**The Labyrinth Ahead**

Standing at the entrance of a labyrinth, you are about to experience a walking journey from being a refugee abroad to resettling in America. As you walk through the labyrinth’s turns and twists, use this guide as a way to discover the many stages a refugee encounters when immigrating with support and oversight from US Sponsoring Agencies, including Church World Service, Ethiopian Community Development Council, Episcopal Migration Ministries, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, International Rescue Committee, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Global Refuge, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and World Relief Corporation.

**Let’s get started with a few facts about refugees.**

* A refugee is defined as someone who is displaced from his or her home country because of a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, social group, gender orientation, or political view.
* There are 27,000,000 people who qualify for refugee status. In 2021, 57,000 refugees were resettled worldwide and another 429,300 were returned to their country of origin.
* The basic stages of resettlement are displacement, processing, and integration.

**Walk through a labyrinth and at each turn you can experience each stage of the resettlement process.**

1st TURN: **Refugee Status** -The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees determines if a person qualifies as being a refugee.

2nd TURN: **Referral to the U. S.** - The refugee is referred to the United States for resettlement by the UNHCR, US Embassy, or a non-governmental organization.

3rd TURN: **Security Clearance** - Multiple security clearance checks are done by law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

4th TURN: **In-Person Interview** - Department of Homeland Security officer conducts a detailed interview face-to-face with the refugee.

5th TURN: **DHS Approval** - Upon approval following the interview, the DHS officer processes the refugee’s application as conditionally approved for resettlement.

6th TURN: **Airport Check** - Upon arrival, the refugee is checked again to ensure the person arriving is the same person who was screened and approved for admission.

7th TURN: **Admission** - The refugee is met at a US airport by an USSA representative. Note: The refugee now becomes a ‘*client’* of the resettlement agency.

8th TURN: **Agency’s Duties** - Case manager is assigned to a client and explains the resettlement agency’s role and responsibilities and ensures the client knows their rights and the grievance appeal process.

9th TURN: **Filing for Benefits** - Case manager assists the client to apply for Social Security and public assistance benefits (TANF, SNAP, Medical Assistance) within 30 days of arrival. Benefits eligibility may differ depending on a person’s income, assets, and other factors.

10th TURN: **Housing** - Case manager arranges safe, sanitary, and decent housing for a client. Housing should provide a base from which a client can find employment, training opportunities, and connect with community groups. Case manager arranges essential furnishings to include furniture, cleaning supplies, food preparation and toiletries. Case manager conducts a housing and personal safety orientation (how to use a thermostat, shower and toilet, kitchen appliances, door lock, etc.) with a client.

11th TURN: **Welcoming Meal** - When a client arrives in their new home, a warm, culturally appropriate *welcome meal* is provided along with an initial supply of groceries. After enduring many hours of traveling, the refugee will enjoy having a hot meal and settling in on their first day/night. The meal is from (or close to) a client’s homeland, which provides comfort and shows respect for their culture and heritage.

12th TURN: **Life Necessities** - Case manager regularly checks in with a client to find ways of offering support and connecting them to community assistance groups (diaper bank, Central Pa. Food Bank, medical/dental clinics, furniture, etc.)

13th TURN: **Transportation** (Employment) – Transporting a client to job interviews/training is coordinated by a case manager and volunteers; both help with job interview practice, resume building and acquiring occupational supplies.

14th TURN: **Family Reunification Assessment** - U.S. Government along with agency’s case manager and legal office assist a client to reunite with family members remaining overseas. Different immigration options for reuniting a client with family are based on citizenship, immigration status, and the mode of entrance the United States.

15th TURN: **Creating a Family Budget** – Client has new financial responsibilities to pay rent, utilities, phone bills, etc. Case manager instructs a client about the obligations of managing income streams (salary, cash assistance, grants, food stamps, etc.).

16th TURN: **Mentorship** – A volunteer becomes a client’s mentor by supporting a client in all areas; job placement, social integration, setting goals, and sharing positivity.

17th TURN: **Medical Screening** - The refugee undergoes a baseline medical screening.

18th TURN: **Agency Match** - The refugee is assigned a US Sponsoring Agency (USSA), such as Church World Service, which assists the refugee upon arrival to the US.

19th TURN: **Cultural Orientation** - The refugee is offered cultural orientation (to learn how most Americans behave or tend to think) while waiting for final processing.

20th TURN: **Security Screening** - Before departing to the US, a second interagency security screening is done to check for new information or change about the refugee.

21st TURN: **Clothing** - Case manager anticipates and provides clothing needs as best can be supplied before arrival to ensure seasonally appropriate clothing and footwear can be provided right away. Clothing does not need to be new, but must be clean, in good condition, and functional.

22nd TURN: **ESL** - Enrollment in an English Second Language program must be provided to all adults within 30 days of arrival.

23rd TURN: **Employment** - Enrollment in an employment services program must be provided to all adults of working age and ability within 30 days of arrival.

24th TURN: **Resources** - Client is informed about other eligible services and community support organizations.

25th TURN: **Necessities for Living** - Volunteers stock the client’s new home with food supplies (culturally appropriate ready-to-eat meals) and other necessities. More food may need to be supplied until a client's SNAP benefits are confirmed.

26th TURN: **Health Screening**- Prior to a client’s arrival, the case manager schedules medical screenings (tuberculosis, parasites, etc.) with local clinics within 30 days of arrival.

27th TURN: **School Registration** – Children should be enrolled shortly after arrival, so their education can resume, uninterrupted by their displacement. Also, connect children with community services (ESL, food banks, counseling, etc.) as needed.

28th TURN: **Cultural Orientation** – Adult clients are required to undergo cultural orientation within 90 days of arrival by promoting integration into our society and gaining an understanding of our domestic systems and procedures.

29th TURN: **Transportation** (Assistance) – Volunteer team provides transportation and/or public transport training to medical clinics, ESL classes, grocery store runs, etc.

30th TURN: **Bank Account** – Volunteers, bank partners, and case manager set up a bank account for a client before employment and help manage a client’s documents.

31st TURN: **Health Follow Ups**- After the initial medical/mental screenings, a client may be referred for follow up care. Volunteers assist with making regular appointments and providing transportation.

32nd TURN: **Ongoing Life Necessities** - At the end of the 90-day *Reception and Placement* period, some clients may not reach self-sufficiency. Case manager assesses a client’s needs for continued support and finds community resources.

33rd TURN: **Extended Case Management** – If a client has special needs or a disability that challenges a client becoming fully self-sufficient, a client may be eligible to receive intensive case management for 6 months to 2 years, within 5 years of arrival. Clients are deemed to have reached self-sufficiency after their goals.

**Acknowledgement:** Material contained in this handbill was provided and later reviewed by Church World Service Harrisburg for the Community Connections Committee at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Cathedral located in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. (June 2023**)**