

# GETTING STARTED TOOLKIT

## WELCOME CIRCLES *for Refugees*

Welcoming Refugees. Building Community. Renewing Hope.

### SOLIDARITY CIRCLES



The Archdiocese of Seattle's Welcome Circle Ministry is an affiliate site of the USCCB's Migration and Refugee Service's Solidarity Circles

Start the journey at [Archseattle.org/WelcomeCircles](https://Archseattle.org/WelcomeCircles)  
ARCHDIOCESE OF SEATTLE | Immigrant & Refugee Ministry





# DEAR WELCOME CIRCLE LEADER,

Thank you for your yes to Welcome Circles! We are so grateful for your willingness to participate in this ministry, and are so excited to see what God does through your journey.

This guide was designed to help you every step of the way. In it, you will find information about refugees, getting started as a Welcome Circle, group roles, fundraising, housing, health care, and much more!

That being said, every Welcome Circle is different, just as every family is different. You will most likely come across unique circumstances in your circle. Rest assured, our team in the Immigration and Refugee Ministry of the Seattle Archdiocese is prepared to walk with you, giving you the encouragement and support you need, pointing you to helpful resources, and praying for you daily.

Jesus promises us in the Gospel of Matthew that when we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the homeless, we are doing it for Him. This is a beautiful miracle! As you serve newcomers to the United States, you will actually be serving Jesus and drawing closer to His Sacred Heart! This is a transformative experience and an enormous blessing!

As you begin this journey, please always feel free to reach out to us at any time with any questions, concerns, or suggestions you may have. We look forward to hearing from you and walking with you in this journey!

In Christ,

*The Welcome Circles Team*

Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren,

*You did it for me.*



## WELCOME CIRCLES

Seattle Archdiocese  
Immigrant and Refugee  
Ministry

For help with your journey as a Welcome Circle, you can reach out to the Welcome Circle Coordinator, Amy Nash, at amy.nash@seattlearch.org or the Welcome Circle Associate, Rebecca Burdullis, at rebecca.burdullis@seattlearch.org.

Also, make sure to join our email list at [www.archseattle.com/welcomecircles](http://www.archseattle.com/welcomecircles).



# GETTING STARTED

You can form a Welcome Circle with our help by following these steps.

[www.archseattle.org/welcomecircles](http://www.archseattle.org/welcomecircles)

## 3 PATHWAYS

Work with the Welcome Circle Team to find out which pathway is for you.



Your Welcome Circle can sponsor an individual or family fleeing violence in Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, Ukraine, or Venezuela. We can help you invite them to come for a temporary stay through the Humanitarian Parole process. Learn more at [www.sponsorcircles.org](http://www.sponsorcircles.org)



Your Welcome Circle can be matched with or name a refugee from a refugee camp to sponsor. We can help you prepare to invite a family to fully integrate into the US. Learn more at [www.welcomecorps.org](http://www.welcomecorps.org)









If you have encountered a refugee locally whom you would like to help, the Seattle Archdiocese can help you create a Welcome Circle around them and connect you to local resources to support their integration.

## WHAT IS A WELCOME CIRCLE?

A Welcome Circle is a **group of five or more people** who creates wrap around care for a family or individual in need.

With the assistance of their community, they help the family or individual to:

-   • Secure housing, food, clothing and other essential needs
-  • Enroll in public benefits
-  • Access healthcare
-  • Find employment
-  • Enroll any children in school and adults in English classes



*Corporal Works of Mercy*

FEED THE HUNGRY

GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY

RANSOM THE CAPTIVE

BURY THE DEAD

SHELTER THE STRANGER

COMFORT THE SICK

CLOTHE THE NAKED



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**PATHWAYS TO**

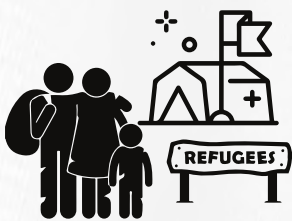
**WELCOME  
CIRCLES**  
*for Refugees*

**The Seattle Archdiocese Immigration and Refugee Ministry can accompany you to apply to one of these three pathways to becoming a Welcome Circle:**

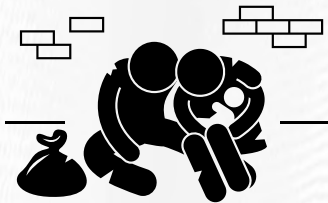


Your Welcome Circle can sponsor a person or family fleeing violence in Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, Ukraine, or Venezuela. We can help you apply to Sponsor Circles.

[www.sponsorcircles.org](http://www.sponsorcircles.org)



Your Welcome Circle can be matched with or name a refugee from a refugee camp to sponsor. We can help you apply to Welcome Corps. [www.welcomecorps.org](http://www.welcomecorps.org)



If you have already encountered a refugee locally whom you would like to help, the Seattle Archdiocese can help you to create a Welcome Circle around them.



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# Welcome Circle Pathway 1:

## Welcoming Newcomers Fleeing Violence through Sponsor Circles



*Our first pathway to form a Welcome Circle is through Sponsor Circles.*

*The Sponsor Circle Program is a community-led initiative that supports everyday Americans in taking on the responsibility of welcoming newcomers to their communities. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has partnered with Sponsor Circles and is here to help!*

*Follow these steps to get started on your sponsorship journey:*



# Sponsor Circles

1

### *Form Your Circle*

Bring together at least five adults in your neighborhood to form a sponsor circle. Complete [background checks](#), [fundraise](#), and prepare to submit your group's [application](#).

2

### *Become Equipped & Informed*

Attend an [Information Session](#) and [complete the online training](#). Only one person is required to complete the training, but we **STRONGLY** recommend that each person in the circle completes it.

\*\*\*The password for the Information Session is ?VfUF6d#

3

### *Make a Plan*

Complete a welcome plan sharing how you will support the newcomers you will sponsor:

[Welcome Plan for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans \(Spanish version\)](#)

[Welcome Plan for Ukrainians](#)

4

### *Sign Codes of Conduct and Fill Out Declaration of Financial Support*

Make sure every Welcome Circle member signs a [code of conduct agreement](#). Also, make sure that your circle's financial sponsor completes the [I-134 Declaration of Financial Support](#).

# Welcome Circle Pathway 2:

## Private Sponsorship of Refugees through Welcome Corps



*Our second pathway to form a Welcome Circle is through Welcome Corps.*

*Now for the first time, groups of ordinary Americans are able to privately sponsor refugees in the U.S. through a new U.S. State Department-led program called Welcome Corps. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is a member of the group of implementing organizations (Private Sponsor Organizations or PSOs) and is here to help!*

*Follow these steps to get started on your sponsorship journey:*



1

### *Understand the program*

Begin by reviewing the following resources:

1. [Refugee Eligibility Tool](#) (Naming Phase only)
2. [Welcome Corps FAQ](#)
3. [Step-by-step checklist](#)

2

### *Attend an Application Support Session*

These sessions are offered directly through [Welcome Corps](#). We highly recommend attending the 1:1 meeting offered after the session.

3

### *Form your group & identify a coordinator*

You will need at least 5 people for your Private Sponsor Group (PSG). Sponsors must be 18+ and either U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

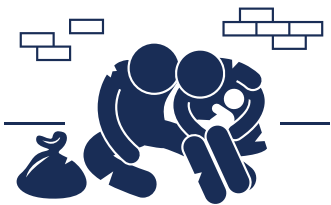
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### *Meet your PSO partners*

USCCB local and national staff will work closely with you through certification. To schedule an initial meeting with us, click [here](#).

## Welcome Circle Pathway 3:

### Form a Welcome Circle Around a Local Family in Need



*Our third pathway is to form a Welcome Circle around a local family in need.*

*With the encouragement, help, and support of the Welcome Circle Team of the Immigration and Refugee Ministry of the Archdiocese of Seattle, you can form a Welcome Circle around a local refugee, migrant, or homeless family.*

*Every family is different, and we can help you to create a Welcome Circle that best suits a family's needs.*



1

#### *Form Your Circle*

Bring together at least five adults in your neighborhood to form a sponsor circle. Complete background checks and fundraise,

2

#### *Become Equipped & Informed*

Complete the online training. Only one person is required to complete the training, but we **STRONGLY** recommend that each person in the circle completes it.

3

#### *Make a Plan*

Complete a welcome plan sharing how you will support the newcomers you will sponsor.

4

#### *Sign Codes of Conduct*

Make sure every Welcome Circle member signs a code of conduct agreement.

# GUIDANCE FOR SUPPORTING NEWCOMERS

Last Updated: 11/21/2023

The United States has a rich tradition of welcoming newcomers and has recently launched programs to welcome Ukrainians and Venezuelans. The following are some best practices, drawn from this experience, that can set you and the newcomer you are welcoming up for success.

- **Establish a Group:** Our experience with sponsorship has shown that sponsorship is most successful when the responsibility is shared. Consider pulling together a group of at least five people, with one person serving as sponsor group lead. You can see a sample sponsor group structure [here](#).
- **Create a Budget:** Beneficiaries who are granted humanitarian parole will be eligible to apply for employment authorization. However, it may take time for them to gain that authorization and to find work. As a sponsor, you will offer critical support in the first months after arrival. You will assist them in securing initial housing and ensure they have essential furnishings, household goods, and food. Create a budget to estimate the resources you will need to provide this support. You can use this [budget template](#) to get you started.
- **Fundraise to Meet that Budget:** Fundraising can help you generate the financial and in-kind resources needed to support newcomers. Often, members of your community are eager to give. This [fundraising guide](#) can serve as a useful support.
- **Make a List of Early Tasks:** In addition to providing the newcomer with critical financial support, you will also need to connect them with relevant services (such as health care and education), and support their integration, by assisting them as they learn English and secure employment. Here is a [checklist](#) that can guide you in things to be done.
- **Keep Going!** Supporting someone who is adjusting to a new environment can take time and rarely unfolds as expected. Newcomers have unique journeys and may seek to achieve different goals on different timelines. Sponsorship is hard work. But it's worth it!



## Resources Available to You

You will have access to a growing collection of tools, including the following resources:

[Initial Sponsor Service Checklist](#) Supports preparation for the newcomer's arrival by having an easy reference for what critical services are typically needed within the first 90 days of arrival.

[Sample Sponsor Group Structure](#) There are many ways to structure a sponsor group. This resource offers a template structure, with typical roles and responsibilities outlined.

[Sample Budget Template](#) Helps capture initial and ongoing estimated living costs and supports a newcomer in establishing a balanced budget.

[Sponsor Fundraising Tips and Tools](#) Provides guidance for groups in raising necessary resources for the newcomer.

[Tips for Securing Housing](#) Provides guidance on how to secure temporary and permanent housing for the newcomers.

[Sample Home Supply Checklist](#) Helps sponsor groups prepare the home for the arriving newcomers.

[Sample Pantry Checklist](#) Lists items recommended to be included in the newcomer's pantry upon arrival.





# SHARED PRINCIPLES

[www.archseattle.org/welcomecircles](http://www.archseattle.org/welcomecircles)

**CHRIST HAS NO  
HANDS BUT YOURS  
-ST. TERESA OF  
AVILA**

## YOUR ROLE

As a Welcome Circle, you are living out the Corporal Works of Mercy in a very real way. You are the Body of Christ, and the people you serve will experience the love of God through you. This should always be the foundation of how you operate as a Welcome Circle.

The role of the Welcome Circle is unique to other roles you may have filled in other areas of life. The role is unlike that of a parent, friend, or legal sponsor. A Welcome Circle accompanies refugee newcomers during the sponsorship period, connecting them to initial resources, and facilitating linkages for ongoing integration. The below shared principles can guide sponsors in fulfilling their role. Further, by coming together and acting according to shared principles, groups are likely to achieve the goals of sponsorship

## RESPECT NEWCOMER AUTONOMY

Out of our great love and respect for newcomers and all of life, we must always remember that newcomers are fully autonomous human beings. They possess the resilience, strength, and potential to set goals and address challenges in their resettlement. It can be easy to lose sight of this autonomy and resilience because newcomers arrive in a vulnerable position having experienced challenging and harrowing circumstances. However, respecting a newcomer's autonomy means recognizing that the newcomer is the best person responsible for making their own life choices. Therefore, Welcome Circles should enjoy collaborating with others and approach challenges with patience and curiosity.



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## CHRIST HAS NO HANDS BUT YOURS -ST. TERESA OF AVILA

### PROMOTE SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND THE STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

Welcome Circles will best assist newcomers by reinforcing their strengths and facilitating skill-building for self-sufficiency. Taking a strengths-based approach means assuming individuals possess the skills, knowledge, connections, and capacity for growth to meet challenges. In a strengths-based approach, newcomers' strengths, efforts, and progress is centered and praised. Successes, big and small, are celebrated along the course of the sponsorship. Emphasis is placed on how Welcome Circles can support the newcomers' desired outcomes and goals. Newcomers lead on setting and prioritizing their own goals. In promoting self-sufficiency, Welcome Circles should think not of "doing for" the newcomer, but rather "doing with" the newcomer. To be responsible collaborators in reaching self-sufficiency, Welcome Circles can be intentional about providing skill-building opportunities, be proactive in providing opportunities for community connection, and provide information without making decisions for the newcomer.

### PRACTICE CULTURAL HUMILITY

Cultural humility is a vital perspective while working with newcomers. The National Institute of Health defines cultural humility as a "process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another's culture, but one starts with an examination of her/his/[their] own beliefs and cultural identities." In other words, culturally humble Welcome Circles engage in self-reflection, value flexibility, and responsiveness, and ensure differences are valued. From the perspective of cultural humility, the newcomer is the teacher. Cultural humility discourages acting out of assumptions, recognizing not everyone in the same culture group will share the same characteristics or beliefs. One way to think about cultural humility is that when differences arise, you think not only about the culture of the newcomer but think about your own values and experiences. In cultural humility, there is no assumption of right or wrong, only differences to be approached with respect and curiosity.



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## FOCUS ON INTEGRATION

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines integration as, “a dynamic twoway process that places demands on both the refugee and the receiving community. Integrating refugees goes beyond ensuring that they are provided with basic needs and access to services. . . [It includes] fostering a sense of belonging and encouraging participation in their new communities.” Welcome Circles can be key in initiating an early sense of belonging and facilitating community participation. As integration is an ongoing process continuing long after the sponsorship period, one of the primary roles of a sponsor is to connect newcomers to others in the community and find ways for them to connect to others in their cultural communities. These connections situate newcomers for integration long after the sponsorship period concludes. Newcomers come from cultures with different systems and traditions. The newcomer may make some adjustments to their lifestyle, so they are adhering to new laws and established best practices in certain systems, but integration does not require newcomers to give up their culture or history. It is important to respect their culture and traditions and find ways for them to stay connected to their culture and traditions in their new country.

## INCORPORATE TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

Sponsors do not need to know the specifics of a newcomer’s trauma or have a clinical background to incorporate principles of trauma-informed care (TIC) into their support. TIC is not a specific therapy meant to treat symptoms directly related to an individual’s past trauma. Instead, it is an approach to providing support in a way that is appropriately responsive to an individual who has experienced trauma while minimizing opportunities for re-traumatization.



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## PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

### SAFETY

Find ways, big and small, to create a sense of both physical and emotional safety.

### TRUSTWORTHINESS

Try to avoid making promises you cannot keep, set and enforce clear boundaries, and communicate as simply and clearly as possible.

### CHOICE

Find ways, big and small, to incorporate choices into interactions with newcomers. Be sure to avoid making choices for them, but instead, provide clear information so newcomers can make choices for their own lives.

### COLLABORATION

Affirm the newcomer's power and responsibility in their resettlement process. Be mindful of the inherent power imbalance that can be present in a sponsor-newcomer dynamics when sponsors have more knowledge of the new culture and access to resources.

### EMPOWERMENT

Remember the goal of resettlement is integration and self-sufficiency. Try and focus on reinforcing strengths and skill building in all your service delivery and interactions with the newcomer.