

Refugee Resettlement: Challenges Facing Teens and Young Adults

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Who Are We?

Jewish Family & Community Services of Pittsburgh

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Who Is a Refugee?

A refugee is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.

Similar, but distinct classifications:

- Special Immigrant Visa (SIV)
- Asylee/asylum seeker (e.g., APA)
- Internally displaced person
- Stateless person



Displaced Persons by the Numbers

84 million displaced persons around the globe as of June 2021, including:

- 26.6 million refugees
- 50.9 million internally displaced people
- 4.4 million asylum seekers

Two thirds of people displaced across borders represent just five countries of origin: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar (Burma).

42% of displaced persons are children

All statistics gathered from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); www.unrefugees.org



Education for Refugees

As of 2021, **48%** of refugee children were not enrolled in school.

UNHCR data show the following enrollment rates for refugee learners:

- Primary school: 68%
- Secondary school: 34%
- Higher education institutions: 5%

Pre-pandemic, young refugees were 30% less likely to complete primary school, and half as likely to complete secondary school.

All statistics gathered from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); www.unrefugees.org



The Resettlement Process



These processes can take years!

- Sometimes, refugees can be **repatriated** into their countries of origin if the threat has ended.
- Others may be **integrated** into the country surrounding the refugee camp.
- When these options are not possible, **resettlement** is the next step.

Many refugee children were born in camps, not in their parents' countries of origin.



The Resettlement Process, cont...

PREPARE TO RELOCATE: If refugees clear all medical and security checks, they receive cultural orientation and await their flights to the US.

ARRIVE: An assigned resettlement agency helps refugees settle into a safe home in the US and begin important steps (employment, education, etc.).

THRIVE: Over time, with adequate support, refugees integrate into their new communities.



The Roles of Refugee Resettlement Partners



HIAS

Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

 **JFCS** PITTSBURGH

The Role of JFCS

- Employment search assistance
- Housing assistance
- Health care assistance
- Public benefits assistance
- Education assistance
- Cultural orientation
- and much more



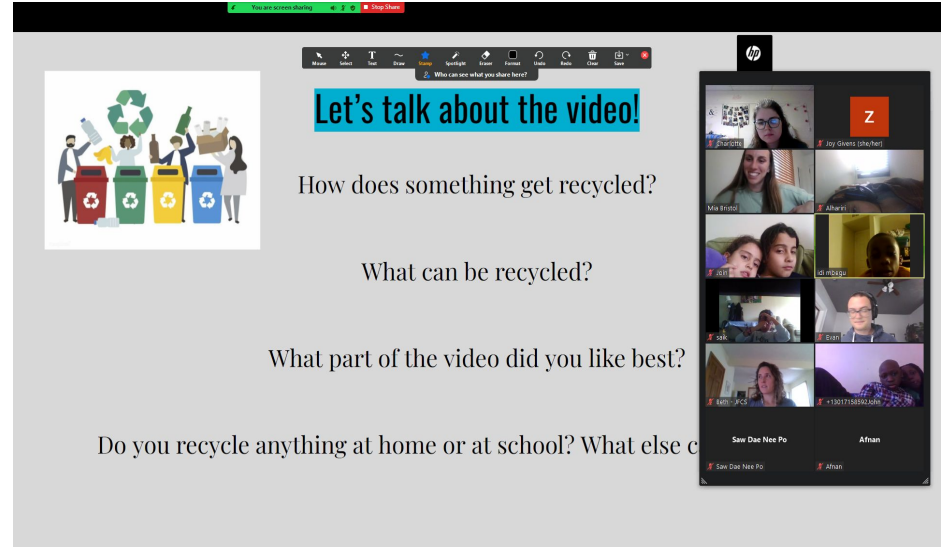
Our Refugee Youth Programs

- BASE (Basics of Academic Success & Engagement)
 - K-8, first six months following arrival
 - Hybrid mentoring (virtual/in-home) that engages the whole family
- Bridge Builders
 - Ages 5-21, enrolled after completing BASE or after approximately 6-8 months in U.S.
 - Virtual mentoring during the school year, in-person activities over the summer
- Both programs *run* on volunteers!



Barriers We Have Observed

- Language
- Technology
- Culture
- Social/Cultural Capital
- Previous access to education
- Informational/navigating pathways
- Experiences of trauma




How We Work to Reduce Barriers

- Interpreters & language support
- Technology & cultural orientations
- Support groups
- Mentoring & enrichment activities
- Coordination with schools & other programs (412 Futures, ARYSE)
- Trauma-informed care & OT support



Supporting Refugees Throughout Their Educational Careers

- Consider & evaluate barriers facing the individual student
 - Take a trauma-informed, strengths-based approach
 - Employ mentoring & peer support to help develop social & cultural capital
 - Provide support to navigate educational pathways (Bajwa et al, 2017)
 - Acknowledge intersectionality & multiple dimension/s of identity (Jones, Abes, & Quay, 2013)
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Questions?

