



Know the Culture and Laws of US

A brief Overview for Afghan Refugees



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Introduction

On behalf of Afghan American Muslim Outreach (AAMO) Board of directors, Board of Advisors and Volunteers, we would like to welcome you with warm greetings and let you know that this organization is dedicated to serve your need and be at your service. This booklet is designed to make you more familiar with the basics of American culture, laws and your civil rights as well as other important issues that will help you to integrate in a new society with ease and comfort.

In spite of all the challenges and difficulties you may experience in the first few months, still you should be happy and thankful that the future of your children and your entire family will be in much better shape than people who are still in Afghanistan. Your family have a golden chance to succeed in life as long as you all work hard and pursue every opportunity comes to your way.

In general, living in the west is not the same as living in the east. New refugees coming especially from Muslim countries have lots of challenges to raise their children and maintain some of their traditional values. The parents in particular will have great difficulties to deal with their children because the children will be adjusting themselves much faster to the new language and custom of this country than them. This will create conflicts within the family members and will be the cause of discomfort and disappointments.

The new refugees shall learn from the experience and wisdom of those who came earlier and faced similar challenges.

Learning the laws and regulations and most importantly the English language will help to close the gap between the young and old generation.

To maintain your identity as an Afghan American, you and your family must join the community's activities and fully participate in cultural festival and traditional activities. Soon you will learn that the early immigrants worked hard to establish many organizations, mosques and cultural centers to help families to safeguard their identities. AAMO will be at your service to connect you with not only the Afghan American community, but also with the larger Muslim American community and their mosques and institutions. No matter where you live, you can always find a Muslim organization or a mosque to help you and your family.

Your new life in USA

As you probably imagine, to get acquired with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes you need to adapt to your new life in the United States and become a fully integrated into your new communities takes time and efforts.

You many have received Initial Cultural Orientation at the base



you were in the United States. This Cultural Orientation booklet is designed to prepare you for resettlement by providing practical information on the

culture and laws of the United States. It will assist you to develop

realistic goals and know what to expect upon arrival. It will also prepare you for travel.

In the United States, staff, interns, and volunteers at Resettlement Agencies will welcome you by providing Cultural Orientation specific to the surrounding community. For that reason, some resettlement offices refer to Cultural Orientation as “community orientation.” This Cultural Orientation will provide practical information about how to get around, look for a job, and access local services such as healthcare and education.

Both the pre-departure and post-arrival Cultural Orientation are important and will help you thrive in your new environment. Cultural Orientation is provided with interpretation services and is offered to refugee newcomers in group classroom settings or, if necessary, on a one-on-one basis in certain locations.

These topics are covered during Cultural Orientation classes:

- Resettlement Agency
- Transportation
- Healthcare
- Education
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Cultural Adjustment
- Housing
- Employment
- Community Services
- Learning English
- Money Management

Cultural Orientation is designed to help you become self-sufficient more quickly.

CHAPTER 1

Resettlement Agencies

What is a Resettlement Agency?

A Resettlement Agency is a non-profit organization that cooperates with the United States Government in a public-private partnership to assist refugees who come to the United States through the United States Refugee Admissions Program.

There are nine Resettlement Agencies in the United States that operate on a national level.

These national Resettlement Agencies have local offices in the cities where refugees live, though the local offices may operate under different names.



Some of the Resettlement Agencies have religious affiliations, but they are not allowed to discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, religion, or the sex of the refugee, or on the basis of having a physical or mental disability.

These Resettlement Agencies have been helping refugees from all over the world resettle to the United States for many years. They provide critical support to refugees and their families during their first months in the United States.

The Role of the Resettlement Agency

The United States government sets guidelines and provides funding for the basic services that refugees receive, but the Resettlement Agencies and other organizations deliver the services and may offer other help as well. The Resettlement Agency will connect you to other services that you need to start your new life. Services and assistance are limited, and different refugees may receive different services because of factors such as family size, ages of family members, resettlement site, and income.

First 30 Days

Initial services are meant to help refugees get started on the path to new life in the United States. Resettlement Agencies will help you with basic services and living costs for your first 30 days in the United States. Some agencies will pay your expenses directly. Others may give some of the money to you and show you how and where to pay certain expenses yourself.

Up to 90 Days

The 30-day period can be extended up to 90 days after arrival if the resettlement services you need cannot be completed in 30 days. You will need to start looking for a job as soon as possible. The Resettlement Agency is not required to find a job for you. The Resettlement Agency is also not required to provide you with a phone, television, car, or computer, or pay your travel loan and other bills. You will need to work to earn money to purchase these items and pay your own expenses.

Moving to another Community

There are many good reasons for staying in your resettlement community for at least six months to one year. If you consider moving to another community, you will be responsible for your own move and for finding any support services you may need in your new community. It is best to discuss your thoughts about moving with your Resettlement Agency before you move. You must notify the U.S. Government of your new address within ten days of moving.

Required Services

These are the services that all resettlement agencies must provide, or make sure that someone provides, to all refugees during their first 30 days in the United States:

- Meet refugees at the airport and provide transport to housing
- Provide necessary seasonal clothing. The clothing does not have to be new, but it must be clean and in good condition.
- Arrange safe, decent, and sanitary housing.
- Provide every adult in the family with a small amount of money for personal spending.
- Provide basic furniture and household items. The items do not have to be new items, but they must be clean and in good condition.



- Provide food or food allowance according to family size until food stamps are received or the family can provide its own food.
- Help with application for cash and medical assistance.
- Help with application for a Social Security card.
- Help with enrollment into an English language class, if appropriate.
- Provide transportation to job interviews and job training.
- Help with enrollment in employment services, if appropriate.
- Help with obtaining health screenings and any health services needed.
- Help with registration with Selective Service for males between the ages of 18 and 25.
- Help with enrolling and registering children in school.
- Provide orientation to the community and life in the United States.
- Provide transportation and interpretation, as needed, for all required services.



CHAPTER 2

Housing

When you first arrive in the United States, you may be placed in an apartment or a hotel, or you may stay with relatives who have already resettled in the United States. If you are single, you may be placed with other single refugees of your same gender.



Your Resettlement Agency will make sure that you have housing during your first month in the United States and they will look for housing that is clean, affordable, and in a safe neighborhood. In the beginning, you will have a limited income, so your first home may not be your ideal choice. However, securing a steady income will allow you to choose a home, in the future, that suits your income, needs, and preferences.

Furnishings

Your Resettlement Agency is responsible for putting basic furniture and household items in the apartment or house they have selected for you and your family. The items will include furniture, linens, kitchen supplies, and personal care items. The agency is not required to provide you with new items. The items should be in good condition, but they do not have to be new.

A house or an apartment usually has a kitchen with a stove, sink,

and refrigerator; a living and dining area; one or more bedrooms; a bathroom; and closets.

Housing Costs

Housing in the United States is often expensive, and finding a suitable place to live can be difficult. It is common for people to rent a house or an apartment. The cost of housing differs from state to state, from city to city, and even from one neighborhood to another. Wherever you live, housing costs will be the largest part of your monthly expenses.

You can move out of your apartment or house if you let your landlord/landlady know ahead of time, as agreed on in your lease. But be aware that there are costs associated with a move, and you should make sure you can afford to move before you break your lease.

Housing Rights and Responsibilities

In the United States, both tenants and landlords have rights and responsibilities. When you rent an apartment or a house, you must sign an agreement called a lease. In the lease, you are considered the tenant, and you agree to rent the property for a certain amount of time, pay the rent and utilities on time, and maintain the property. Breaking the lease you signed (vacating the apartment before the lease term is over) could result in a fine and could negatively impact your credit rating. If you do move, there are items that you must take care of that includes notifying the U.S. government and post office, etc. Please make sure to seek guidance from your Resettlement Agency if you are considering a move.

Landlord responsibilities

Housing laws apply to both landlords and tenants. Landlords must see to it that their housing meets certain standards of safety and sanitation

for rental property.

The landlord must be sure

that electrical, plumbing, and heating systems are in good condition. They must provide smoke detectors and make sure there aren't any rodents or insects. Housing laws also state that landlords cannot refuse to rent to people because of their race, nationality, religion, sex, family situation, or physical or mental condition.

RESIDENTIAL LEASE AGREEMENT

This Residential Lease Agreement ("Agreement") made this _____, 20____ is between _____ ("Landlord") with a mailing address of _____, State of _____, City of _____, AND _____ ("Tenant(s)").

Landlord and Tenant are each referred to herein as a "Party" and, collectively, as the "Parties."

NOW, THEREFORE, FOR AND IN CONSIDERATION of the mutual promises and agreements contained herein, the Tenant agrees to lease the Premises from the Landlord under the following terms and conditions:

Being a Good Neighbor

A good neighbor in the United States is someone who is considerate of people who live near her/his apartment or house. A good neighbor keeps common areas in apartment buildings clean. In the case of a house, you must keep your lawn neat and only put out trash on trash collection days. Being a considerate neighbor means that you must keep noise levels at a minimum at night so that you do not disturb your neighbors.

Apartment Laws and Regulations

Laws pertaining to rental housing are established to protect both parties of the landlord-tenant relationship. Knowledge of and compliance with federal, state and local regulations is crucial for both landlords and tenants. Rental property owners want to run a profitable business and protect their investment. Tenants want to live peacefully in a rental home and protect their personal rights.

As a landlord, understanding your rights and legal obligations will help you protect yourself, your rental business and your investment property.

Federal Landlord-Tenant Laws

The major federal laws that affect all landlords and property managers are the Fair Housing Act and the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

The **Fair Housing Act** prohibits discrimination due to race, color, national origin, religion, sex familial status or disability. The Fair Housing Act extends beyond leasing to include advertising, preventing landlords from marketing their properties to certain groups of people.

The **Fair Credit Reporting Act** dictates the ways in which a landlord may use a tenant's credit history for screening purposes. Under this act, a landlord must get an applicant's permission to run a credit report, provide information on the credit reporting agency used, and inform the applicant if

information contained on the credit report was the basis for denial or adverse action.

State Laws About Rentals

States laws regarding rental properties and tenant rights typically concern practical matters.

These include things like the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords, what terms and conditions can be set as part of a lease, lease termination guidelines, and how evictions must be handled.

State laws can also dictate how much a landlord can charge for security deposits, how those funds can legally be handled, and how property managers must use trust accounts for rental income.

A Landlord's Legal Responsibility

It is very important to become familiar with landlord-tenant laws specific to your state and city. Ignorance of the laws is no excuse and you can be sued for not obeying state laws, even if you were unaware of their existence.

Nolo provides a great starting point when conducting your own research on state landlord-tenant laws.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is responsible for regulations covering discrimination and other federal issues affecting your tenants. You can also check with your state real estate board or join a local

professional agency for property managers or landlords who should be able to provide guidance on state regulations.

Important Landlord Tenant Laws

1) Laws About Discrimination

Whether you are advertising your property, screening new tenants or setting apartment rules, make sure that you are in compliance with Fair Housing laws and that all actions or policies apply to everyone (with supporting documentation), and cannot be construed as affecting some people but not others.

2) Legal Lease Document

Providing a lease agreement and any other legal paperwork is all part of a landlord's duties. It is a landlord's responsibility to ensure the rental contract is legally written and abides by all laws. Leasing periods, monthly rental rates and tenant names must be clearly indicated.

In some jurisdictions, legal disclosures, such as security deposit details, must be included. The lease should also contain all appropriate clauses, such as advising tenants to purchase renters' insurance.

3) Laws - Required Disclosures

Many states require landlords to inform tenants of important state laws, individual landlord policies, or facts about the rental, either in the lease agreement or in another writing—typically before the tenant moves in.

Federal law requires landlords to disclose lead-based paint hazards to tenants. Every state has different requirements, but common

disclosures that may need to be part of your lease agreement could include – notice of mold, notice of sex offenders, recent deaths, lead-based paint disclosure, meth contamination or other potential health or safety hazards.

4) Laws - Providing A Safe Environment

Landlords are required to make sure the rental unit is in a safe, habitable condition. The property must not have any serious deficiencies, and any supplied appliances, fixtures, plumbing and heating must be in good working order. The property must be free of insects and pests.

Landlords are generally responsible for getting infestations under control, even if they occur after tenants have moved in, although in most states landlords can avoid this by specifying in the rental agreement that pest control is the renter's responsibility.

5) Laws About Making Repairs

Tenants have the responsibility of reporting any repairs that need to be done, as outlined in the lease agreement. Landlords' responsibilities include responding to these reports and completing repairs in a timely manner.

A tenant may be within their rights to withhold rent money if a landlord fails to make a repair that affects the health or safety of a tenant, like a broken heating unit in freezing temperatures.

6) Laws About Security Deposits

Most lease agreements require a tenant to pay a security deposit to cover damage caused by the tenant or if a tenant does not pay rent. A landlord can only keep security deposit funds that are used to cover default rent payments or fixing property damage.

A landlord must provide the tenant with an itemized list of deductions and must pay the balance of the deposit back to the tenant. The failure of a landlord to provide an itemized statement or the failure to return the unused portion of the security deposit can result in the landlord owning more than the kept security deposit funds.

7) Laws About Renters Right to Privacy

Most landlord-tenant laws protect a tenant's right to quiet enjoyment. — meaning they have the benefit of living in a home without being disturbed. Once a tenant has possession of a property, the landlord may not interfere with this right. It's, therefore, the landlord's responsibility to ensure he or she does not enter the rental unit without proper notice (usually 24 – 48 hours, except in emergencies). When a landlord enters the rental property, it must be at a reasonable time of day and for a valid reason.

8) Laws About Abandoned Tenant Property:

When a tenant leaves items behind after vacating the property, the landlord must treat it as abandoned property. The landlord must notify the tenant of how to claim the property, the cost for storage, where to claim the property, and how long the tenant has to claim the items.

If the property remains unclaimed and it is worth more than a certain amount, the landlord may sell the property at a public sale. If the property is worth less than the state-specified amount, the landlord may either keep the property or throw it away.

9) Laws About Known Criminal Activity

If a landlord becomes aware of any criminal activity taking place in one of their rental units, they must report it to authorities. Illegal tenant activity could involve drug use or distribution or much worse.

A landlord is typically responsible for protecting the neighborhood of the rental property from the criminal acts of his tenants and could be held liable or face a variety of legal punishments if illegal activities occur at the property.

10) Laws About Safety Features

It is your duty to protect your tenants, to a point. In some jurisdictions, landlords must provide specific safety measures. These may include fire and carbon monoxide

detectors, fire extinguishers, front door peepholes, deadbolt locks on exterior doors and window locks.

11) Laws About Evictions

An eviction is a legal action by a landlord to remove a tenant from a rental property. Every state has laws that regulate the eviction process. A landlord can evict a tenant for the nonpayment of rent, for the failure to vacate the premises after a lease agreement has expired, for a violation of a provision in the rental contract, or if the tenant causes damage to the property and it results in a substantial decrease in the value of the property.

Before throwing out a tenant, a landlord must go through the legal eviction process. Every state has different guidelines, but most require giving the tenant a termination notice before filing an eviction lawsuit. If the landlord attempts to remove the tenant without a court order, the tenant may recover damages for the landlord's actions.

Shared Laundry

When it comes to apartment living, you may be more likely to live with a shared laundry room rather than in-unit washers and dryers. What is proper laundry room etiquette, and how can you make the most out of living with a shared laundry facility?

What is a shared laundry room?

Shared laundry rooms are a common approach to having on-site laundry without installing washer/dryer hookups in every unit. Shared laundry rooms will typically consist of an on-site space with multiple washers and dryers that residents share.



These machines may be coin- and/or card-operated, or simply require residents to access the room with a key or fob.

Keep the laundry room clean

One of the biggest cons of sharing an apartment laundry room is the potential for mess. More people can mean more potential for trash and spills. If you're using a shared laundry space, don't throw any food items into communal trash cans. Trash cans in the laundry room may not be emptied as frequently, and you'll increase the chances of attracting pests and bugs.

Make sure you change the lint traps in the dryers after every use. It's up to your maintenance department or landlord to clean the dryer vents, but you as a renter can ensure top performance by emptying the lint traps.

You should also be mindful of your detergent, softener, and bleach usage. Using too much detergent or too much bleach can leave unwanted residues in washing machines and push certain parts to degrade faster.

Time your laundry effectively

The most important aspect of working with a shared laundry room is to maximize your time and others' time. You don't want to leave your dirty clothes sitting in the washer or dryer while someone else is waiting for a machine. If you've ever lived in a dormitory or used a laundromat or any other shared laundry situation, you know how irritating it can be when someone removes your laundry when it's done – or not done – and just sets it on a machine. Avoid this problem by timing your laundry.

Don't start a load and leave for the day. Instead, set a timer on your phone and change out your clothes when they're done, this way other residents can use the machines they need.

Don't try to reserve a washer or dryer

These days, almost everyone has a busy schedule, meaning household chores sometimes fall by the wayside. If you share a laundry room, however, don't try to preemptively start laundry day by setting your hamper or belongings on a washer or dryer not in use. If you're not actively using a machine, let another resident who's ready to start their laundry take it.

Wait until your clothes are finished washing to claim a dryer as well. You want every resident to have their chance to get laundry done.

What to do with other people's laundry?

Waiting for another resident to clear their laundry out of a machine will most likely be the most persistent problem you face in a shared laundry room. A good rule of laundry room etiquette is you should never move anyone's stuff if you can help it. You don't want to cause any conflict over someone's personal belongings.

However, if you absolutely have to use a machine, it's a good rule of thumb to wait at least 10 to 20 minutes to see if the resident in question is coming back for their laundry. Taking clothes out of a dryer and placing them on top of a machine is much more acceptable than removing someone's wet clothes and placing them elsewhere. If you don't have to pay for each machine use, some might say to place someone else's clothes from the washer into the dryer, but maybe everything in that load isn't fit to be tumble dried.

If you can tell for certain whose clothes are sitting there, and you know those neighbors well enough, it is fine to knock on their door and let them know you need the machine. In most cases, just wait a few minutes to see if the resident is coming back for their laundry.

Be prepared before using the laundry room

If you use an on-site laundry space it may be a bit of a walk from your unit, so to maximize your time and to ensure you don't leave others waiting for a machine, make sure you're prepared. Be sure all the clothes you wish to wash are ready to go in a hamper, basket, or laundry bag. You should also bring any detergents, softeners, dryer sheets, etc. with you to avoid multiple trips. And don't forget coins or other forms of payment if you have to pay for your laundry service.

It's wise to bring your detergent and other items back to your unit after you've started washing your clothes. If you leave them in the laundry room another resident may use them. A good practice is to have a separate bag with your soaps, coins, and any other items you need for laundry so you can simply grab it on the

way out. You don't want to make it a habit to rely on other residents for detergent or coins.

Respect your fellow residents

Sharing a laundry room with multiple renters can be a balancing act. Just remember to respect everyone's space and belongings at the end of the day. If you're not sure if someone is using a machine, don't be afraid to politely ask. Making assumptions can make for an awkward situation.

If you see a new resident struggling with the laundry equipment, offer to assist them. It's important to make every communal space in your complex a place where every resident can come together. After all, we all put our pants on one leg at a time.

CHAPTER 3

Transportation

There are different types of transportation available to you when you arrive in your new community. Most communities have one or more forms of public transportation. You will need to know how to use public transportation safely. Your resettlement agency will give you information about public transportation in your new community soon after you arrive.

There are laws in the United States that regulate walking, biking, and driving a car. When you first arrive in the United States, you will probably spend a lot of time walking to the places you need to go. Soon, you will start taking public transportation.



Public transportation varies from place to place. In some places, it can take you almost everywhere you need to go. In other places, public transportation may operate only occasionally or may not exist.

Owning or having access to a personal vehicle comes with benefits and responsibilities. Owning and driving a car in the United States can be expensive. During your first months in the United States, you may need to use public transportation to get around your new community. Later, after you have a job and can afford car expenses, you may decide to purchase a car, but there

are laws regarding car insurance, driver's licenses, and safety that you need to understand and obey if you buy a car.

Types of Public Transportation

Public transportation allows people in a city to travel throughout a city without a car. You will need to know how to safely board, ride, and exit the types of transportation you use. In the



United States, **there are 3 major types of public transportation:** buses, subways, and commuter trains. They run on a schedule and stop at certain locations to allow riders to get off or on. Most of the time, you will need to buy a ticket to use public transportation. Taxis and other private car services may also be available, but they are usually expensive.

Walking and Biking

Be aware of traffic signs and signals so that you are safe when walking in your community. Use sidewalks and cross streets at crosswalks or corners.

Many cities provide special lanes for bicycles and also have traffic and safety regulations especially



for cyclists. Biking is a practical and inexpensive way of getting around, but it is important to know and follow traffic rules in order to bike safely.

Ride sharing and taxis

Ride sharing services, like **Lyft** and **Uber**, are available in many cities and towns around the United States. In most cases, ride sharing is less expensive and more convenient than traditional taxis, but a smartphone with the appropriate app is needed to arrange a ride, and an account with credit or debit card is required for payment.



Taxis can be hailed on the street or found in designated areas in some cities, or you can arrange a ride by calling a taxi company if you speak English. Taxi drivers usually accept cash or credit cards but you should confirm the method of payment before the ride begins.

Ride sharing and taxis will be more expensive than public transportation and are not recommended for daily use. However, they may helpful in urgent situations.

Owning and driving a car

Owning a personal vehicle comes with benefits and responsibilities. Car-related expenses usually include monthly car payments (if purchased on credit); insurance premiums; license and registration fees; and parking, gas, and maintenance costs. These expenses can drain your income



quickly, so at first you may need to use public transportation to get around. Later, after you have a job and can afford car expenses, you may decide to purchase a car. A driving test and license are required for anyone operating a car.

CHAPTER 4

Employment

Employment in the United States is very important. Finding, getting, and keeping a job is important to your family's future and well-being. It is the fastest way to self-sufficiency and is necessary for success. Your Resettlement Agency will assist in connecting you to employment services, but ultimately you will play a central role in finding and keeping a job. You should be prepared to actively pursue employment as soon as you arrive in the United States.



Finding a Job

All adults, both men and women, who are between the ages of 18 – 64 and are able to work should make finding a job a priority. A job allows you to support yourself and your family. Government assistance is limited in time and amount, so it is important for you to find a job as soon as possible after you arrive in the United States.

Employment is not guaranteed by the government or your Resettlement Agency. It may take weeks or months to find a job and you may have several job interviews. You should work

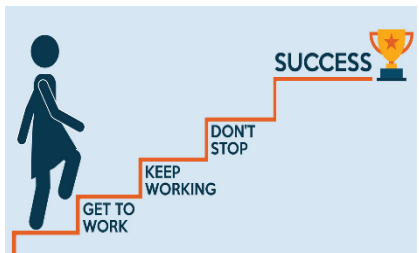
with your employment specialist to find a job and learn common interview tips.

You will be expected to accept the first job that is offered to you, even if it is not highly paid or in your field, so that you can build a work history and begin to support your family. If you do not take a job that is offered, you may lose government assistance. There are often many people applying for the same job, so it is important to be willing to accept an entry-level job in a new field. To build a good work history, you should stay in the job for at least 6 months.



Work Culture in the United States

The United States is known as a land of opportunity for those who work hard. To obtain a better, higher paying job you will need to speak, read, and write English and you may need to learn new skills. If you worked in a specific profession in your country, you may need to attend classes and obtain a certification before you are able to work in that field in the United States.



Both women and men work in the United States. Women make up half the work force, do the same jobs as men at all levels, and often supervise male workers.

In the United States, children around 14 years old and older may work at part-time jobs, but they may be limited in the number of hours they can work and the types of jobs they can do. Many young people in the United States work part time after school, on the weekends, and during vacations. The United States has laws to protect youth workers.

Employment Rights and Responsibilities

In the United States, employees have rights as well as responsibilities in the workplace. You have the right to be paid for your work and employment laws protect workers from unsafe working conditions. It is also important to pay your taxes in the United States.

An employer may not discriminate against you because of your refugee status or deny you a job or a promotion because of your age, disability, marital status, ethnic or national origin, race, religion, gender, sex, or sexual orientation.



However, some jobs, especially in government, are only open to U.S. citizens.

Workers have the right to work in an environment that is also free from discrimination and harassment. Sexual harassment

is any behavior of a sexual nature that makes a person feel intimidated or uncomfortable and it is not tolerated in the work place.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Will I receive help in finding a job?

Your Resettlement Agency will connect you to employment services wherever you are resettled, but you will play a central role in finding and keeping a job. Finding employment in the U.S. is important, and your first job will probably not be in the same profession or field as your job in your home country. It may be an entry level, non-professional job, and may even be temporary or part-time. Because the cost of living is high in the United States, it is common, and often necessary, for both men and women to work outside the home.

How will I get to my job?

Public transportation is available in most U.S. cities. Cars are not provided as part of the resettlement process. Therefore, you may need to rely on public transportation to access your first job.

Employment for Refugee Women

Employment in the United States is very important to your family's future and well-being, as well as to your own development and financial stability as a woman. All adults, women and men, who are between the ages of 18 and 64 and are able to work, should make finding a job a priority.



The benefits of working

In the United States, women make up half the work force, do the same jobs as men at all levels, and often supervise male workers. Getting and keeping a job holds many benefits for both you and your family.

Supporting the household. When both spouses work, the household income increases making it easier to afford such expenses as monthly bills and rent, as well as food and clothing. A double income also enables you to save money and increase your family's financial security.

Receiving employment-based benefits. Some jobs include certain benefits such as health insurance where the employer offers insurance plans for the employee and often pays part of the monthly cost. The rest of the cost of insurance is taken out of the worker's paycheck. Most Americans rely on employment-based health insurance programs since the cost of health care is high and health insurance helps to reduce those costs. Receiving health insurance through your work place is a significant benefit.

Improving your English.

Working outside the home will allow you to practice and improve your English as you interact with coworkers and clients in a professional setting.



Learning English will allow you to become involved in your community and increase your ability to manage your affairs whether you are going to the grocery store, the doctor's office, or the bank.

Interacting with others. A work place also affords you the opportunity to interact with a diverse group of people and learn about American culture and values, which will enable you to better adjust to your new environment.

Acquiring professional skills. Your first job will provide you with the professional skills and knowledge that will prepare you for your next job. The more skills you acquire, the greater your chances are of receiving a promotion or finding a better paying job.

Using public transportation or learning to drive. Getting to and from work might require you to use public Transportation or learn to drive. Learning how to use public transportation or drive will greatly contribute to your independence and self-sufficiency, help familiarize you with your neighborhood and your city, and provide you with a sense of belonging to your new home.

Working mothers and single mothers

Many women who raise young children often find it difficult to juggle the demands of work and home, especially if they are single mothers. However, there are solutions to help mothers who work outside of the home.



One solution is placing the children in daycare.

Daycare services are not free. Early Head Start is a federally-funded program that serves low-income children from birth to the age of 3. Another program, Head Start, caters to families with children ages 3 to 4. Enrolling young children in one of these programs will allow a single mother, or both parents, to work outside of the home. Another solution is to utilize friends, neighbors, or adult family members, such as grandparents, as child care providers to assist working parents. For couples, a third solution is for one of the parents to find a part-time job with evening and weekend hours, which would allow one parent to care for the children while the other parent is at work.

Changing family dynamics

Americans value Independence in both men and women. In many families, both the husband and the wife work and in some families, the wife earns more than the husband. In other families, the wife has found a job and the husband has not. In this case, the husband will be expected to care



for the children when they are not in school. In situations like these, some men may feel that they have lost their leadership role in the family.

Some women may feel stress as they take on new responsibilities and become the primary wage-earner. Showing support for one another, along with open and honest communication, can increase understanding and ease stress between spouses.

CHAPTER 5

Healthcare

The healthcare system in the United States is complex and it may be difficult at first to understand. Remember that resettlement staff can help answer your questions and provide you with more information.

Your Initial Health Screening

Your first contact with U.S. healthcare will probably be at your first health screening. Your Resettlement Agency will arrange for this screening soon after you arrive. The screening will identify health problems that may affect your resettlement, such as your ability to work or your children's ability to go to school. Your children may receive immunizations during the screening because all children enrolling in public school must show proof that they have been immunized.



Healthcare Providers

There are several different types of healthcare providers in the United States. Here are some common healthcare providers:

Public Health Departments provide immunizations against diseases and offer other preventive health services, including testing and treatment for tuberculosis. Preventive health

services are services that prevent diseases before they happen. For refugees, these services are generally free or very inexpensive. An appointment is usually necessary.

Community Clinics and Health Centers: Provide basic health services and health counseling. Some also

provide dental care and eye examinations. Some clinics in cities treat specific types of patients,



such as pregnant women or people with HIV/AIDS. Clinics accept private insurance and Medicaid (government insurance for people with low-income), and many charge fees based on the patient’s ability to pay.

Private Doctors are either general practitioners or specialists. General practitioners provide general healthcare, including annual checkups.

Specialists work in one area of medicine. Some specialists treat certain groups, such as women or children. Others specialize in one part or system of the



body, such as the heart, the eyes, or the feet. You need an appointment to see a private doctor. Before you see a private doctor, you usually have to show that you can pay for the service or that you have insurance.

Hospitals are for patients with special problems who need tests and surgery. Normally your doctor will refer you to a hospital or you will be admitted after an emergency room visit. Hospital care is expensive, and you may be asked to show that you can pay for the service or that you have insurance before being admitted. However, emergency rooms at hospitals cannot turn you away for inability to pay.



Emergency Rooms are for sudden and serious health problems. You do not need an appointment to go to the emergency room, but they are busy places and you may have to wait a long time if your problem is not serious. Emergency room care is very expensive. If your problem is not an emergency, you should make an appointment at a clinic or doctor's office.



Urgent Care Clinics are available in some communities. These clinics are for situations where you have an illness or injury that needs immediate care, but is



not serious enough for a visit to the emergency room. You do not need an appointment.

Your Healthcare Rights

In the United States, you have two important healthcare rights. You have the right to interpreter services and you have the right to confidentiality. Tell the hospital or clinic staff that you need an

interpreter when you make the appointment or arrive for emergency care. Everything that takes place between you and your healthcare



provider is confidential under the law. Your healthcare provider cannot tell your family, your friends, or your employer about your health situation without your permission.

American Concepts of Health

Most Americans see a doctor once a year for a checkup so that they will know about any health problems before they become

serious. They go to the dentist twice a year to have their teeth cleaned to prevent serious problems with their



teeth. Americans believe that many illnesses can be prevented through cleanliness, proper nutrition, exercise, and adequate sleep.

Cleanliness and Personal Hygiene

Most Americans bathe or shower every day, brush their teeth twice a day, shampoo their hair often, apply deodorant once a day, and wash their clothes frequently. Stores sell many kinds of products that help people avoid appearing dirty or having any odor of sweat. Personal hygiene can be especially important for getting and keeping a job.

Proper Nutrition

Proper nutrition means eating the right kinds of foods to keep the body healthy. It also means limiting foods that can cause health problems and serious illnesses if they are eaten often and in large amounts. Such foods include those that are high in sugar, salt, or fat (e.g., fried foods, sweets, and sodas).

Mental Health Care

Americans believe that mental health is as important as physical health. Mental health refers to how you feel, think, and behave as you cope with life.

It also refers to how you handle stress. Good health care includes treatment by a mental health professional when it is needed. If you ever feel that life is too



hard and you cannot cope with everyday activities, you should seek mental health services. Your Resettlement Agency can help

you find these services and will keep your information confidential.

Common disorders among children

Mental health disorders in children or developmental disorders that are addressed by mental health professionals may include the following:

Anxiety disorders. Anxiety disorders in children are persistent fears, worries or anxiety that disrupt their ability to participate in play, school or typical age-appropriate social situations. Diagnoses include social anxiety, generalized anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorders.

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Compared with most children of the same age, children with ADHD have difficulty with attention, impulsive behaviors, hyperactivity or some combination of these problems.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Autism spectrum disorder is a neurological condition that appears in early childhood — usually before age 3. Although the severity of ASD varies, a child with this disorder has difficulty communicating and interacting with others.

Eating disorders. Eating disorders are defined as a preoccupation with an ideal body type, disordered thinking about weight and weight loss, and unsafe eating and dieting habits. Eating disorders — such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge-eating disorder — can result in emotional and social dysfunction and life-threatening physical complications.

Depression and other mood disorders. Depression is persistent feelings of sadness and loss of interest that disrupt a child's ability to function in school and interact with others. Bipolar disorder results in extreme mood swings between depression

and extreme emotional or behavioral highs that may be unguarded, risky or unsafe.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is prolonged emotional distress, anxiety, distressing memories, nightmares and disruptive behaviors in response to violence, abuse, injury or other traumatic events.

Schizophrenia. Schizophrenia is a disorder in perceptions and thoughts that cause a person to lose touch with reality (psychosis). Most often appearing in the late teens through the 20s, schizophrenia results in hallucinations, delusions, and disordered thinking and behaviors.

What are the warning signs of mental illness in children?

Warning signs that your child may have a mental health disorder include:

- Persistent sadness — two or more weeks
- Withdrawing from or avoiding social interactions
- Hurting oneself or talking about hurting oneself
- Talking about death or suicide
- Outbursts or extreme irritability
- Out-of-control behavior that can be harmful
- Drastic changes in mood, behavior or personality
- Changes in eating habits
- Loss of weight
- Difficulty sleeping
- Frequent headaches or stomachaches
- Difficulty concentrating
- Changes in academic performance
- Avoiding or missing school

Identifying the early signs of Mental Health in Adults

Attempting to tell the difference between normal, expected behaviors and possible early signs of mental health problems are not always easy. There is usually no precise way to test if an individual is suffering from a problem related to their mental health.



Possible early signs in adults can include:

- unexplainable feelings of sadness
- confused thinking or reduced ability to concentrate
- excessive fears, worries, or extreme feelings of guilt
- extreme mood changes or dramatic highs and lows
- withdrawal from friends and family
- significant tiredness, low energy, or problems sleeping
- delusions (detachment from reality), paranoia, or hallucinations
- inability to cope with daily problems and stress
- trouble understanding or relating to situations and others
- alcohol and/or drug abuse
- major changes in eating habits
- sex drive changes
- excessive anger, hostility, or violence
- suicidal thoughts

Connect to Resources:

- info@aamo-usa.com Tel: (623) 282-2266
- info@qazizadafoundation.org Tel: (310) 985-3845

Frequently asked questions:

Will my medical costs be covered?

All refugees admitted to the United States will receive some form of health insurance paid by the government for at most 8 months after arrival. While this health insurance will pay for all of your critical health needs, it may not include dental or eye care. You are encouraged to find employment shortly after arrival in order to access private health insurance offered at a cost through your employer. If you have a disability or are over the age of 65, the United States government will provide health insurance at no cost to you.

Services available for people with disabilities?

The laws of the United States protect and help people with disabilities. Your Resettlement Agency will help you navigate and access services designed for refugees with disabilities. Health insurance and cash assistance for disabled refugees is available and refugees can apply for these benefits after they arrive.

CHAPTER 6

Community Services

Community services are the services, assistance, goods, and resources available to people in their communities. These services may be provided free of charge or at a very low cost by the government, community-based organizations, or religious organizations.



Government Assistance

Government social service agencies provide services to people in the community. They help people with special needs, such as low-income families, the homeless, and people with disabilities. Government programs have strict time limits and guidelines for participation.

Here are some government programs that help refugees:

Cash Assistance Programs:

For people who are having difficulty finding a job, two programs provide temporary financial assistance: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) for parents with children and Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) for single and married refugees without children.



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

This federal program provides assistance to low-income people in the United States to buy food. A person in this program is given a debit card that can be used to buy a certain amount of food each month. Refugees may apply for food assistance at a local government office. The amount of assistance is different in every state and based on family size and income.



Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

This is a federal cash assistance program for people who are disabled or over the age of 65 and have little or no income.

Child Care Assistance Programs

Some communities provide free or low-cost child care for low-income people so they can work or look for work.

Public Services

Every community has public services available to everyone in the community. Here are a few of the most common public services:

Emergency Services and 911

All communities have fire departments and emergency medical services. To get help in an emergency, dial 911 on the telephone and tell the operator what you need

(“Police”, “Fire”, or “Ambulance”) and your location. If you cannot explain the problem in English, just say, “Help” or “Emergency” and do not hang up the telephone. The open telephone line will help the operator know where you are.

Police

Police officers are public servants who protect the public and help people. If a police officer approaches you and asks you to stop, do so. Always comply with an officer’s request and remain calm and respectful. If you cannot communicate with the police, ask for an interpreter and wait patiently. If you can, contact your resettlement agency for assistance.



Libraries

Public libraries have books and other materials, such as CDs and DVDs, that residents can borrow free of charge. You must apply for a library card to take materials out of the library. Libraries often offer children’s reading programs and classes such as



English conversation practice, and many have computers available for public use.

Parks and Recreation

Local parks provide picnic areas, playgrounds, and sports fields to the public. Many parks have regulations about what visitors can and cannot do. Most local parks are free, but state and national parks may charge an admission fee.



Post Offices

You can mail a letter or package, or buy stamps at a post office. United States Post Offices are run by the federal government.



Recreation or Community Centers

Recreation or community centers are places people can gather to participate in different activities in a safe environment. Examples of activities include playing sports or games, taking classes, or



participating in social gatherings around a common interest. Recreation centers are open to both adults and children, and activities can be accessed for free or for a fee.

Non-Government Assistance

Some service organizations operate with donations from private citizens or with a combination of donations and government funding. They have boards of directors that oversee their work and they must provide annual public reports on their activities, but they are separate from the government.

These kinds of organizations generally fall into one of the following three categories:

National Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

National NGOs offer services in locations all around the country, usually organized by a headquarters office in a large city. Some may provide services that help refugees. The amount, cost, and type of these services vary from place to place, but many offer the following:



- Counseling
- Immigration status assistance
- English classes
- Employment services
- Interpretation and translation services

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

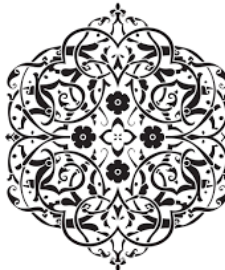
These organizations operate in a local community and provide recreational, social, and educational services to community members. One type of CBO that you may find in your community is the ethnic community-based organization (ECBO). ECBOs are created by former refugees and immigrants and help newcomers in their communities. Some provide adult education classes, organize women’s groups, and hold cultural and recreational events.

Community Based Organizations

CBO

Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs)

FBOs may include churches, mosques, synagogues, and other places of worship whose mission is to practice their faith. However, there are also many FBOs, which may receive funding from or be connected to various religious organizations, but whose mission is to provide services to individuals and families in need regardless of religious affiliation. Some have English language classes for adults and some give away used clothing and furniture.



CHAPTER 7

Education

Education is available to all children in the United States, regardless of ability, gender, age, race, religion, sexual orientation, or social class.

Public school is free. There are laws and customs regarding public schooling. School is mandatory for children of certain ages. Exact ages for mandatory education is determined by each state. Parents are expected to be involved in their children's education by doing things like ensuring that they attend class.

Children and Youth

Public schools are available throughout the country free of charge. By law, public schools cannot have any religious affiliation. Private schools are also available in most areas and some have religious affiliations. Private schools charge tuition, which can be very expensive.

There are four levels of education for children in the United States. In public schools, boys and girls attend classes together.



Preschool. This level is for children 3 to 5 years of age. It is not required by law, and it is usually not free.

Elementary school. This level begins with kindergarten (age 5) and continues through fifth or sixth grade (age 12).

Middle or junior high school. This level usually includes sixth or seventh through eighth or ninth grade, for children ages 12 to 14.

High school. This level usually includes ninth or tenth grade through twelfth grade, for children ages 14 to 18. Students who complete school requirements at this level receive a high school diploma.

Students with a high school diploma and a good academic record often continue their education at a college or university, but higher education is not free. Post-secondary vocational training is also available and is less expensive than colleges and universities.

Adults

Americans believe that a person is never too old or too young to learn new things. There are many educational opportunities for adults and young adults, but refugees should consider the pros and cons of studying versus working. Studying may lead to better job opportunities in the future, but refugees need to work right away to support themselves and their families, and adult education in the United States can be expensive. For many refugees, the best



option may be to work full-time while going to school part-time.

Most communities offer many different kinds of educational opportunities for adults including:

- English language and literacy classes
- Training courses in areas such as computer technology, foreign languages, and secretarial skills
- General Education Development (GED) diploma classes for adults who do not have a high school diploma
- Vocational and technical schools
- Community colleges (usually 2-year programs)
- Colleges or universities (usually 4-year programs)
- Graduate schools offering advanced degrees in many fields.

The cost of these classes, schools, and colleges varies a great deal. Most schools and colleges offer some financial aid to students who need it.

Cultural Adjustment

U.S. schools generally have a very participatory and interactive classroom environment, as opposed to the lecture and recitation teaching methods used in some other countries. There is also a high value placed on original thinking and individual effort. Group work is



important, but students are largely assessed based on their own achievements.

There are many ways that parents can help and support their children even with limited English. Here are some ways refugee parents can get involved with their children's education:

- Find out if the school offers school tours or an orientation in the summer before school begins.
- Ask your child what s/he learned about in school that day.
- Ask your child what they have for homework or check their assignment book or homework folder.
- Attend ESL classes, if offered, at your child's school.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences.
- Help with an extracurricular activity such as a school sports team or an art club.
- Volunteer in your child's classroom.
- Walk your child to the bus or school.
- Work with your child on her/his homework.



CHAPTER 8

Learning English

Learning English is important to a successful adjustment to life in the United States for both adults and children. Learning English will help you take care of your needs, get a job, be successful on the job, communicate with other Americans, and adjust more quickly to your new life in the United States.



Americans believe that a person is never too old or too young to learn new things. Learning a new language takes time, and each person learns at a different pace. Studying English in a classroom with an experienced teacher is a good way to learn English, but there are many other ways that you can learn English. Here are some things you can do to help learn a new language:

- Practice speaking English with other English language speakers.
- Watch television or listen to the radio in English.
- Use the internet to find online resources to learn English.
- Attend English classes.
- Set realistic goals for yourself each week.
- Keep a list of new words you learn.

- Try to read the English that you see around you on street signs, on buses, and in the windows of stores.

It is important to continue looking for a job and participating in community life while learning English. Interpreter services are available at places like hospitals and courts.

The local resettlement agency will assist refugees with enrollment in English classes. People from all over the world study English together in the United States. Although students may have very different backgrounds, they all want the same thing: to learn English.

Benefits of learning English

English is the most commonly used language in the United States and most people in the United States will not be able to speak to you or understand you if you do not learn English. Learning English is necessary for you to survive and flourish. If you have children, understanding English will help you engage with your children's school. In addition, you will need to learn English in order to be a connected and informed resident in the city and state where you live. You will need to learn English in order to pass a test when you apply for U.S. citizenship.

English Classes

Many communities offer English classes to immigrants and refugees who have recently arrived in the United States. Some are free and your Resettlement Agency will help you find English learning opportunities available near you.

In English classes, men and women of different ages, education, and ethnic backgrounds sit together. In beginning-level classes, students usually study simple, practical English that a newcomer needs to get around. For example, you may learn English phrases to help you buy things in a store, read a bus schedule, or look for a job. Some classes teach the English needed for certain jobs; like working in a hotel or working in the medical field.

In higher level classes, students pay more attention to English grammar, reading, and writing. There are also English classes that prepare students for college.

Learn English at work. When you get a job, you may learn the English vocabulary and expressions that are useful for that job. You will have coworkers and possibly clients or customers who speak English. Speaking with them will help to improve your English.

Learn English in your community. Be sociable and willing to meet new people. Talking with strangers in stores and practicing English with friends or neighbors can be difficult at first, but most people will be friendly and helpful. Join or start an English language or cultural exchange club in your neighborhood and meet regularly to speak only English. Plan activities you enjoy with the group like visiting a museum or going for walks in a park. This will be a good way to practice speaking English with others who are learning the language or who already speak English. This can also be a good way to learn about American culture and customs.

Learn independently. Motivate yourself to learn English wherever and whenever you can. You can do this by watching English movies or television shows, or by listening to English programs on the radio. Keep a list of new words you learn and try to read the English that you see around you on street signs, on buses, and in the windows of stores.

Learn as a family. Everyone in your family will be learning English with you. Make it a fun family activity by playing English language games and having “English only” time at home each day. Get involved at your child’s school by volunteering to help in the classroom or at special events. Children learn new languages quickly, so it’s important to keep up with them.

Learning English Takes Time

In the beginning, you may find it hard to learn English and may feel frustrated. It is normal to feel this way.

Each person learns at a different pace and in a different way. You should try different methods to find what works best for you. The key to learning a new language is to practice it every day. Even if you listen to the radio or watch television in English for only ten minutes a day, this will help. With time and practice you will become more comfortable speaking English and this will help ease your adjustment process in the United States. This will take time but it gets easier if you keep trying.

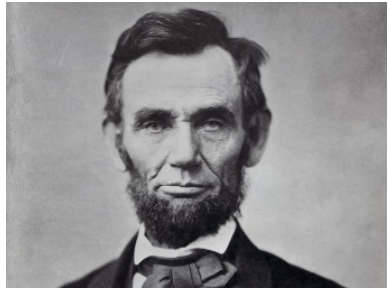
CHAPTER 9

Rights and Responsibilities

The United States of America is governed by a system intended to ensure order and to protect citizens through laws and processes to enforce those laws. This is often referred to as “rule of law.” Laws in the United States follow the principles and rights outlined in the United States constitution. All people in the United States, including refugees, are protected by these laws and are responsible for knowing and following them.

“A GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE”

Delivered during a speech at the turning point of the American Civil War in 1863, these words of President Abraham Lincoln epitomize a central democratic concept. In a democracy, the government



is made up of elected officials who represent the people who voted for them. Through these elected representatives, and through the voting process and other civic activities, citizens are empowered to engage in the process of making the laws that will govern and protect them. Civic engagement is an important right and responsibility of all citizens.

How are the laws made?

The United States has a federal government; each of the 50 states in the United States has a state government; and each municipality within each state has a local government. Federal laws are proposed and developed by the legislative branch of



the federal government (Congress), enacted by the executive branch (the President and the Departments and agencies), and enforced by the judicial branch (the federal court system, including the Supreme Court). The Constitution establishes whether an area of law is the primary responsibility of the federal government or the state and local governments.

U.S. Laws in the United States are intended to protect the rights of all people including refugees. It is important that you have a basic knowledge of your legal rights and responsibilities once in the United States.

There are three kinds of laws in the United States:

Federal laws, such as the laws against drug trafficking, apply to every person living in the United States.

State laws vary by state. For example, in some states you can get a driver's license at age 16, but in others you must be 18.

Local laws apply in a particular city or county. These might include laws about noise or parking your car.

Right to due process

If a person does break a law, they have a right to due process.

The right to due process is the right to be treated fairly through the use of specified legal procedures if accused of a crime.

In the United States, the right to due process is provided in the



Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution, and additional fair trial guarantees are provided in the Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments.

The fifth amendment

The Fifth Amendment establishes the right of due process if a person is accused of a crime or if that person's property interests are to be taken by the government. It prohibits a person being charged for the same crime twice.



Additionally, it says a person cannot be compelled to be a witness against himself or herself in a criminal case, and that a person's private property cannot be taken for public use without just compensation.

The sixth amendment

The Sixth Amendment says that a person accused of a crime has the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury, and access to legal counsel. A person also has the right to be informed



of the charges against him or her. Additionally, it says that the accused has a right to confront the witnesses against them and provide witnesses in their defense.

The fourteenth amendment

The Fourteenth Amendment prohibits states from making or enforcing laws that violate most of the rights that are provided by the United States Constitution. The Fourteenth Amendment, however, does not mandate how states are to ensure these rights, including the right to due process. This means that laws to protect these rights and due process can differ from state to state.

Protection against Discrimination

U.S. law prohibits discrimination, though the details of antidiscrimination laws vary from one state to another. If you are discriminated against or denied your rights

SPEAK UP
STOP DISCRIMINATION

because of your race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, you have the right to seek legal action.

Innocent Until Proven Guilty

If you are accused of a crime in the United States, you are considered innocent until you are proven guilty. You have the right to a lawyer, who will represent you in court. If you cannot afford a lawyer, the court will pay for one to represent you.

Your Legal Status and Citizenship

Refugee Status

For your first year in the United States, you will have refugee status. During this time, you should carry a copy of your I-94 and a government-issued photo identification card with you at all times as proof of your legal status. While you have refugee status, you may not travel outside the United States without permission. Keep your original documents in a safe place.



As a refugee, you can do the following:

- Travel anywhere within the United States. (Remember, if you move, you are required to notify U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) within 10 days of changing your address.)
- Buy property.
- Attend school.
- Sponsor your spouse and unmarried children under 21 years of age. If you wish to have your spouse or

children join you in the United States, your resettlement agency can explain what to do.

Things you cannot do while you have refugee status:

- You cannot obtain a U.S. passport, join the military, vote in elections, or work in a government job that requires U.S. citizenship.
- You may not travel outside the United States without permission from USCIS, the government agency in charge of immigration.

If you must travel overseas, your resettlement agency can explain how to ask for permission.

If you return to your country of origin while you are a refugee, you might not be permitted to re-enter the United States.

Permanent Residency

After one year in the United States, you must apply to become a lawful permanent resident (LPR), or ‘Green Card’ holder. This adjustment of status is very important: it is required by law, and it is also the path to U.S. citizenship.



For additional information on immigration requirements, consult your resettlement agency and a staff member can assist you or refer you to someone who can.

Citizenship

After four years and nine months as a permanent resident, you can apply for citizenship. USCIS or your resettlement agency can tell you what you need to do to become a citizen. Among other things, you must show good moral character and a basic knowledge of English and U.S. history and government. Immigrants or refugees who become citizens have the same rights and privileges as citizens born in the United States.



General Rights & Responsibilities

- You must learn and know the laws.
- Everyone who lives in the United States has basic civil rights, such as freedom of speech, freedom of worship, and the freedom to peacefully assemble.
- You can work in the United States.
- Citizens can vote in elections.
- Job discrimination is illegal in the United States. No one can refuse to give you a job because of your race, color, religion, sex, and national origin.
- Public services and benefits are available to those who are eligible for them.
- If you break the law, your immigration status could be affected.
- You can move to a new community.
- If you move to a new home, you must fill out an USCIS change of address form.

- Men between 18 and 25 years of age must register for the Selective Service.
- You need to pay your own income taxes. You must fill out and send an income tax form to the government every year. You can fill out the form yourself or find someone to help you.
- You must have a driver's license and insurance to operate a vehicle.
- People in the United States may not drink or buy alcohol until they reach the age of 21.
- Parents must learn legal ways to discipline their children.
- It is illegal to leave children without adult supervision.

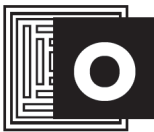
KNOW YOUR RIGHT AS A MUSLIM

Council on American-Islamic Relation (CAIR)

Responding to Hate crimes / incidents:

A hate crime is an incident directed against a person or property that is motivated in whole or in part by the victim's race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, and in some cases, sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. Such an incident can include physical violence, verbal attacks, and attacks on property.

If you witness someone being subjected to verbal harassment, do not confront the perpetrator. Instead, engage the victim in conversation and ignore the perpetrator. Discuss a random subject with the victim and create a safe space until the perpetrator leaves. Escort the victim to a safe place if necessary.



pression and bigotry can only be overcome through solidarity and community.

What To Do After a Hate Crime / Incident:

- If you are being attacked or feel threatened, **call 911** immediately.
- **Seek medical and mental health care.** Keep documents related to any treatment you receive.

- **Document the incident.** Write down what happened, language used, and if appropriate take pictures.
- **Report.** To have the incident addressed, & to ensure others are not subjected to further harassment, report it to CAIR.
- If you are in a non-urgent situation, and have concerns about your immigration status, please reach out to an immigration attorney for advice on how reporting may involve your immigration case.

KNOW YOUR RIGHT as a Student

DRESS CODE:

- You have the right to wear your hijab or kufi, and otherwise cover as you find appropriate, even if your school has a dress code or uniform requirement
- If you do not wish to participate in school activities that would require you to remove your hijab or otherwise expose yourself in a way that violates your religious beliefs, such as swimming, your school must provide an alternative activity for you.
- If you do not wish to participate in an activity that involves close contact with the opposite gender, you can request an accommodation (alternative activity).
- You have the right to wear more conservative sports clothing while participating in sporting events (e.g. your school cannot stop you from competing in swimming competitions because of your religious decision to wear modest swimwear.)

Holidays & Prayers

- Schools cannot penalize students for missing school on religious holidays. You should request the day off in advance for Eid holidays.
- You can pray individually or as a group during the school day. CAIR advises you to choose a time to pray that does not coincide with school activities or class time.
- A school is not required to provide a designated prayer room, but students must have access to some area appropriate for prayer.
- You may be permitted to leave school for juma'ah (Friday prayer), but it's not always guaranteed. You must coordinate with school officials if you wish to do this.

Bullying & Harassment

State laws vary but generally they require schools to:

- Protect you from harassment and discrimination,
- Prohibit bullying based on religion, race and nationality. Schools must make their bullying policies public.
- Have a process in place for investigating bullying complaints. If you tell a teacher or another adult at school that you are getting bullied, they are required to do something to help you.
- Ensure that you are not penalized for reporting bullying or harassment or for requesting an accommodation for your religious practices.

What is Bullying?

- Bullying can take place in person, through notes, text messages, or online via email or social media.
- Bullying can range from isolation to verbal insults to physical violence, and usually occurs over an extended period of time.
- Bullying can take many forms, some common problems that Muslim students face are pulling of headscarf or kufi, pressure to convert to another religion, insulting comments about Islam made in the classroom, and physical abuse.
- Bullying can be from peer to peer or teacher/administrator to student



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS As an Employee

Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act protects against employment discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin and sex by both public and private sector employers with at least 15 employees. Title VII is federal law and applies throughout the country.



We all have the right to be who we are and work with dignity in a safe workplace.

Your state may have similar or additional protections under state law. For state law assistance, see your local CAIR chapter.

TITLE VII GUARANTEES YOUR RIGHT TO:

Reasonable religious accommodation:

An employer must reasonably accommodate an employee's religious beliefs or practices unless doing so would cause an undue burden on the operations of the employer's business. The failure of an employer to reasonably accommodate your religious practices may constitute employment discrimination. 'Religious practices' include wearing a beard, prayer breaks, wearing a hijab and going to Jummah (Friday) prayers.

Fairness in hiring, firing, and promotions: Your employer is prohibited from considering religion when making decisions affecting your employment status.

A non-hostile work environment: Your employer must ensure that you are not subjected to anti-Muslim insults, harassment or unwelcome and excessive proselytizing

Complain about discrimination without fear of retaliation: Federal law guarantees your right to report an act of alleged employment discrimination. It is illegal for your employer to retaliate against you for your complaint.

When Faced with Discrimination on The Job:

- Remain calm and polite.
- Inform the offending party that you believe his/her actions are discriminatory.

- Report the discriminatory action in writing to company management.
- Document the discrimination by saving memos, keeping a detailed journal, noting the presence of witnesses and making written complaints. Make sure to keep copies of all materials. It is important to keep a “paper trail” of evidence.
- DO NOT sign any documents or resign without an attorney’s advice
- Contact CAIR to file a report.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS While Traveling

TSA Screeners Cannot:

- Target you for additional screening or questions based on religious, racial or ethnic profiling.
- Ask you general questions without reliable information that leads them to believe you are breaking a law. For example, they cannot question you about your personal life, where you spend time, work, or worship.
- Handcuff you or strip search you.

CBP (Custom and Border Protection) CAN:

Ask about:

- Your citizenship
- The nature or purpose of your trip
- Anything you are bringing back to the United States that you did not have with you when you left
- Examine your baggage and everything in it
- Physically take possession of your electronic items, but they cannot force you to unlock them. There are limits on how much data CBP can examine.
- Contact your local CAIR chapter for more information.

How your immigration status impacts what happens when you invoke your rights at the border?

- US citizens cannot be denied entry for refusing to answer questions. However, invoking your rights may result in delays.
- Green card holders cannot be refused entry unless their travel was not brief and innocent per USC 1101(a)(14). However, invoking your rights may result in delays.
- Non-citizen visa holders can be denied entry into the country for refusing to cooperate. Speak to an attorney prior to exiting the country.

As an airline passenger, you are entitled to courteous and respectful treatment by airline and security personnel. You have the right to complain about the treatment that you

believe is discriminatory. If you believe you have been treated in a discriminatory manner, immediately:

- Ask for the names and ID numbers of all persons involved in the incident. Be sure to write this information down.
- Ask to speak to a supervisor
- Ask if you have been singled out because of your name, appearance, dress, race, ethnicity, faith or national origin.
- Ask witnesses to give their names and contact information
- Write down a statement of facts immediately after the incident. Be sure to include the flight number, the flight date, and the name of the airline
- Contact CAIR to file a complaint
- An airline pilot may refuse to fly a passenger if they reasonably believe, based on observation, that the passenger is a threat to flight safety. A pilot may not, however, question you or refuse to allow you on a flight because of biased stereotypes, including any based on your religion, national origin, gender, ethnicity, or political beliefs.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS With Law Enforcement

- You have the right to remain silent and refuse to answer any questions from law enforcement (local, state, or federal). Refusing to answer questions cannot be held against you and does not imply that you have something to hide. Law enforcement may ask you for identification or car registrations. But those stops should be brief, and you don't have to answer any other questions.
- You also have the right to have a lawyer present when speaking with law enforcement (local, state, or federal), even if you are not under arrest or in any legal trouble.
- These rights are afforded to all individuals, citizens and non-citizens.
- Non-citizens do not have to answer questions about their immigration status.
- Do not lie about your citizenship status or provide fake documents. Avoid carrying false identity documents.
- Law enforcement agents must possess a search warrant to enter your house. If they say they have a warrant, request to view the warrant without allowing them to enter the house (show the document through a window, slide the document under a door, etc.). The warrant will specify exactly what can be searched and must be signed by a judge. If the warrant is not complete or you see a mistake, say that you "don't consent to a search." Be courteous and polite and remember that you have the right to remain silent. If you have an attorney, contact your attorney immediately and stay on the phone with

them during the search. Take notes on, or film, what is taken and what areas were searched but do not interfere with the search. A search warrant does not give law enforcement a right to arrest you. However, they may have the right to arrest you based on items found during the search. Do not resist arrest.

- Lying, misleading, or providing inconsistent statements to law enforcement is a crime and should never be done under any circumstance.

What to do when approached By Law Enforcement:

- If at home, step outside and close the door behind you before speaking with them.
- If at work, lead them away from your personal workspace.
- If you are called, go to a quiet space.
- Ask the officer or agent for their business card or obtain the agency name, name of the officer/agent, phone and email.
- Then politely say “My attorney will contact you” and end the encounter.
- Contact CAIR immediately for legal assistance

What to do if you are approached by law enforcement in public:

- If you are stopped on foot, you do not have to answer any questions, but providing your name, address, and

age if asked (and ID if you are being given a citation) may help you avoid arrest.

- Do not reach into bags or pockets without telling an officer you are about to do so (they might think you are reaching for a weapon).

If You are Under Arrest:

- If you are under arrest, the police have the right to search you and the area around you. However, you always should state politely and clearly, “I do not consent to a search.”
- The officer should read you your Miranda rights before questioning you, which include your right to remain silent and your right to an attorney. To protect your right to remain silent, you should state politely and clearly, “I want to remain silent.” Silence cannot be used against you. You must also expressly assert your right to an attorney and should state “I want to speak to a lawyer.” If you are under 18, you can also ask to speak to your parent or guardian. Once you have asserted your rights, do not speak to police until you have met with an attorney.
- You have a right to ask for the officer’s name and badge number. Keep your hands where the police can see them. Do not resist, run away, or touch the police officer. Stay calm and do not argue. If you are placed near or in a police car, and even if the police officer is not near you and you think you are alone, keep in mind anything you say may be recorded.
- **Never give any false information.**

- If you have a cell phone with you, law enforcement agents are not allowed to search that device unless they have a warrant or unless you give them permission.

CHAPTER 10

Cultural Adjustment

Cultural adjustment is a process that happens over a long period of time. The process is different for different people, but there are certain stages to the process that most people go through as they adjust to a new culture.

Like others who have left their homes and resettled in a foreign land, you will probably feel worried and frustrated as you try to adjust to your new country. These feelings are normal, and they usually go away over time. You may need 2 to 5 years to adjust fully to life in your new community. Your adjustment will be easier if you work together with those who are helping you. Being patient, keeping an open mind, and learning healthy ways to cope with stress and culture shock can help ease the process. Finding a job and learning English will also help you adjust. Learning to live in a new culture is not easy, but it can also be a good experience as you learn new things and gain new skills.

The U-Curve of Cultural Adjustment

There are four common phases of cultural adjustment that you may experience during your adjustment process: honeymoon, culture shock, adjustment, and mastery.

- **Honeymoon Phase** : You have feelings of excitement and happiness, everything is new and exciting and good. This often occurs soon after arrival in a new place.

- **Culture Shock Phase:** You have feelings of worry and confusion as you, the newcomer, try to function in a place that is different and unfamiliar.
- **Adjustment Phase:** Your feelings settle down as you come out of culture shock and start to feel more comfortable and confident in your new community.
- **Mastery Phase:** You have a feeling of comfort with your new life and culture, although there are still difficult periods sometimes.

Ways to cope with culture shock may include getting together with friends, playing sports, or contacting religious or spiritual resources. If you or a member of your family ever feel unable to cope with the stress of your new life in the United States, seek help right away.

Getting involved in the local community by attending cultural events or volunteering may also help ease your adjustment to life in the United States. Community involvement is a way for you to meet not only other members of your ethnic or religious group, but also to meet Americans and practice English. Resettlement staff will help you learn about your new community. Explore your community on your own as well.

Family Dynamics

Resettlement may affect family dynamics by changing existing roles. The change in family roles is one of the most stressful parts of resettlement for refugees. However, there are healthy ways to deal with these role changes. Communicate openly and honestly with family members so

that each person has a good idea of what everyone in the family is feeling and going through.

Refugee parents may face challenges as their children adjust to the new culture faster and differently than they do. Parents may not like some of the things their children want to do or some of the ways they talk and act. Yet some parenting practices may be unacceptable or even illegal in the United States. If you are concerned about your family or are struggling with your children, talk to someone at your resettlement agency. They may be able to help you or to connect you to family services or programs in your community.

American Values and Cultural Norms

The United States is a diverse society, made up of people of different races, ethnicities, religious views, and other practices or beliefs, yet there are cultural norms and expectations that are fairly widespread throughout the United States. Showing tolerance and respect towards all people, whatever their beliefs and backgrounds, is an important value for most Americans. You should be tolerant and respectful to those who are different from you, and you should expect the same tolerance and respect from others.

Some of your traditional practices may differ from those of most Americans. Some practices may be considered unacceptable and even illegal. Although Americans are open to other cultures and ways of doing things, there are certain basic values, beliefs, and practices that they expect residents

of the United States to follow:

- The philosophies of self-sufficiency and self-advocacy are central to American culture and to your cultural adjustment.
- Americans believe in equality of the sexes, and they value independence in both men and women.
- People are expected to arrive on time for appointments and meetings, whether professional or personal. Being late is seen as disrespectful, and in some situations being late can have serious consequences. You may lose your job if you show up late for work, and you may lose appointments if you are not on time to meet with your case worker, doctor, or other service providers.

CHAPTER 11

Money Management

The cost of living in the United States varies greatly from one location to another, but in many places it can be high. This is why finding a job as soon as possible is very important for all adults who can work. You will need to be careful with your money, so that you do not spend more than you can afford.



Managing Personal Finances

You are responsible for managing your own personal finances. One way to keep from spending too much is to create a budget. Learning how to budget is an important skill. In order to create a budget, it is important for you to know your monthly income and expenses, such as rent, utilities, and groceries. For budgeting purposes, it will be important to identify what your family wants versus what your family needs. Some of the wanted items may be expensive and unnecessary, and could take away from the needs of your family. The staff at your resettlement agency will help you make a budget.

Banking System

The safest places to keep money in the United States are banks which are federally regulated and insured. There are different types of banks. The resettlement agency will be able to help you find the bank that is best for you. If you have cultural or religious beliefs about money (for example, if you believe it is wrong to pay or collect interest), you may be able to find a bank in your area that practices your beliefs.



You should understand how to deposit money into a bank account, and how to withdraw it by using an Automatic Teller Machine (ATM), or by writing a check. At a bank, you can put your money in a checking account or a savings account or both. Checking accounts are good for when you expect to deposit and withdraw money regularly using checks and ATM cards. Savings accounts are used to save money that you will not need for a while. At first, you will probably only need a checking account. Later, when you are able to start saving money, you may want to have both a checking account and a savings account.



When you use a credit plan or credit card, you are borrowing money and will be charged interest on the amount you owe. To have a good credit history, make your payments on time every month. Making monthly payments on your travel loan is

your first chance to build a good credit history in the United States.

Direct Deposit

Many employers offer or require direct deposit into employee bank accounts. With direct deposit, your pay is sent directly to your bank account instead of given to you in the form of a check. There are several benefits to direct deposit. Your check cannot be lost, and no one can steal it and try to cash it with a forged signature. Also, you will receive your pay even if you are not at work on payday, and you do not need to make a trip to the bank to deposit your check. Finally, with direct deposit, your money is in your account and available to you right away. If you deposit a check yourself, it may take a day or two for the money to become available in your account.

Extra Advises

For Children:

- Children between the age of 6 – 16 shall attend school
- Avoid beating or abusing your children
- Children below 8 years old must be seated in a car seat
- In some state, leaving children alone at home is illegal.

Driving

- Always keep the registration and insurance card in your car
- Make sure you have a driver license before operating a vehicle
- When you are at red light, you can turn right by first making a complete stop and then proceed unless no right turn sign is posted.
- When the bus red light is blinking, you **MUST** stop and do not move till the red light is turned off.
- If you see / hear siren or emergency vehicles such as police and/or fire truck, immediately part on the right side of street

Marriage, Opposite sex interaction

- In United States, you are not allowed to marry more than one spouse
- You are not allowed to beat your spouse or any family members
- Having sex by force is prohibited even if it your wife
- No one can make anyone to marry by force even if he/she is your child

- You can divorce your spouse even if he/she do not concur
- Getting married for the purpose of obtaining green card is a crime and subject to prison time and/or heavy fine

How to act in public

- When walking, use the sidewalk, otherwise you may get a ticket
- You cannot put your trash on street or sidewalk
- It is illegal to expose yourself or hire prostitute
- Selling or obtaining illegal drugs are prohibited

Hunting

- For wild animal, you must have a hunting license
- For hunting, you can go only on designated season with certain gun
- It is illegal to abuse or torture any animal. You can obtain more information about animal hunting from internet

Argument and Abuse

- It is against the law to use show force against anyone
- Argument, name calling and physical attack are all considered crime

Using Internet

- Downloading illegal staff such as movie, song, a film are against the law and it is called intellectual property.
- Downloading Pornography pictures of minors, keeping them are illegal
- Chatting with minor is prohibited
- Fishing on the internet is illegal

- Following electronically someone is illegal
- Any kind of smuggling through internet is illegal
- Committing Crime
- Hacking and stealing private information is illegal

Respecting provide property

- Misleading people, stealing is a crime
- Selling of illegal weapon is a crime and against the law

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful



انجمن دعوت اسلامی افغانان مقیم امریکا (آمو)

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Afghan American Muslim Outreach (AAMO) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit, non-political grassroots organization (Tax ID #: 30-0394343). AAMO was established in October of 2006 to serve the Afghan-American community through social activism, to foster an Afghan American Muslim identity, and to empower future generations to pursue higher education by providing them with the necessary tools and skills.

AAMO's goal is to build a better future for young Afghans and to guide them in serving the community with confidence. Our vision is to empower Afghan Americans to enhance personal and communal development. In the last 15 years, AAMO has successfully organized more than 67 conferences and educational seminars to empower our youth with knowledge and understanding of their faith and values. In each event, AAMO provided a unique opportunity for the youth to organize and lead the entire event, so they can learn firsthand the skills needed to become an effective leader, great communicator, and good managers. Alhamdulillah, AAMO takes pride in many of today's young and energetic leaders who are serving selflessly in the leadership level of various Masajid and Islamic organizations. AAMO's advisers are some of the most influential Afghan Muslim scholars and leaders of our community. In 2018, AAMO launched scholarship program to invest on potential scholars and leaders of tomorrow by providing them the financial assistance they need; scholarships can help overcome the barriers that prevent these students from pursuing their dream of attaining their educational goals.