



GROUP ROLES



Welcome Circles is a ministry that requires teamwork and collaboration. Given the array of welcoming activities a group takes on, it is wise to organize your group members into specific focus areas and roles. In addition to a group leader, having specific people or teams focusing on key areas such as housing and transportation ensures all-around support for newcomers and lessens the likelihood of confusion and burn-out.

The below introduces common roles and focus areas in Welcome Circles, as well as associated knowledge and skills so that you can organize your circle. However, no two Welcome Circles are exactly alike. Group roles or focus areas can be adjusted according to the unique goals of the newcomers and the capabilities and interests of Welcome Circle members.

Group Leader

The Welcome Circle leader's role is to use collaborative leadership skills and to delegate work to other group members. The group leader maintains clear, thorough, and open communication between the Archdiocese of Seattle Welcome Circle Team and the Welcome Circle. They set boundaries, model virtues, communicate effectively, and solve problems. The group leader is the main point of communication between the Welcome Circle and the Welcome Circle Team of the Archdiocese of Seattle's Immigrant and Refugee Ministry. They provide oversight for background checks, paperwork compliance, and financial accountability. A group leader:

- Enjoys collaborating with others.
- Approaches challenges with patience and curiosity.

Housing

The housing team works with local resources to find local housing and create a welcoming home. They often collect furniture and household items, stock the kitchen, and provide a culturally appropriate welcome meal. The housing team has:

- Ability to find and mobilize donations of furniture and household supplies including pickup, storage, and delivery.
- Interest in discovering foods from other countries.
- Interest in setting up a new home.

Transportation

This team supports family transportation and community navigation needs, especially in the early days after arrival. This team arranges transportation for airport arrival, initial healthcare appointments, grocery shopping trips, or for public benefits appointments. Most importantly, they provide public transportation orientation, accompanying individuals to key locations on public transit. The transportation team:

- Provides knowledge of community's public transit or interest in exploring.
- Includes team members with access to their own car for initial appointments and tasks.
- Has varied availability within team with some availability for weekday appointments.

Health

The health team supports physical and mental health needs. In coordination with the transportation team, they will assist the family in attending any initial health screening appointments. They support the family in setting up a calendar for healthcare appointments and making initial contacts. The health team introduces individuals to healthcare resources including the nearest hospital, pharmacy, urgent care, and local mental health services or refugee-related support groups. The health team has:

- Knowledge of community health care resources or interest in exploring.
- Varied availability within team with some availability for weekday appointments.

Education

This team helps families access English learning programs and supports their knowledge and comfort with communication. This may include helping with sign-up for local English learning programs. Team members may practice English conversation with individuals and connect them with resources such as the local library, picture or bilingual dictionaries, and translation apps. This team may also assist families with children with school enrollment and orientation to the K-12 school system. The education team has:

- Experience in education or the K-12 school system.
- Interest in researching language learning opportunities and resources.
- Attitude of patience and fun for English language practice.
- Enthusiasm to learn a few new words in a new language.

Employment

This team supports employable individuals in looking for and securing safe and dignified employment. Once employment is secured, they may assist with practicing public transportation and ensuring refugees have necessary clothing or supplies for their work. The employment team has:

- Interest in exploring local employment opportunities.
- Willingness to help practice job transportation and job-specific skills.

Finance & Fundraising

The finance and fundraising team applies their knowledge of fundraising, personal finances, and budgeting. Important tasks may include organizing fundraising efforts, setting up a bank account, and supporting the family in using SNAP benefits or other public benefits cards. The finance and fundraising team has:

- Interest in fundraising, budgeting, and personal finance.
- Basic experience paying your own bills.

Orientation

This team supports the newcomers in acquiring the needed knowledge, skill, and attitudes for life in the U.S. They will help them orient themselves to their new hometown. They will locate and map the nearest grocery store, library, park, laundromat, bank etc. If the family is of a certain faith tradition, they may help connect them with their preferred community of faith such as an area mosque, church, or temple. They, and other teams, will connect family with relevant resources available to refugees through the Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange. The orientation team:

- Likes to visit local community spots — and share them.
- Is curious to find local resources and experiences that align with family's interests and goals.

Prayer

While all members of the Welcome Circle should be praying for their circle and the people they serve, the prayer team can focus on this and encourage the other Welcome Circle members. The prayer team can:

- Hold up the Welcome Circle, the people being served, and the Immigrant and Refugee Ministry in daily prayer.
- Share insights in prayer with the Welcome Circle.
- Invite and encourage Welcome Circle members into opportunities to pray, such as a novena to St. Cabrini.

Welcome Circles provide more effective support to newcomers by organizing their group thoughtfully. While group members coach and help with specific resettlement tasks within their focus area, all group members provide social and emotional support to the newly arrived family. To those who have been through loss and displacement, this social and emotional support from the whole group provides welcome, inclusion, and belonging.

Group Leader Role **G r o u p L e a d e r R o l e** Group Leader Role

The community sponsorship group leader's focus is to delegate tasks among the group and maintain open communication. Some key roles the group leader plays in support of the group and newcomers include:

Communication Hub

Perhaps the group leader's most important role is to be the primary point of communication. The group leader communicates information between the Seattle of Archdiocese Welcome Circle Team and sponsor group committee leads or the entire group. They may establish a shared calendar where staff and sponsor group members can see scheduled appointments and other important dates.

Meeting Scheduler

The group leader coordinates and helps set regular meetings with the entire group, setting agendas and making sure all are informed. They may also meet with committees as needed. As requested, the group leader will communicate regularly with the Seattle Archdiocese Welcome Circle Team to report progress, ask questions, and identify action items or next steps.

Paperwork Champion

The group leader is ultimately responsible for all necessary paperwork. The group leader makes sure each member of the group has completed a background check and has participated in training. They are responsible for making sure service delivery activities such as English language training enrollment or school registration are completed on time and appropriately documented. They work with the group to ensure case notes are recorded.

Problem Solver

The group leader is a problem solver. When issues of concern are raised; the group leader makes their best effort to address those concerns with everyone involved.

Supporter of Principles

The group leader works to incorporate the principles and practices of a skilled Welcome Circle in the group's work. The group leader practices setting positive boundaries and models patience and respect in sponsorship support. They receive continued guidance regarding shared principles of cultural humility, respect for client agency, and a focus on empowerment and self-sufficiency.

Effective Welcome Circle communication is at the heart of successful sponsorship. Communication and relationships within the group can be as rewarding and important as those with the newcomer you are welcoming.

The following are communication best practices for sponsor groups:

- Select a routine time to have the entire group come together to discuss updates, ask questions, and share relevant information.
- At the start of a sponsorship, meetings will need to happen more frequently. Once per week, either in person or over a platform like Zoom, may be sufficient. Meeting frequency may decrease over the course of the sponsorship.
- There can be almost daily changes and moving pieces at the start of a sponsorship. For non-urgent items, all group members should try and save questions and updates for the meeting time.
- Groups should incorporate the use of any calendars, timelines, and case plans in their planning and communication.
- Group leaders can work with the Seattle Archdiocese Welcome Circle Team to determine:
 - Staff primary point of contact for group leader
 - Staff point of contact 's preference for phone, email, or text communication
 - Any regular meetings or check-ins for sponsors and staff point of contact
 - How the newcomer can escalate concerns, if any, to staff directly
 - How the sponsors can escalate concerns, if any, to staff
- All group communication and planning should prioritize newcomer autonomy and promote a strengths-based approach.
- Conflict and differences arise in any group. At an initial meeting, decide on a few group guidelines for when differences arise.