

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

AFGHAN REFUGEE RELIEF

DO AFGHAN REFUGEES HAVE VISAS?

Afghan refugees arrive in the country on either a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV), or on Humanitarian Parole.

DO AFGHAN REFUGEES RECEIVE GOVERNMENT BENEFITS?

Yes, both those with SIVs and parolees receive some benefits, such as SNAP for food, Medicaid, and others. The process to enroll in these programs and start seeing the actual benefits can be time-consuming and lengthy.

WHO IS HELPING THE REFUGEES ENROLL IN THE AVAILABLE PROGRAMS AND START RECEIVING BENEFITS?

Social service agencies, such as Catholic Charities and Lutheran Social Services, are the designated groups to handle this process. In this particular refugee crisis, because of the volume of refugees and the state of the refugee-processing system prior to 2021, the agencies are particularly overwhelmed.

WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT DOING TO ALLEVIATE THE STRESS ON THE SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES?

One of the things the government is doing to alleviate the stress on the social service agencies is to open up the system to outside groups. Some select organizations are able to become the equivalent of a social service agencies in order to help with the backload. These organizations are then opening up the process to teams or “circles” of ordinary US citizens.

WHAT HAPPENS ONCE A REFUGEE ARRIVES AT ONE OF THE AMERICAN MILITARY BASES?

Once refugees arrive at a base, they have options of how to proceed. They can register with one of the social service agencies, who then help them process their paperwork and find housing off-base, or they can opt out of this process.

ARE THEY FREE TO LEAVE THE BASES?

They are not prisoners, so are free to leave at any point if they have friends or family who they wish to join or think they can manage on their own.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY DECIDE NOT TO WORK WITH A SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCY?

If a refugee decides they do not want to work with one of the primary social service agencies, they have

a two basic options. The first is that they can withdraw from the system entirely, and work through the process on their own. The second option is that they can work with one of the supplemental organizations that have been authorized through the government. Should they take this option, these organizations, such as Samaritan's Purse, then assign families through their 'circle' programs and private teams take on the responsibility of supporting the refugees.

WHAT IS THE BEST WISDOM FOR MOVING FORWARD AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE?

Once registered with a particular social service agency it is strongly recommended that they stay with that agency even if things are slow. It does them a disservice to jump out of line and start with a new agency as they go to the very back of the line, and because these agencies are overwhelmed, they are not able to get through their own list of refugees quickly.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF ENROLLING IN ALL OF THE PROGRAMS LIKE?

The most important thing to remember about the process is that it will take time! While we appreciate how difficult it can be to wait, and how we would like to be able to spare them from this scenario as they will undoubtedly have some significant issues, ultimately the best thing for them to do is stay in the process with the social service agency. While they are waiting, you can help them with other things that they would likely appreciate, such as finding the nearest playground for their kids, navigating a grocery store, sharing a meal and enjoying some personal contact with friendly people in a new country, and many other things.

HOW MUCH FUNDING IS THE GOVERNMENT PROVIDING PER AFGHAN REFUGEE?

The US government provides \$2275 per Afghan refugee. Additionally, they receive SNAP benefits for food, Medicaid, and a few others.

WHAT IS MBC DOING TO HELP AFGHAN REFUGEES?

MBC is providing support and assistance for Afghan refugees both on a global and local level. Locally we are working with Samaritan's Purse to sponsor "Care Teams" or "Circle Teams" that provide support to refugee families. We are donating supplies and financial assistance to other local partners and are informally providing support to a handful of other refugee families. Currently we are working to provide ESOL training classes in the Alexandria area, and train volunteers to help in various other ways. This is a church-wide response, so if you are interested in helping, please sign up [here](#).

Globally, we are working with missionaries serving Afghan refugees who are being resettled in other countries across the region. We have partnered with organizations such as Pioneers to help with these resettlement efforts. Additionally, we are in the process of identifying opportunities to support believers and churches who have remained in Afghanistan.

WHAT DOES A "CIRCLE TEAM" OR "CARE TEAM" LOOK LIKE, AND WHAT ARE THEY RESPONSIBLE FOR?

The short answer is that a team consists of five or more adults who commit to serve an Afghan refugee family for a period of months. Responsibilities include helping them find housing, find work, register for medical coverage and get the kids in school, navigate grocery stores, find a mom's group, work the thermostat, or anything else that they need. Teams will require one person to serve as the lead. This is

really a wonderful opportunity to build relationships with these precious people and share the love of Christ!

For more information on these teams, please check out [this document](#) from Samaritan's Purse.

HOW CAN I JOIN A "CARE TEAM" TO SUPPORT AN AFGHAN FAMILY?

After evaluating several different secular and government-sponsored programs? MBC has decided to work with Samaritan's Purse. They have the best program and are the most closely aligned theologically. If you are interested in serving on a care team, make sure you're signed up on our [Local Outreach Volunteer List](#) and email me at lauren.deluca@mcleanbible.org.

Ideally you will recruit your church group or small group to join you, as we feel it is best to know the people that you'll be working so closely with. If you cannot do this but still feel led to serve in this capacity, please let me know. There will be a list of individuals in search of a team, and if we receive enough we'll try to connect you.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I ENCOUNTER A REFUGEE FAMILY THAT I THINK NEEDS HELP?

Many families that one might meet are already working with a social service agency, but they are dealing with delays since these groups are overwhelmed. The best thing to do is to encourage them to stick with the process. Sometimes there are urgent needs that are not being met and, in this case, we encourage you to gather a group of your friends, or church group, and band together to support them in non-material ways. You can also help with contacting the social service agencies on their behalf, but please do not suggest that they leave the queue. It is NOT easier to switch to a different agency or process, no matter how slow things seem. If there are extenuating circumstances beyond what you can assist with, please fill out the form to request assistance [here](#). Please note that we have a limited budget available and are trying to use these resources in the best way possible. Unfortunately, we are not able to help in all situations.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

The most important thing you can do to get started is to join our [Local Outreach Volunteer List](#). We send emails out weekly, or every other week, with opportunities, trainings, and more. If you'd prefer to give, please donate to the [Missions Fund – Afghanistan Relief](#).

For any additional questions, please contact Lauren at lauren.deluca@mcleanbible.org