



Serving Refugees in IELCE Activities

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Adult education programs serving refugees may find the use of an immigrant integration approach helpful in thinking about how they serve and connect refugees to services that meet their varied needs. The Migration Policy Institute defines immigrant integration as “the process of economic mobility and social inclusion for newcomers.”¹

This spotlight on serving refugee populations with Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE)/Integrated Education and Training (IET) activities provides (1) an overview of refugee classifications and their implications for adult education; (2) innovative approaches to serving refugees in adult education; and (3) potential resources for adult educators looking to expand partnerships or services to increase the civic, linguistic, and economic integration and inclusion of refugees into U.S. society. Though IELCE/IET activities are open to all immigrant populations, this spotlight specifically looks at serving refugees, asylees, special immigrant visa holders, and humanitarian parolees via IELCE/IET activities.

The Enhancing Access for Refugees and New Americans project aims to support adult educators in developing and delivering high-quality IELCE/IET programming in alignment with an immigrant integration approach.

Enhancing Access Spotlights describe and provide examples of specific aspects of IELCE/IET implementation.

What is the definition of a refugee?

According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, refugees are individuals who are “unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin because of a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.”² To be inclusive of various legal pathways related to forced migration, including those defined in Exhibit 1, we use the term refugees in this spotlight.

Adult educators and programs can ask students about their refugee status. Knowing a person’s status, regardless of what it is, can help programs provide the right services to each student. Students who have one of the formal refugee statuses listed in Exhibit 1 may be eligible for more services, hold work authorization, or receive supports from other organizations.

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¹ Migration Policy Institute. n.d. “Immigrant Integration.” <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/topics/immigrant-integration>

² UN Refugee Agency. n.d.-1. “What is a refugee?” <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/what-is-a-refugee.html>

Exhibit 1. Selected Immigration Program Definitions

IMMIGRATION PROGRAM	DEFINITION
<p>Refugee</p>	<p>A refugee is any person who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin because of a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.²</p>
<p>Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Holder</p>	<p>SIV is an umbrella term for visa holders in many different subcategories. Section 602(b) of the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009, as amended, is a special immigrant program that authorizes the issuance of SIVs to Afghan nationals who meet certain requirements and who were employed in Afghanistan:³</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » by or on behalf of the U.S. government in Afghanistan, or » by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), or a successor mission, in a capacity that required the applicant to serve as an interpreter or translator for U.S. military personnel while traveling off-base with U.S. military personnel stationed at ISAF or to perform activities for the U.S. military personnel stationed at ISAF.⁴ <p>SIVs from Afghanistan and Iraq can be accompanied by members of their family.</p>
<p>Asylees</p>	<p>Asylees are individuals who, on their own, travel to the United States and subsequently apply for and receive a grant of asylum. Asylees do not enter the United States as refugees. They might enter as students, tourists, businessmen, or even in undocumented status. To qualify for asylum status, the person must meet the definition of a refugee and meet an application deadline. Asylum status permits the person to remain in the United States.⁵</p> <p>An asylum-seeker is someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed.⁶</p>
<p>Humanitarian Parolee</p>	<p>Parole allows an individual who may be inadmissible or otherwise ineligible for admission into the United States to be in the United States for a temporary period for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit.⁷</p>
<p>Temporary Protected Status</p>	<p>Countries can be designated for temporary protected status (TPS) due to conditions in that country that temporarily prevent its nationals from returning safely (e.g., ongoing armed conflict, environmental disaster, epidemic).⁸</p>

³ The SIV program was also used for Iraqi translators who worked with the U.S. Armed Forces.

⁴ U.S. Department of State – Bureau of Consular Affairs. n.d. “Special Immigrant Visas for Afghans - Who Were Employed by/on Behalf of the U.S. Government.” <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/special-immig-visa-afghans-employed-us-gov.html>

⁵ Office of Refugee Resettlement – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2022. “Who We Serve – Asylees.” <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/policy-guidance/who-we-serve-asylees>

⁶ UN Refugee Agency. n.d.-2. “Asylum Seekers.” <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/asylum-seekers.html>

⁷ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. 2021. “Humanitarian Parole.” <https://www.uscis.gov/forms/explore-my-options/humanitarian-parole>

⁸ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. 2022. “Temporary Protected Status.” <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status>. More information about which countries currently hold TPS designations can also be found here.

How can IELCE activities support refugees?

Using an immigrant integration approach, IELCE activities may be connected to services that support refugees' civic, linguistic, and economic integration, such as preparation for the naturalization exam, improvement of English language skills to enter postsecondary education, or increasing their ability to obtain a better job. IELCE activities can strategically serve and support adult learners who are refugees through local, regional, and state efforts.

Program Efforts


1. **Recognize Refugees' Basic Needs.** As newcomers to the United States, many refugees have basic needs, such as housing, health care, and transportation, that must be met. Often refugee resettlement organizations help meet refugees' immediate needs and refer learners to adult education programs. Adult education and IELCE activities can often offer or connect refugees to additional or ongoing basic needs supports (e.g., academic support, transportation, childcare) that would enable adult learners' to successfully participate in IELCE and other educational activities. When cooperating with community partners, programs can offer a warm hand-off, or introduce the learner directly to the community partner, to ensure that learners receive support as needed.
2. **Put Refugees' Access to Education Services Front and Center.** Adult educators should consider how refugees will be able to access their IELCE activities. For example, to better serve refugees without a high school equivalency in IET activities, Georgia

Piedmont Technical College negotiated the removal of the equivalency requirement for some IET activities. Instead, it built a bridge class that supported refugees in reaching a necessary standardized test score for entry into IET activities and access to credit-bearing courses at the college.

Additionally, many classifications described in Exhibit 1 include work authorization, which can make refugees strong candidates for IELCE/IET activities that have work or documentation requirements.

3. **Employ a Trauma-Informed Teaching Approach.** Refugees may experience stress and trauma, which can impact learning. As educators build programming for students who are refugees, they can also consider providing training and professional development on trauma-informed teaching practices to both instructors and volunteers who interact with and support refugee students.

Programs, instructors, and volunteers can draw on instructional strategies that support learning for individuals who have experienced trauma. Instructors like Andrea Echelberger at Adult Academic Program, Robbinsdale use strategies such as “regulate and relate” to start each class. Regulating refers to giving students a chance to regulate responses through activities such as breath work and meditation. Relating refers to setting up a chance for connection among classmates.

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4. **Establish a Human-Centered Intake Process.** Within the intake process, programs can provide refugees and other IELCE participants with the opportunity to share their backgrounds, including educational attainment, previous experience learning English and other languages, prior work experiences, and any current connections with local refugee resettlement agencies. This information can help to not only connect refugees with other services in the community but also inform a culturally responsive and asset-based approach to instruction.

Intake is also a good time to learn more about students' goals and help them make a plan for meeting them. For newcomers, it can be helpful to implement strategies such as asking them to select from a list of sample goals (e.g., get my driver's license, help my children with school, earn my GED) and having materials that help pinpoint skills and achievements needed for daily life in the United States available in multiple languages.

Serving Refugees at Georgia Piedmont Technical College

Georgia Piedmont Technical College (GPTC) is located in Clarkston, Georgia, a long-standing refugee resettlement community. GPTC serves high numbers of refugees in their adult education programming; therefore, they design programs and supports so that refugee students can access all career pathways. Access to programming benefits from supportive services and a dedicated effort to ensure that the financial burden on students is as low as possible.

With a human-centered approach, IELCE staff meet individually with refugees and other IELCE participants to learn more about their educational and professional backgrounds, and subsequently determine the career pathway programming that is the best fit for the participant's needs and strengths. This process of determining best fit includes a discussion of refugees' long-term goals, work and educational experiences, and the financial aid options to support them in potential pathways. For internationally trained professionals, this also includes individual support with the credential evaluation process. The human-centered approach requires staff to have a detailed understanding of financial aid and college programs. As one GPTC staff member stated, "staff need to be well informed before we interact with students."

Finding ways to make workforce training programs no or low cost is a priority for GPTC staff. Recognizing financial aid as a basic need for many English learners and refugees in particular, GPTC staff seek out grants and intentionally combine funding sources so that refugees and other IELCE participants are able to access career pathways programming at no or low cost. For refugees with limited formal schooling, this includes sources such as the Ability to Benefit provision so that they can work on a high school equivalency and obtain postsecondary credits at the same time or state aid to support enrollment in in-demand career pathway programs. GPTC's model of braided funding also includes philanthropic funding and support from community organizations, especially for internationally trained professionals who cannot access other forms of financial aid. Moreover, GPTC staff's ongoing efforts to engage employers and bring them to the table, especially in reference to funding for workforce training, also support the ultimate goal of bringing refugees access to family-sustaining-wage work at no or low cost. GPTC's approach recognizes financial aid as a basic need and uses a human-centered approach to determine the best fit for all refugees and IELCE participants.

Local and Regional Efforts

- 5. Collaborate with Refugee Resettlement Agencies.** The College of Western Idaho partners with its local chapter of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to provide wraparound services such as case management and transportation for refugees' participation in IELCE/IET career pathways programming.
- 6. Offer Online or Hybrid IELCE/IET Activities.** Many IELCE programs have offered online and hybrid IET activities, which reduce barriers to access like childcare and transportation. Regionally, these efforts can provide expanded access for refugees who resettle outside of urbanized areas that typically support more IET activities. For example, Minnesota is serving large numbers of English learners in regionalized, virtual programming.

State Efforts

- 7. Collect Demographic Data.** Requiring local programs to collect and report information about the size and specifics of the refugee populations being served can help state staff make informed decisions that could impact availability of specialized services or IELCE/IET programming for refugees, partnerships, policy, or professional learning opportunities.

- 8. Promote State-Level Partnerships.** State adult education agencies can collaborate with state agencies that have responsibility for supporting refugees to look for opportunities to leverage resources and services. State-level partnerships can also encourage the development of program-level partnerships (e.g., requiring a memorandum of understanding with a refugee-serving organization as part of a competitive grant application).
- 9. Cultivate a Professional Learning Community.** Professional learning communities can support efforts to effectively serve refugees in IELCE programs across the state. Upon realizing that Afghan refugees were headed to Virginia, the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center created a professional learning community to share strategies for serving refugees,⁹ including key topics such as drawing from culturally responsive instruction, supporting beginning literacy learners, and developing partnerships. The professional learning community convened over 5 months in spring 2022, hosted guest speakers and discussion on these key topics, and provided a place for shared resources.¹⁰

⁹ See the July 2022 issue of the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center's newsletter *Progress* for more information: https://issuu.com/valrc/docs/july2022final_a/24.

¹⁰ Shared resources can be found at <https://padlet.com/dayberryhj/q7m43qny5umhh8vn>.

Serving Refugees in Virginia

In 2021, Virginia welcomed a large influx of Afghan refugees across the state, both to places like northern Virginia with established Afghan communities and to military bases in rural areas with fewer resources geared toward serving new refugee populations. As a result, adult education programs across the state saw an increase in enrollment among refugees and a particular increase in beginning ESL learners and learners with emerging literacy skills. To help meet the needs of programs and new refugee arrivals, the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC) prioritized supporting programs to meet immediate needs, strengthening partnerships to better serve refugees, developing resources to support language access, and offering targeted professional learning opportunities for instructors.

First, to meet the immediate needs of refugees arriving at Virginia's military bases, VALRC created resource guides and welcome materials to share with military partners and the organizations providing services to refugees on the bases. These resources helped support the immediate needs of the refugees as well as their transition to other communities across the state.

Virginia also put a plan into action to sustain support for refugees beyond the first few weeks of their stay. At the state level, the Virginia Department of Education participated in the state refugee resettlement task force and invested in resources and professional development. VALRC then works with adult education programs to strengthen their relationships and referral practices with refugee resettlement agencies. VALRC also developed resources to support refugees with very limited English proficiency by developing intake materials in multiple languages, as well as creating videos in different languages (including Dari and Pashto¹¹) to help new learners understand expectations for intake and registration with an adult education program. Finally, VALRC significantly increased their professional learning opportunities, including the professional learning community described earlier, as well as trainings and resources on trauma-informed care,¹² social and emotional learning,¹³ and cultural competence. Through this sustained focus on partnerships, resources that increase access, and professional learning, Virginia is better prepared to meet the needs of future refugee newcomers.

¹¹ Videos that help students understand what information must be provided during registration are available in multiple languages: <https://valrc.org/resource/multilingual-aspd-videos/>. Intake forms in multiple languages are also available: <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/specialized-instruction/adult-education/grants-funding>.

¹² VALRC developed a web page of resources to support trauma-informed care: <https://www.inclusive.valrc.org/supports-2/trauma-informed-care/>.

¹³ Virginia's Social and Emotional Learning for Adult Multilingual Learners Toolkit is available here: <https://valrc.org/resource/social-and-emotional-learning-for-adult-multilingual-learners-toolkit/>.

Resources

General Refugee Resources

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)

» **Fact Sheets: Eligibility & Benefits**

These fact sheets describe eligibility for ORR benefits and services, including for asylees, Cuban and Haitian entrants, refugees, SIV holds, survivors of torture, and victims of trafficking. The webpage also provides fact sheets, available in multiple languages, about benefits for special populations

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/refugees/factsheets>

» **Key State Contacts**

Use this list to find the names and contact information for State Refugee Coordinators, State Refugee Health Coordinators, and the state websites related to refugees.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/key-state-contacts>

» **Find Resources And Contacts In Your State**

Use this interactive map to find local affiliates in cities and regions across the United States.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/map/find-resources-and-contacts-your-state>

Partnership

- » **ALLIES Immigrant Integration Framework**
The ALLIES Framework provides a broad set of goals and associated metrics that more accurately record an immigrant's progress.

https://www.allies4innovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Allies_WhitePaper_ImmigrantIntegrationFramework-hr.pdf

Trauma-Informed Instruction

- » **Atlas ABE Teaching & Learning Advancement System Cultural Competency Resources**

Search the resources for teacher development and classroom materials related to trauma-informed practices.

<https://atlasabe.org/resources/cultural-competency/>

- » Connor, E. **Trauma Informed Educational Program Checklist.** System for Adult Basic Education Support.

Use this checklist to guide programmatic self-reflection toward creating a trauma-informed education program.

<https://www.sabes.org/content/trauma-informed-educational-program-checklist>

- » U.S. Department of Education, LINCS. **Follow-up Discussion: Adult Education and Resettled Refugees in the U.S.**

This discussion provides examples of trauma-informed practices in the adult education classroom.

<https://community.lincs.ed.gov/group/20/discussion/follow-discussion-adult-education-and-resettled-refugees-us>

- » Johnson, R. 2018. **Trauma and Learning: Impacts and Strategies for Adult Classroom Success.** *MinneTESOL Journal* 34, No. 2.

This article describes three exercises that can be implemented in the adult education classroom, attention tasks, memory strategies and tasks, and mindfulness.

https://minnetesoljournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Johnson-2018-Trauma-and-Learning_-Impacts-and-Strategies-for-Adult-Classroom-Success.pdf

- » Wilson, E. 2016. **Trauma Informed Teaching, Advising, and Learning: Strategies for Building Resilience Inside and Outside the Classroom.** System for Adult Basic Education Support.

This resource packet contains slides, links, research, and fact sheets to inform designing programming that supports trauma survivors.

<https://www.sabes.org/content/trauma-informed-teaching-advising-and-learning-strategies-building-resilience-inside-and>

Refugee Families & K-12 School Resources

U.S. Department of Education

- » Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. **Starting School in the United States: A Guide for Newcomer Students' Families.**

This guide provides answers to many questions newcomer families typically have about the U.S. school system. The guide is available in Arabic, English, Somali, and Spanish.

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northwest/news/newcomer-guides.asp>

- » Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). **The Newcomer Tool Kit.**

The Newcomer Tool Kit contains an overview, sample tools, and resources to help U.S. educators work directly with immigrant students, including asylees and refugees, and their families.

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/newcomers-toolkit/index.html>

- » OELA. **The English Learner Family Toolkit.**

The Toolkit helps families choose education services that meet their child's needs. Adult educators can share the toolkit with parents with children enrolled in the K-12 public school system.

<https://ncela.ed.gov/family-toolkit>

Californians Together. **Support for Immigrant and Refugee Students (SIRS): Fostering a Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment in California's PreK-12 Schools.**

The SIRS curriculum and materials support immigrant students in developing resilience to thrive in the face of adversity.

<https://californianstogether.org/support-immigrant-refugee-students-2/#materials>

National Child Traumatic Stress Network. **Psychological First Aid for Displaced Children and Families.**

This guide describes a flexible intervention that can be used to support interactions with children and families who have newly arrived in the United States.

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/pfa-for-displaced-children-and-families>

Supporting Afghan and Ukrainian Newcomers

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, ACF, ORR

» **Afghan Assistance Resources**

This webpage compiles resources from across federal agencies that are focused on supporting Afghan refugees.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/refugees/afghan-assistance-resources>

» **Benefits for Afghan Humanitarian Parolees.**

This document describes ORR benefits available to Afghan humanitarian parolees.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/orr/Benefits-for-Afghan-Humanitarian-Parolees.pdf>

» **Switchboard. Who are the Afghan Newcomers?**

Switchboard has developed a suite of online courses, videos, blogs, and webinars on topics including recent Afghan history, transitioning to U.S. culture, social and cultural characteristics, and employment.

<https://switchboardta.org/>

» **Ukrainian Assistance Resources.**

This webpage compiles resources from across federal agencies that are focused on supporting Ukrainian refugees.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/refugees/ukrainian-assistance-resources>

» **U.S. Department of Education. Keeping the Promise: Education and Afghan Resettlement.**

This webpage compiles ED resources to support communities as they provide educational services to Afghan refugees

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/keeping-the-promise/index.html>

» **U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Information for SAVE Users: Afghan Arrival Categories, Documentation, and SAVE Responses.**

This fact sheet provides information about eligibility for benefits, documentation, and verification processes for Afghans who are part of Operation Allies Welcome.

<https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/fact-sheets/SAVE-Fact-Sheet-Afghan-Arrivals.pdf>

» **U.S. Department of Labor. New Afghan Refugees/Resettlement.**

This webpage compiles curated resources to support employment and training services to Afghan refugee job seekers who have recently resettled in the United States.

https://www.workforcegps.org/resources/2022/03/18/13/44/New_Afghan_Refugees_Resettlement