

Resettlement of Afghan Refugees in Salt Lake County



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Background

- ❑ On July 8th President Biden announced U.S. military mission in Afghanistan to conclude on August 31st.
- ❑ As troops started to return home, Taliban advanced and gained control over more territories until they reached Kabul before August 31st.
- ❑ The lives were of women leaders and activists, human rights workers, journalists, and thousands of Afghans who helped with the United States military efforts were put at risk.
- ❑ On August 17th Governor Spencer Cox wrote a letter to President Biden expressing his desire for Utah to assist in the resettlement of the Afghan refugees.
- ❑ As the nation's first Welcoming County, Mayor Jenny Wilson joined other mayors to release a statement of support for the Afghan refugees
- ❑ 765 refugees will be settled in Utah, mostly in Salt Lake County. IRC will settle 615, CCS will settle 150

Utah Refugee Advisory Board

□ Governor Spencer J. Cox directed his Refugee Advisory Board to create 3 workgroups to address the needs of new Afghan arrivals. Salt Lake County Office of New Americans is participating in the workgroup structure

- Housing Needs
- Basic Needs
- Community Support

Workgroup 1: Housing Needs

Nate McDonald (State of Utah) & Pamela Atkinson (State of Utah)

- Michael Gallegos, Salt Lake County Housing & Community Development Division Director, participates
- About 13 hotels promised to participate but occupancy depends on the length of time requested. 1 hotel promised to offer a full floor.
- About 20,000 house owners and landlords willing to support
- Recommendation made to Governor Spencer Cox to approve using the Emergency Rental Assistance Part 2 to help parolees who currently do not qualify for refugee services after 3 months of their resettlement.

Workgroup 2: Basic Needs

Asha Parekh (State of Utah) & Miles Hansen (World Trade Center Utah)

- ONA collaborates with group
- Reached out to LDS and Utah Food Bank for food assistance
- Parolees (federal refugee category designation) would need work authorization – advocacy
- For health care -Reached out to Association of County Health Centers, retired physicians, Utah Department of Health, etc., asked for short-term assistance for up to 6 month
- SLCo. Health Department- Planning on waiving fees for immunizations for newly arriving Afghan refugees and parolees. The ONA connected Dorothy Adams of the SLCo. Health Department with both CCS and IRC to help if there is a need as they receive the Afghan refugees.

Workgroup 3: Community Support

Luna Banuri (Utah Muslim Civic League and Salt Lake County CODA Board Member)

- Interpreters available
- Connecting newly arriving Afghan refugees and parolees with Afghan communities
- Helping with cultural connections
- Connecting Afghan community members needing immigration assistance to partner organizations
- Utah Muslim Civic League continues to receive and direct all inquiries that are appropriate for the Congressional delegation and reporting back to the Utah Afghan communities and partners
- Providing expert one-on-one assistance to the Afghan community for filing necessary forms, applications, etc.

Salt Lake County Filling the Gaps

- Providing vaccination and other immunization services to newly arrived Afghan refugees (COVID vaccine administered by federal government before refugees arrive in Salt Lake County)
-Fee waiver by the Salt Lake County Health Department
- Increasing the SLCo Behavioral Health contract amounts for IRC and CCS to address the mental health needs of newly arrived refugees
- Making SLCo Spaces accessible to IRC and CCS to meet with clients and conduct community education sessions
- Participating in housing solution if necessary

Questions/Comments

