

Refugee Resettlement: Challenges Facing Teens and Young Adults

JFCS Pittsburgh - Refugee Youth Programming Team
Beth Sheridan, Joy Givens, and Mia Bristol

Who Are We?

Jewish Family & Community Services of Pittsburgh

- Beth Sheridan - Refugee & Immigrant Youth Services Supervisor, esh Sheridan@jfccspgh.org
- Mia Bristol - R&I Case Worker, Preferred Communities, mbristol@jfccspgh.org
- Joy Givens - Bridge Builders Refugee Youth Program Coordinator, jgivens@jfccspgh.org



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



The Role of JFCS

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



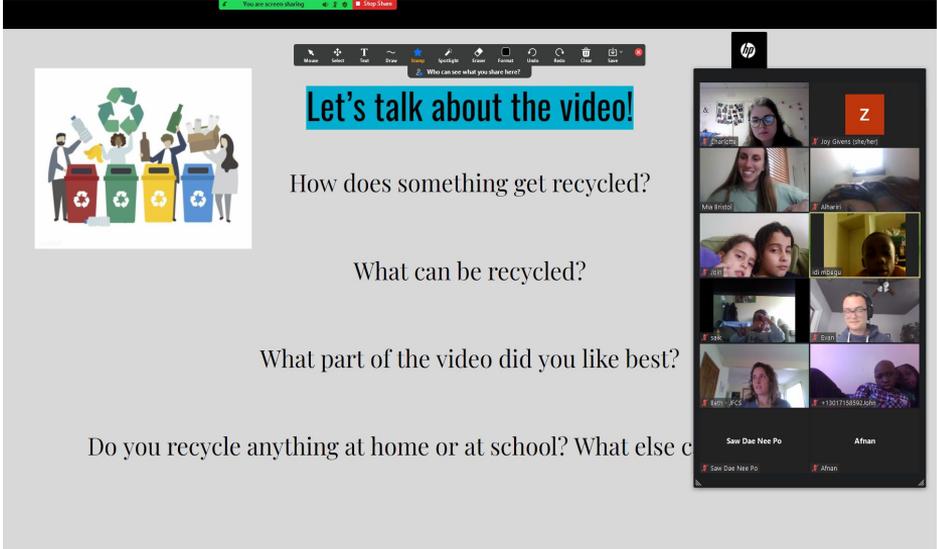
Our Refugee Youth Programs

- 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



The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. On the left, a presentation slide is displayed with the following content:

- An illustration of four recycling bins (red, green, yellow, blue) with people recycling.
- A blue text box: "Let's talk about the video!"
- Text: "How does something get recycled?"
- Text: "What can be recycled?"
- Text: "What part of the video did you like best?"
- Text: "Do you recycle anything at home or at school? What else c"

On the right side of the Zoom window, a grid of video feeds shows several participants. The names visible in the feeds include: Joy Green (TheNet), Mia Emro, Albert, idimkrou, Erik, Erik, Saw Dae Nee Po, and Afnan. The Zoom toolbar at the top includes icons for Mute, Select, Text, Draw, Share, Screen, Stop, Back, Clear, and Exit.

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?

