

HOUSING 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
ARCHDIOCESE OF SEATTLE | Immigrant & Refugee Ministry



ARCHDIOCESE
OF SEATTLE



DEAR WELCOME CIRCLE LEADER,

Thank you for your yes to Welcome Circles! We are so grateful for your willingness to participate in this ministry.

The **Housing Toolkit** was created to help you navigate what can be a difficult part of the Welcome Circle journey. You will find information about housing from the [Refugee Welcome Collective](#), information about [Refugee Housing Solutions](#), tips for securing housing from [Community Sponsorship Hub](#), and a list of local resources that we have compiled. We find the information from these other organizations very useful even if all of it is not relevant for our circles.

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.

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:

Amy Nash, Welcome Circle Coordinator
amy.nash@seattlearch.org

Rebecca Burdullis, Welcome Circle Associate
rebecca.burdullis@seattlearch.org

Also, make sure to join our email list at www.archseattle.com/welcomecircles.

Safe, secure, and affordable housing provides a sense of place and is an important base for integration.

Keys to a Good Home

The group may assist in the task of identifying decent, safe, and sanitary housing that meets important requirements for a good home for a newcomer. The following are important things to look for in a new home:

- 🔑 Within the area where your Welcome Circle lives to make it easy to be available for the newcomer
- 🔑 Within walking distance or easy public transit trip to a grocery store and K-12 schools
- 🔑 Within easy public transit distance to shopping, medical care, and English language learning opportunities
- 🔑 Access to laundry
- 🔑 Affordable — ideally, the rent would be a third of the income for a family with adults working entry-level jobs
- 🔑 Close to any established local cultural communities
- 🔑 Landlord willing to lease to a newcomer
- 🔑 Number of bedrooms sufficient for family composition and in accordance with state law

Home Search

Searching for housing in the U.S. is challenging with a nationwide shortage of affordable and available homes. Here are some ways to begin.

- 🏠 Use online search tools such as [AffordableHousing.org](https://www.AffordableHousing.org), [Apartments.com](https://wwwApartments.com), [Craigslist](https://www.Craigslist.com), or [Zillow](https://www.Zillow.com).
- 🏠 Reach out to your network using email or social media, share the basics of what is needed such as the number of bedrooms, access to public transit, and range of rent. See if any of your friends or neighbors have recommended apartment communities or rental homes.
- 🏠 Reach out to local real estate agents or offices, they are tuned in to the housing market and may be a good resource to find affordable housing.
- 🏠 You may not initially know the number of individuals or the size of the family you will be welcoming. Start your search by collecting information for one- to three-bedroom homes.
- 🏠 Call or visit the leasing offices of apartment complexes in your community. Ask about their subsidized housing options.



Questions to Ask a Landlord

The group may assist in the task of identifying decent, safe, and sanitary housing that meets important requirements for a good home for a newcomer. The following are important things to look for in a new home:

- What lease terms are available – yearly, six months?
- Newcomers do not arrive in this country with the typical documentation renters provide for screening purposes; however, the newcomers have I-94 cards, are authorized the work in the U.S., and will have social security numbers. May we provide you with this information instead?
- What is the cost of average rent and utilities? Are any utilities included in the rent?
- What amount is the security deposit?
- If a co-signor is required, when can the co-signor's name be removed from the lease – upon the newcomer meeting income requirements or at the end of the lease term?
- Highly motivated to have a new home, newcomers often make reliable long-term residents. However, what, if any, are the break-lease fees or re-letting options in the lease?
- When is rent due and how do you prefer rent to be paid – check, online?
- If the property is within a Homeowner Association, what are the rules or restrictions?
- Is renter's insurance required?
- Who do residents contact if there is a maintenance issue on the property?
- What is the limit to the number of people who can live at this property?

If you need support in your housing search or navigating landlord relationships, you can reach out to Refugee Housing Solutions (RHS). RHS is a capacity-building project funded by the Bureau of Population, Refugee, and Migration to support refugee access to housing. They also offer the following resources:

 [Landlord Toolkit](#) (RefugeeHousing.org)

 [Recruit & Retain Housing Providers Toolkit](#) (RefugeeHousing.org)

Home Safety Orientation

Experience and familiarity with U.S. apartment living vary according to the newcomer's home culture and their individual experience. It is important to remember that newcomers may benefit from the explanation of the use of some household appliances and may be completely accustomed to others. Explain differences respectfully and ask about how they might do it in their country.

Newcomers will benefit from a basic orientation regarding housing and personal safety matters on the day of arrival or the next calendar day. Remember to provide newcomers with emergency contacts and emergency services (911) on the day of arrival as well as their own address and phone number. The below are useful resources for home safety orientation.

 [Housing Orientation](#) (COREsourceExchange.org)

 [Personal Safety Orientation](#) (COREsourceExchange.org)

 [Welcome to Your New Home](#) (SwitchboardTA.org)

Reviewing an Apartment Lease

Understanding the contents of a lease situates newcomers for informed housing decisions – now and in the future. You can use a highlighter to mark these items in an extra copy of their lease, assisting the newcomer in transferring key dates to a calendar and key numbers to their phone. Set the times when a group member can work with the newcomer to make their first rental payment or practice making a maintenance request.

Important information in the lease to look at includes:

- Lease start and end date
- Rent amount, due date, method of payment, grace periods, and late charges
- Utilities included
- Contact for maintenance requests
- Process and dates to know to renew lease and process and dates to know to end lease, including break lease fees

 [Understanding Your Lease](https://www.coresourceexchange.org/understanding-your-lease) (COREsourceExchange.org)

Future Housing

Some newcomers may find their initial apartment home is the ideal place to live for years to come as it provides the affordability, community, and location the family desires. If the newcomers are interested in other housing options, you can share resources with them before the sponsorship period ends. They can revisit these resources later in their resettlement or at the end of their lease independently or with the assistance of a friend or neighbor. Below are helpful resources:

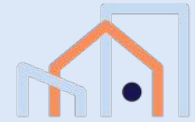
- **U.S. Housing Programs:** Refugees are eligible for U.S. housing programs such as public housing or housing choice vouchers. Reach out to your Public Housing Authority with the contact information provided below to find out what opportunities are available in your community, average waitlist times, and steps to apply. If newcomers are interested, introduce them to the local Public Housing Authority for future opportunities. U.S. housing programs are usually not an option for initial housing due to waitlists and requirements.

 [Public Housing Agency Contact Information](https://www.hud.gov/publichousing) (HUD.gov)

- **Financial literacy programs:** Certain financial literacy programs may be a good future resource for newcomers as some provide support to first-time home buyers.
- **Habitat for Humanity:** This or similar programs may provide support for home ownership.

Who We Are

Everyone deserves a safe place to call home. At Refugee Housing Solutions, we provide tools, resources, training, and one-on-one support for refugee resettlement practitioners, landlords, and property owners to address barriers refugees and newcomers often face when accessing affordable housing.



Refugee Housing SOLUTIONS

Increasing access to **safe, sanitary and affordable** housing for refugee families and newcomers in the United States.



What We Do

Refugee Housing Solutions provides technical housing support and a cohesive strategy as we work collaboratively with resettlement practitioners by engaging key stakeholders as we innovate and expand affordable housing solutions across the United States.

We offer on-demand technical assistance to provide ongoing support to resettlement practitioners seeking quality housing for newcomers.

Resources include but are not limited to:



Who is a Refugee, Afghan Evacuee & Asylum Seeker?



Housing Toolkit & Navigating Resources



Partnering with Landlords & Property Managers



Understanding the U.S. Housing Crisis



Housing Advocacy & Policy



Media Inquiries



Refugee Resettlement in the U.S.

Get Involved

Addressing the housing crisis will take multiple solutions, policy changes, and a collaborative effort to increase access to affordable housing.

We believe this is possible and are hopeful for change.

Increasing access to affordable housing and creating innovative housing solutions not only benefits newcomers, but also the entire United States.



TIPS FOR SECURING HOUSING

Last Updated 05/03/22

The United States has a rich tradition of welcoming newcomers. Drawing from this experience, this resource provides best practices to guide sponsors as they find and secure housing for newcomers.



The uncertain arrival date for the newcomer family may create a need for temporary housing.

Potential temporary or short-term housing options may include:

- Hotels (with accessible kitchen)
- Airbnb (<https://www.airbnb.com>)
- Separate living space attached to private home
- In some instances, hosting within the sponsor's home

General Guidelines:

Get to know your local housing market! It is important to find housing that a newcomer family can afford, even after you are no longer supporting them. Housing should be clean, safe, and affordable, preferably near shopping, employment, schools, and accessible to public transportation. Research affordable apartment buildings and ask about availability, unit sizes, and lease agreement details.

Identify Potential Housing:

- **Use Online Search tools:**
 - Zillow (<https://www.zillow.com>)
 - Apartments.com (<https://www.apartments.com>)
 - Craigslist (<https://www.craigslist.org>)
- **Use your Networks:** Seek potential housing through your own contacts. Create a one-page overview of your search criteria and circulate to your networks, including on social media.
- **Consult with a Real Estate Professional:** Real Estate professionals know their local housing markets well. Typically, there is no fee for this service to the renter.

Tips for Securing Housing

Due to the national housing crisis, securing affordable housing can be competitive. Be prepared!

- **Educate the landlord on the opportunity to welcome a newcomer.**
- **Ensure that they understand your role as sponsor and support to the newcomer.**
- **Questions for landlords should include confirming:**
 - Average monthly rent
 - Maximum occupancy of the housing
 - Cost of security deposit and associated utilities
 - Terms for return of security deposit
 - Co-signer requirements (if applicable)
 - When/if co-signer can be removed from lease
 - Process for early termination of lease, and associated penalties
 - Possibility of shorter-term lease or month-to-month option



HOUSING RESOURCES

A good place to start is in your own community! Who is an expert in housing in your parish or community? Do you know a real estate agent or a landlord? Very often, low income housing opportunities for refugees will come from within your own community and network.

Some other local resources to look into are:

Catholic Community Services of Western Washington

Website: <https://ccsw.org/>

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)

Website: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/>

DSHS - Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance

Website: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/office-refugee-and-immigrant-assistance>

DSHS - Economic Services Administration | Community Services Division

Website: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa>

DSHS - Housing Stabilization Services - Short-Term Housing Assistance - Program and Community Provider Information

Website:

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/ESA/oria/documents/DSHS%20ORIA%20Housing%20Stabilization%20Services%20Program%20Announcement.pdf>

To apply for the DSHS Short-Term Housing Assistance Program, please contact one of our contracted community providers who can assist you with enrollment.

DSHS Provider Contact Information:

The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia – Refugee Resettlement Office

Email: info@ecww.org Phone: 206-325-4200

Website: <https://ecww.org/diocesan-ministries/refugee-resettlement-office/>



HOUSING RESOURCES

International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Seattle Email: Seattle@Rescue.org

Phone: 206-623-2105

Website: <https://www.rescue.org/united-states/seattle-wa>

Jewish Family Services

Email: ris@jfsseattle.org

Phone: 253-850-4065

Website: <https://www.jfsseattle.org/get-help/refugee-and-immigrant-services/>

Refugee Women's Alliance

Email: info@rewa.org

Phone: 206-721-0243

Website: <https://www.rewa.org/services/housing-and-homelessness-prevention/>

Refugee & Immigrant Services Northwest

Phone: 425-388-9307

Website: <https://risnw.org/contact-us/>

Lutheran Community Services Northwest

Phone: 206-901-1685

Website: <https://lcsnw.org/our-impact/refugee-and-immigrant-services/>

Refugees Northwest

Website: <https://refugeesnw.org/contact-us/>

World Relief - Western Washington

Phone: 253-277-1121

Website: <https://worldrelief.org/western-wa/about-us/contact-us/>

HopeLink Rental Assistance

Web Page: <https://www.hopelink.org/programs/financial-assistance/>



HOUSING RESOURCES

Tacoma Community House

Website: <https://www.tacomacommunityhouse.org/>

Polaris Equal Housing Opportunity

Shoreline Website: <https://www.liveatpolaris.com/>

Lake City Website: <https://www.liveatpolarisatlakecity.com/>

Redmond Website: <https://www.liveatpolaristgethercenter.com/>

Seatac Website: <https://www.liveatpolarisatseatac.com/>

HNN Communities - Several locations that provide low income housing.

Website: <https://lifeisbetterhere.com/communities/>

King County ARCH Affordable Housing Apartment Listings

Website: <https://www.atg.wa.gov/residential-landlord-tenant-resources>

King County ARCH Renter's Guide

Web Page:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/61687c3f7fbc096461d80234/t/62c8a566f4e9f41c66d5eb22/1657316711640/Renter+Guide.pdf>

Refugee Housing Solutions

Website: <https://refugeehousing.org/>

Below are links to websites that help landlords who may be willing to rent to refugees.

Landlord Mitigation Program

Website: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/landlord-fund-programs/landlord-mitigation-program/#:~:text=Program%20Overview&text=The%20program%20offers%20up%20to,by%20a%20tenant%20during%20tenancy>

Residential Landlord-Tenant Resources | Washington State

Website: <https://www.atg.wa.gov/residential-landlord-tenant-resources>



HOUSING RESOURCES

PSE Discount Rate Program for Income Eligible Households

Web Page: https://www.pse.com/en/pages/together/bill-savings?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjwn7mwBhCiARIsAGoxjaJrB04_nvJY9y7zP3iwnY8MG8cHLtXdjL4STMMBhr_pZEWp_tzTZ8oaAsgnEALw_wcB

Windermere Foundation

Website: <https://www.windermere.com/foundation>

Windermere Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization created by Windermere Real Estate for the purpose of raising and distributing funds to support low-income and homeless assistance programs for families throughout the Western U.S.

*Applicants need to be non-profits – so this would need to be worked out by the Welcome Circle. Maybe a parish's non-profit status would need to be borrowed by the Welcome Circle or other non-profit organization working with the Welcome Circle.

They offer assistance with rent, utilities, food assistance, programs assisting low-income and/or homeless children/youth, holiday assistance, job training, public school assistance (field trips, camps, school supplies, instrument rentals) and scholarships

Application: <https://www.windermere.com/files/2022/01/22058-Windermere-Foundation-Application-Jan2022.pdf>