors more than 200 refugees a year in the East Bay, in full cooperation with the U.S. Department of State.



As bishop and leader of the Diocese of Oakland, I invite each and every one of our 84 parishes to co-sponsor a refugee family. Let's do this together in the same spirit in which we would welcome Mary and Joseph as they looked for a place at the inn. If we would welcome the Holy Family to our parish and provide a place where Mary could give birth to the Christ child, shouldn't we do the same in the name of Jesus to those who come to us for help?

I am proud that our Cathedral Parish of Christ the Light is the first to sign up with Catholic Charities to co-sponsor a refugee family.

Wouldn't it be great if, in the upcoming Holy Year of Mercy (beginning December 8, 2015), we could sponsor 84 refugee families — the same as the number of parishes we have? Would you support such a work of mercy?

***Most Rev. Michael C. Barber, SJ***  
***Bishop of Oakland***  
***January, 2016***

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<b><u>Table of Contents</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
<b>Who are refugees and why do they need our assistance?</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Overview of the “People Organized to Welcome Refugees” Program</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Parish Responsibilities &amp; Support Contact</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Household Setup</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Grocery Lists</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Airport Greeting</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Scheduling Your Visits</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>FAQ’s</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Success Story from a Recent Refugee</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Prayers to Inspire</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Refugee Backgrounders</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Faces of Refugees Videos</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Parish-Refugee Family Agreement</b>	<b>25</b>

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## Who are refugees and why do they need our assistance?

### **Who is a refugee?**

A refugee is a person who has left his or her country of nationality and is unable or unwilling to return to that country due to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution based upon race, religion, nationality, membership in a specific social group, or political group.

An estimated 80% of the world's refugees are women and children, with children and youth constituting approximately half of the worldwide refugee population.

### **Resettlement to the U.S.**

For more than three decades, the United States has offered assistance to refugees of special concern through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. Each year, the U.S. Congress decides how many refugees can be admitted into the Country. For fiscal year 2015, Congress has decided to allow a maximum of 70,000 refugees into the U.S. Once refugees have been approved for admission to the U.S., refugee resettlement agencies in the U.S. secure housing for refugees and meet them at the airport. Following arrival, these agencies provide basic assistance with community orientation, English language instruction, school orientation, medical screening, and employment services.

### **Ensuring a Suitable Welcome**

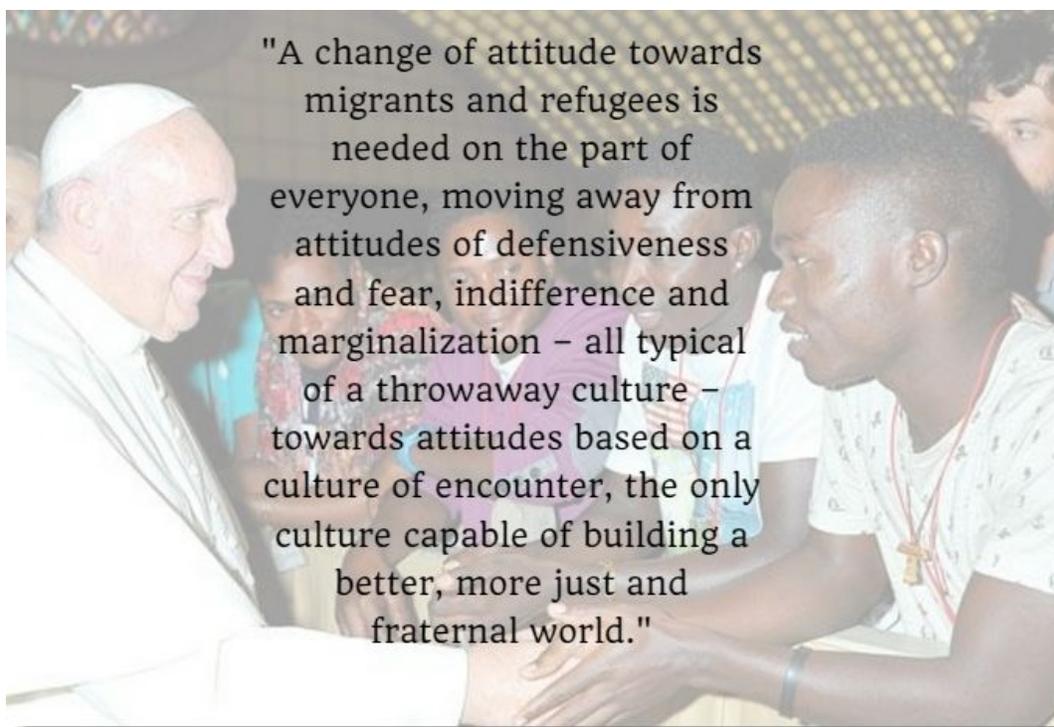
Benefits and services for refugees include the Reception and Placement grant provided by the State Department for the first 30 days after the arrival. Then Social Services programs have time-limited assistance programs (up to eight months from arrival for single adults or couple without children and up to five years for family with dependent children/CalWORKs) funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement at the Department of Health and Human Services. These programs help refugees

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find employment and become economically self-sufficient. They also encourage social integration.<sup>2</sup>

Refugees, having suffered great loss, including loss of their homes, livelihoods, possessions and oftentimes families, need assistance starting over in a new country. Their initial needs are many: food, clothing, shelter, employment, English As Second Languages/Vocational English As Second Languages and orientation to a new community and culture. In partnership with its affiliates, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services resettles approximately 30% of the refugees that arrive in the U.S. each year. The Catholic refugee resettlement network includes over 100 diocesan offices, of which, Catholic Charities of the East Bay (CCEB) is one. Resettling refugees provides an extraordinary opportunity for countless Americans to take an active part in offering a caring and supportive environment for refugees as they begin new lives.



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<sup>2</sup> US Department of State [Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2015](#)

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis, Message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2014

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## Overview of “People Organized to Welcome Refugees”

### INTRODUCTION

The goal of the Refugee Resettlement Program is to help refugees become self-sufficient through an array of services. We offer English classes, help them to navigate the school system and other public institutions, and assist them as they integrate into American society. We provide assistance in finding housing and employment, accessing health care and adjusting to a new culture.

CCEB’s Refugee Resettlement Program serves refugees from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Burma, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Iraq, Iran, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Congo, Vietnam, Russia, Cuba and other countries.

Without volunteers and resources from the community and parishes, Catholic Charities would be unable to accomplish the tremendous task of giving refugees new hope and the opportunity to begin again.

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A co-sponsorship matches a parish with a refugee family. Co-sponsors partner with CCEB to help refugees become self-reliant as quickly and thoroughly as possible. Moving far away, learning a new language, and adjusting to a different culture are very difficult things to do alone. Finances are also a cause of stress. CCEB and the co-sponsors alleviate those struggles by assisting with rent, where possible, and basic needs and providing friendship to a family during their first 3 months. Your financial support and friendship will change their lives – and yours.

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## Share the Joy of Building New Lives

Newly arrived refugees are at risk of feeling culturally isolated from their new community. They need relationships with local community members to feel secure in their new home.

### The Rewards of co-sponsoring a refugee family:

- Allows us to experience the joy of helping victims of war and violence to rebuild their lives.
- Increases our fellowship within the parish community.
- Gives us the privilege of personally observing and learning about another culture.
- Strengthens our faith as it is translated into social action.

Just as Christ entered the human experience, we also are called to enter into solidarity with the vulnerable. Only here does mutual transformation occur as our lives are changed by those whom we seek to serve.

“The new immigrants call most of us back to our ancestral heritage as descendants of immigrants and to our baptismal heritage as members of the body of Christ.”

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<sup>4</sup> *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*

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## Parish Responsibilities

- *Set up the apartment with furniture, household items, toiletries and cleaning supplies.*
- *Provide groceries and assistance with shopping for the first few weeks.*
- *Greet the refugees at the airport upon their arrival and transport them to their new home. You may also want to prepare/purchase a culturally appropriate first meal for your family and group.*
- *Visit refugees approximately once a week, during the first 90 days.*
- *Provide cash assistance, if possible, to help alleviate initial financial struggles, and assist with rent and basic utilities during the first few months. (Any financial donations MUST be made to CCEB, not the family directly). All donations are tax-deductible.*
- *Help refugees adjust to their new community and society, including English tutoring and introduction to public transportation.*
- *Maintain frequent communication with your appointed case manager*

## Support Contact at Catholic Charities

We ask that each parish have one designated representative that will interface with CCEB regarding support of your refugee family. Your direct contact for all activities is: Jude Stephens, Team Support Coordinator, [jstephens@cceb.org](mailto:jstephens@cceb.org) (510) 439-4269

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## Household Setup

Below is a list of the items most needed to set up a household for a refugee family. While there are many other things that may be useful, we ask that that your parish prioritize these essential items. We ask that you acquire new and gently used items.

### KITCHEN

One place setting of dishes per person (plate, bowl, cup), one place setting of silverware per person, glasses, pots, pans, woks, rice cookers, cooking utensils, mixing bowls, can openers, dish towels, and microwave ovens.

### BATHROOM

Bath towels (one per person), bath mat, shower curtain and rings, toilet paper, facial tissue

### HOUSEHOLD

Paper, notebooks, pens, pencils, school supplies, scissors, light bulbs, lamps, flashlights

### PERSONAL HYGIENE

Toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, deodorant, disposable razors, sanitary napkins, diapers, other baby items

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## BEDROOM

Twin, Full and Queen-sized bed frames , Twin, Full and Queen-sized mattresses/box springs<sup>5</sup>, sheet sets for each bed, comforters, blankets, pillows, pillowcases, alarm clock, clothing hangers, window curtains/rods

## FURNITURE

Dining table, chairs, couches, sofa (no pull-out beds), love seat, dressers

## CLEANING SUPPLIES

Mop, bucket, broom, dustpan, toilet brush and holder, wastebaskets, trash bags, paper towels, dish soap, sponges, kitchen cleanser, all-purpose cleaner, laundry detergent

## IT'S HARD TO SAY "NO, THANK YOU," BUT WE GRACIOUSLY CANNOT ACCEPT

- TVs
- VCRs
- DVD players
- Washing machines/dryers, stoves, non-essential items (baskets, knick-knacks, decorations, etc.)
- Books except for children's books, books for English learners, and dictionaries.

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<sup>5</sup> New only

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## Grocery Lists for Refugee Families

### IRAQI/SYRIAN/BHUTANESE/NEPALI

- Rice, Any kind. Though Basmati is widely used.
- Meat, Lamb and Beef ( preferably from Halal Stores)
- Poultry Products (Preferably from Halal Stores)
- Bread, From Middle Eastern stores
- Eggs, Milk and Dairy products
- Fish
- Beans , dried and green
- Black Tea, both loose and Tea bags
- Spices, black pepper, red pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, cumin
- Fruits, , oranges, nectarines, apples, pears, apricots, peaches, dates, grapes
- Other produce, eggplants, cucumbers, tomatoes, potatoes, onions, squash

### AFGHAN

- Rice, Brown rice
- Bread, Afghani Bread
- Meat, Lamb and Beef ( preferably from Halal Stores)
- Poultry Products ( Preferably from Halal Stores)
- Milk
- Flavored yogurt
- Tea, Green tea
- Beans
- Spices, black pepper, red pepper, cardamom, cumin
- Fruits, , oranges, nectarines, apples, pears, apricots, peaches, dates, grapes
- Other produce, eggplants, cucumbers, tomatoes, potatoes, onions, squash

### Middle Eastern food markets and Halal butcher shops

#### Oasis Food Market Market

3045 Telegraph Ave  
Oakland, CA 94609  
(510)655-5111

#### Afghan Market

1500 Monument Blvd  
Concord, CA 95420  
(925)825-2344

#### Yekta International

2908 Delta Fair Blvd  
Antioch, CA 94509  
(925)779-1617

#### Marwa Market

2956 Telegraph Ave  
Oakland, CA 94609  
(510)465-3106

#### International Food

1108 Meadow Ln  
Concord, CA 94520  
(925)676-7844

#### Sahara Market

6783 Dublin Blvd  
Dublin, CA 94568  
(925)999-8242

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## Vietnamese and Burmese

From regular grocery store:

- Rice, Any kind. Though Basmati is widely used.
- Fresh fruits (any kind)
- Fresh vegetables (any kind) carrots, cabbage, onions, garlic, basil, ginger
- Coffee (instant is okay)
- Eggs
- Any kind of meat that can be chopped up to cook
- Oil
- Soy sauce
- Spices such as Coriander, cumin, turmeric

From Asian market: It may help to ask the grocer for appropriate foods

- "Thai" rice (regular rice will do, but most people prefer this kind)
- Rice noodles
- Dried fish
- Fish sauce
- Shrimp paste
- Coconut milk
- Hot chili peppers

If it is affordable for the co-sponsorship team, almost all Burmese and Vietnamese families use rice cookers and find them essential.

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## Airport Greeting

### A Warm Welcome:

Organize a small group of people to join CCEB staff in welcoming the refugees at the airport and transporting them to their new home. The arrival of the family can be a profoundly moving experience for your group, as well as the refugees. Feel free to make a welcome sign and bring balloons or flowers. Consider serving a culturally appropriate meal to welcome them to their new home.



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<sup>6</sup> Courtesy Jennifer Fox

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## Scheduling Your Visits

Visit the family once a week during their first three months. This is a great activity to share - meaning that 2-4 families or individuals can alternate visits. Practice conversational English and reinforce what they learn in daily English classes at Catholic Charities. Help orient the refugees to their new neighborhood, show them the nearest grocery and drug stores, introduce them to public transportation, and share the many enjoyable aspects of The Bay Area.

Use your creativity to help the refugee family to learn more about their new community. Plan two or more outings to discover the great parks, events, and cultural institutions that we have to offer.



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## FAQ's

### 1. **How do refugees get here?**

Refugees are people who have fled their home countries due to persecution involving their race, religion, national origin, political ideology, or being a member of a certain ethnic group. They come from Afghanistan, Cuba , Iran, Iraq, Ethiopia,, Eritrea, Syria, Pakistan, Bhutan and Burma. Refugees are screened and processed to come to the US under the auspices of the State Department.

### 2. **What services does Catholic Charities provide for refugees?**

CCEB provides case management, health case management, cultural and community orientation, employment services, English As Second Languages/Vocational English As Second Languages instruction, and supplemental support through the parish co-sponsorship program.

### 3. **Are Syrian refugees part of the program?**

Yes. They are among the refugee populations that will come to the United States. It takes a minimum from 1 to two years to be screened and processed to be included.

### 4. **How much notice we will receive before our family arrives?**

We receive notices from one week to four weeks in advance.

### 5. **Are we responsible for finding the housing for our family?**

Yes, you may work with CCEB staff to locate safe and affordable housing for the family. If you have connections to affordable housing in the East Bay please let us know!

### 6. **Where will the families live?**

Most families are placed in housing in Alameda County cities such as Oakland and San Leandro. Some are also resettled in East Contra Costa County.

### 7. **Are refugees allowed to work?**

Yes, in fact refugees are encouraged to be employed within months after arrival.

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**8. Are we responsible for finding employment for our family?**

No you are not, as this is one of the services provided by CCEB. If you do have leads on job opportunities for your family or others, please let us know.

**9. How much financial assistance do refugees receive?**

The Federal government provides \$925 per refugee to cover the costs of housing, household goods, food, and pocket money for the first 30 days. Beyond that, refugees may qualify for other public assistance programs.

**10. What level of English do refugees have?**

Refugees have varying levels of English proficiency when they arrive, ranging from little or no proficiency to fluency. Most often, even those refugees who have very good English speaking skills need some assistance perfecting pronunciation, grammar and comprehension skills.

**11. How does our parish make a financial donation to our family?**

Contact your Support Contact to make any tax-deductible donations. Please do not make any donations directly to the refugees themselves.

**12. How long does it take for the refugees to become self-sufficient?**

From 3 to 6 months.

**13. May our parish stay in relationship with our refugee family beyond 90 days?**

Yes, parishes are encouraged to stay in relationship with the family for 6 months or longer to help them to adjust to the new community.

**14. May we host our refugee family at a parish function?**

Yes, it is great to do so. However please check with your family first.

**15. Are we responsible for connecting our family to local families from their country of origin?**

It is encouraged to do so, however most often the refugee has some connection with their own communities.

**16. May we connect our family with a local place of worship?**

Yes, and it depends on their faith/religion.

**17. Can refugees become citizens, and if so, when?**

Yes, refugees may become US citizens after they have been in the country for five years. They must first apply for permanent residency after one year in the US.

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## **Success Story from a recent refugee resettled by CCEB**

“Before I came here, I knew that there would be a sponsor agency, but I was afraid. I didn’t know anything; I didn’t even know how to catch a bus. Without Catholic Charities, I might be stranded at the side of the road with my children. But they helped me with everything. They provided me with an apartment and hot food, they helped me register for social security and other social benefits, and they enrolled my children in school, where they can get the education I never had. And they helped train me to get a job so that I can support my family.”

Tou Lay, Refugee from Burma

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## Prayers To Inspire Your Parish Team

Compassionate God, make your loving presence felt to refugees, torn from home, family and everything familiar. Warm, especially, the hearts of the young, the old, and the most vulnerable among them. Help them know that you accompany them as you accompanied Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in their exile to Egypt. Lead refugees to a new home and a new hope, as you led the Holy Family to their new home in Nazareth. Open our hearts to receive them as our sisters and brothers in whose face we see your son, Jesus. Amen.

### Prayer for Migrants & Refugees

Lord Jesus, when you multiplied the loaves and fishes, you provided more than food for the body, you offered us the gift of yourself, the gift which satisfies every hunger and quenches every thirst Your disciples were filled with fear and doubt, but you poured out your love and compassion on the migrant crowd, welcoming them as brothers and sisters.

Lord Jesus, today you call us to welcome the members of God's family who come to our land to escape oppression, poverty, persecution, violence, and war. Like your disciples, we too are filled with fear and doubt and even suspicion. We build barriers in our hearts and in our minds. Lord Jesus, help us by your grace, To banish fear from our hearts, that we may embrace each of your children as our own brother and sister; To welcome migrants and refugees with joy and generosity, while responding to their many needs; To realize that you call all people to your holy mountain to learn the ways of peace and justice; To share of our abundance as you spread a banquet before us; To give witness to your love for all people, as we

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celebrate the many gifts they bring.

We praise you and give you thanks for the family you have called together from so many people. We see in this human family a reflection of the divine unity of the one Most Holy Trinity in whom we make our prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.<sup>7</sup>

### Prayer for Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers

God, no one is stranger to you And no one is ever far from your loving care. In your kindness watch over migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, Those separated from their loved ones, Those who are lost And those who have been exiled from their homes. Bring them safely to the place where they long to be, And help us always to show your kindness to strangers And those in need. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Who too was a refugee and migrant Who travelled to another land Searching for a home. Amen <sup>8</sup>

Lord God, no one is a stranger to you and no one is ever far from your loving care. In your kindness, watch over refugees and victims of war, those separated from their loved ones, young people who are lost, and those who have left home or who have run away from home. Bring them back safely to the place where they long to be and help us always to show your kindness to strangers and to all in need. Grant this through **Christ** our Lord.

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<sup>7</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

<sup>8</sup> Nouwen Network

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### Let Us See

Dear God, our journey through life is long and hard. We cannot make this trip alone; we must walk together on the journey. You promised to send us a helper, your Spirit. Help us to see your Spirit in those you send to journey with us. In the refugee family, seeking safety from violence, Let us see your Spirit. In the migrant worker, bringing food to our tables, Let us see your Spirit. In the asylum seeker, seeking justice for himself and his family, Let us see your Spirit. In the unaccompanied child, traveling in a dangerous world, Let us see your Spirit. Teach us to recognize that as we walk with each other, you are present. Teach us to welcome not only the strangers in our midst but the gifts they bring as well: the invitation to conversion, communion, and solidarity This is the help you have sent: we are not alone. We are together on the journey, and for this we give you thanks.

Amen. <sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Rev. Enock De Assis

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## Refugee Backgrounders

*The Cultural Orientation Resource Center has produced numerous publications providing key information about various refugee populations. These Refugee Backgrounders and Culture Profiles include a population's history, culture, religion, language, education, and resettlement needs, and brief demographic information.*

<sup>10</sup> – See more at: [Backgrounders](#)

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<sup>10</sup> <http://bit.ly/Backgrounders>

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## Faces of Refugees Videos

An uplifting look at how one church helped a refugee family from Bhutan:



<http://bit.ly/RefugeeHope>

Inspirational stories from the US refugee community:



<http://bit.ly/WeRefugees>

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## Parish-Refugee Family Agreement

Applies to: People Organized to Welcome Refugees



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### Co-Sponsor Responsibilities:

Our parish \_\_\_\_\_ commits to the following activities on behalf of Catholic Charities of the East Bay's Refugee Resettlement program and/or the refugee family we are paired with for a minimum of three months:

### **Refugee Family Activities** (check all that apply)

- Provide a warm welcome with an airport pick-up.
- Prepare a welcome meal.
- Raise funds for housing expenses during first three months.\*  
\*No monies should be given directly to refugee families, but should be directed to your Team Support Coordinator to ensure equity among clients served.
- Set-up the home by collecting household goods and furnishings (according to checklist provided by the CCEB Team Support Coordinator).
- Stock the kitchen pantry (a list of foods will be provided based upon the refugee family's ethnic preference).
- Mentor: Assist with the English language & culture; assist with financial budgeting; introduce them to financial/bank services, health services and health providers; introduce the public transportation system.
- Community Guide: Help orient refugees to the new community; help register school-aged refugee children in school.
- Home Visits: Periodic visits during first three months.

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**Refugee Resettlement Activities (initial each statement)**

\_\_\_ Coordinate and maintain frequent communication with CCEB's Team Support Coordinator

\_\_\_ We understand that our purpose is to foster self-sufficiency for the refugee family we mentor, not dependence.

\_\_\_ We understand that our purpose is to be a friend and partner to the refugee family, and will respect their cultural and religious practices that may be different than ours.

\_\_\_ All parish/congregation volunteers have completed their respective organization's volunteer training (i.e., Shield the Vulnerable, finger printing).

\_\_\_ CCEB's Refugee Resettlement program is responsible for the refugee family for the first 90 days in partnership with the parish. Parish may continue mentoring family or begin mentoring a new family after 90 days.

**Refugee Family's Rights (initial each statement)**

\_\_\_ The refugee family has the right to privacy and confidentiality.

\_\_\_ The refugee family has the right to end the mentoring partnership at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parish Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Team Leader Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Team Leader Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Team Leader Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Team Leader Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
CCEB Staff Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Team Leader Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
CCEB Staff Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**Christopher Martinez, Chief Program Officer**

cmartinez@cceb.org  
(510)439-4261

**Sister Elisabeth Lang, Director of Refugee Services**

elang@cceb.org  
(510)768-3106

**Jude Stephens, Team Support Coordinator**

jstephens@cceb.org  
(510)439-4269

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Compiled by Chuck Haupt

Acknowledgements:

[US Department of State Refugee Resettlement](#)

[US Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services](#)

[U.S. COMMITTEE FOR REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS](#)

[WORLD RELIEF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT](#)

[CULTURAL ORIENTATION RESOURCE CENTER](#)

[Ascentria Care Alliance](#)

[Refugee One](#)

[Lutheran Community Services Northwest](#)

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