1. WHO ARE THE REFUGEES IN NORTH TEXAS?

There are three types of refugees.

The first group is officially identified for resettlement by the U.S. State Department and is assigned to the national office of 1 of 10 VOLAGS1 (Voluntary Agencies – see Appendix).

- They are provided with a refugee visa and receive a few minimal services for the first few months.
- The nonprofit organizations in the North Texas area that recognized by the State Department and responsible to provide refugee resettlement services are:
  - Catholic Charities
  - Refugee Services of Texas
  - International Rescue (IRC)
  - World Vision (in Fort Worth)

Refugees may also enter the country and request political asylum.

- They receive no services or benefits, and instead must pay several thousand dollars in application fees.
- They may not work legally until their case is approved (6 to 12 months) and for that reason are extremely needy.

Syrian refugees who were living in the United States by a certain date also qualify for a special Temporary Protected Status (TPS). They can work legally. Most refugees with TPS also apply for political asylum.

During 2014-2015, refugees to North Texas mostly arrived from Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma and Syria.
2. WHAT SERVICES / BENEFITS DO VOLAGS PROVIDE?

The refugee resettlement agency meets the family on arrival, takes them to a low-cost apartment for which they sign a lease, and supervises their basic needs for the first 90 days only. Their responsibility includes:

• registering children in school
• applying for food stamps
• obtaining Social Security cards
• health checkups
• providing employment
• cultural orientation and ESL classes

Most families receive these items from their resettlement agency:

• a small table and a few chairs
• mattresses or beds with some sheets, blankets, pillows
• a few used dishes, glasses, pots, flatware items
• rent and utilities paid for a three month period only

All additional support (furniture, shoes, clothing, food) is usually provided by community volunteers and faith institutions that are committed to supporting refugees. Most families must be ‘self-sufficient’ and cover all their own bills independently after the initial 90 day period – a challenging task, even under the most favorable circumstances and if they speak English.

3. WHAT ABOUT FOOD?

It usually takes 4 to 5 weeks for a family to receive their food stamp card. During this period donations of food are very desirable. Sometimes caseworkers forget to transport a new arrival to a supermarket to buy food and the newcomers are forced to borrow American money from other refugees for this purpose.

Political asylum-seekers do not receive food stamps – making food a crucial need until their work permit is received – which can take up to a year after their arrival.

Refugees find comfort in preparing and consuming traditional dishes from their own countries. So rather than donating cooked food, it’s recommended that food sponsors
drive the family to an ethnic or major supermarket and assist them to select foods they prefer – or provide them with a gift card from Albertsons, Walmart, Kroger, Target etc. As most families have survived war and famine by consuming inexpensive starches (bread, beans, lentils, rice) for extended periods, nutritious fresh food has a special value.

4. WHICH TYPE OF DONATIONS ARE MOST URGENTLY NEEDED?

Furniture – that is still usable and in good condition
  • sofas
  • bunk beds
  • coffee tables / end tables
  • kitchen / dining room chairs
  • dressers
  • book shelves, shoe shelves, storage units
  • area rugs / mats
  • lamps
  • beds frames / bedside tables

Furniture with minor scratches is of course acceptable. However, if something is broken and would need major repairs or items that are unusable, please consider other means of disposal.
Kitchen Items – that are still usable and in good condition
- pots and pans
- dishes, glasses, flatware, sliver-ware
- vacuums
- blenders, teapots, coffeepots, microwaves

Children / Infant Items – that are still usable and in good condition
- diapers / wipes (helpful if they are sorted by size, even in simple grocery bags)
- strollers, twin strollers
- bassinets / bouncers / baby beds, high chairs
- backpacks filled with school supplies
- story books
- toys
- bicycles, tricycles
- soccer balls / baseballs / footballs

Personal Items (new / sealed)
- pillows / bedding / sheets
- basic toiletries (soap, shampoo, conditioner, lotion etc)
- basic cleaning liquids and powders
- laundry detergent
- towels
5. HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Your cash donation is tax-deductible and can be mailed to:
DFW International Community Alliance
9064 Stone Creek Place, Dallas, TX 75243

* $25 will provide dishes for a family
* $35 will give a child a schoolbag and supplies.
* $50 will buy school uniforms or a bicycle for a child who has been driven from his/her home by war
* $100 will give new shoes to five refugee children new shoes, or will buy a laptop for all the children to share

A tax-deductible receipt is available for other types of donations.

We welcome any other creative ideas to help these refugees as they walk on this difficult path to become residents.

6. CONTACT INFORMATION

If you would like to volunteer or help in any other way, you may contact us by email at president@dfwinternational.org or leave a message at 972-661-2764.

Anne Marie Weiss-Armush
president and founder
DFW International Community Alliance
9064 Stone Creek Place, Dallas, TX 75243
APPENDIX

1. VOLAG is an abbreviation for “Voluntary Agency”. This term refers to any of the nine U.S. private agencies and one state agency that have cooperative agreements with the State Department to provide reception and placement services for refugees arriving in the United States.

• These agencies use funding from the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) along with self-generated resources to provide refugees with a range of services including sponsorship, initial housing, food and clothing, orientation and counseling.

• VOLAGs may also contract with the Office of Refugee Resettlement (part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) to provide job placement, English language training and other social services.

• List of VOLAGs
  1. Church World Service
  2. Episcopal Migration Ministries
  3. Ethiopian Community Development Council
  4. Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
  5. International Rescue Committee
  6. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
  7. U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
  8. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
  9. World Relief