



# CULTURAL ORIENTATION



**WELCOME  
CIRCLES**  
*for Refugees*

Newcomers have been separated from their home communities, friends, and family. Sponsor groups can provide social support and support newcomers in establishing a feeling of home. Through Cultural Orientation, newcomers learn about the culture and context of their new neighbors.

## What is Cultural Orientation?

According to the Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange (CORE), refugees participate in a cultural orientation to acquire vital knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to adapt to their new lives and achieve self-sufficiency. CORE focuses Cultural Orientation around the topics:

- Budgeting and personal finance
- Cultural adjustment
- Digital technology
- Education
- Employment
- English
- Health and hygiene
- Housing
- Newcomer rights and responsibilities
- Public assistance
- Role of the resettlement agency
- Safety
- Transportation
- U.S. laws
- Your new community

## Cultural Orientation Resources

Newcomers can access content through CORE's Settle In App. The Settle In App is a newcomer-facing mobile app with interactive chapters and gamification in multiple languages. Once downloaded, the app is available for offline use. This app can be downloaded from the App Store and Google Play.


Newcomers can also access CORE's Settle In Website. This resource is a newcomer facing website with fact sheets, videos, and podcasts on a variety of Cultural Orientation topics translated into multiple languages and designed with newcomer literacy needs in mind. There is also a help center that provides more tailored content to specific populations.

 [Settle In](https://SettleInUS.org) (SettleInUS.org)

CORE offers self-paced courses for sponsors on its learning platform. The Sponsorship Orientation pathway will guide you through multiple courses designed to teach you more about the resettlement process and best practices in teaching adult learners.

 [Online Courses & Webinars](https://COREsourceExchange.org) (COREsourceExchange.org)

The Cultural Orientation Toolkit for Community Partners and Sponsors teaches sponsors how to incorporate cultural orientation messages as they complete services and activities in the first months after arrival.

 [Cultural Orientation Toolkit for Community Partners & Sponsors](https://COREsourceExchange.org)  
(COREsourceExchange.org)

Cultural Exchange Activities walk sponsors through self-reflection activities and outline five activities to support newcomers in feeling welcome, included, and celebrated.

 [Cultural Exchange Activities](https://COREsourceExchange.org) (COREsourceExchange.org)

In the activity bank, sponsors can explore a variety of CORE's activities, lesson plans, and additional resources for Cultural Orientation topics.

 [Activity Bank](https://www.coresourceexchange.org) (COREsourceExchange.org)

## Community Exploration

Community sponsors can share what they love about their new community. This is an opportunity to explore the community in fun and educational excursions. Newcomers can learn about places and resources they can access long after the sponsor period, knowing that they can get there via public transportation.

"The older children of the family we sponsored really enjoyed gathering with other Afghans to play indoor soccer since it was the middle of winter. It felt familiar to them . . . Visiting the zoo was the biggest hit!"

– Brenda, community sponsor

## Social Activities

Scheduling social activities with newcomers can help avoid isolation and loneliness. You may feel uncomfortable scheduling an activity that is not necessarily a sponsorship task. However, ask the newcomers if they would like to get together for a specific activity; get out of your comfort zone!

### Possible social or community exploration activities

- Locate and map all the places the newcomers know such as the grocery store, park, laundromat, bank, etc.
- Go to the library, check out the resources, use a computer, etc.
- At the post office, practice mailing a letter or mailing a package to a friend, a member of the group, or the newcomer's home.
- Visit the local park.
- Attend a sporting event.
- Go to a museum or the zoo.
- Track local free events and attend one together.
- Give a "Welcome to the Community" tour with local landmarks and places you can explore in the coming months.
- Celebrate a holiday together – whether a holiday in the U.S. or the newcomer's home country.
- Play children's games that may be similar in the U.S. and the newcomer's home country such as tic tac toe, checkers, or other.

## Connecting with Cultural Communities

Connecting with other neighbors from their home country or their faith community is key to integration. These neighbors may be able to provide information and advice that is particularly helpful or insightful as newcomers navigate their new community. You may note that some newcomers may choose not to connect with their own cultural communities if they have experienced persecution, or discrimination, or are concerned about their safety for other reasons.

### Possible activities for cultural community connection

- Ask the newcomers if they practice a particular faith. If yes, ask if they would like help locating the local church, mosque, temple, or other faith community.
- Visit local ethnic grocery stores or restaurants.
- Before and after arrival, see if there is anyone from the same country or language group in your extended network. Remember not to give anyone the names or contact information of the newcomers. Instead, ask if you can provide the more established resident's name and contact to the newcomer family so that they can decide if they want to reach out.
- Ask the newcomer about their favorite music, newspapers, sporting events, TV shows, or radio programs. See if you can access these online or through another source.