

Welcome Circles: A Jewish Community Resettlement Initiative in Westchester

Since the start of the conflict in Ukraine in February 2022, nearly 10 million people have fled the country. Resettling so many people in a short period is unprecedented in recent history. However, it has strained the U.S. resettlement system, so a solution known as Sponsor Circles is being pioneered across the United States.

With deep experience in refugee resettlement and honed strategies for educating, organizing, and mobilizing the Jewish community, HIAS launched Welcome Circles, with over 30 welcoming Afghans. Now, the model has been adapted to welcome Ukrainians, and WJCI is teaming up with HIAS and joining the effort, with financial backing from the Ukrainian Resettlement Grant Initiative.

Welcome Circles for Ukrainians must:

- Launch with a minimum of five people (over 18 YO) and no more than eight people
- Commit to a minimum six-month period of support
- Raise a minimum of 2-5K per Ukrainian newcomer
- Pass mandatory background checks and an online knowledge assessment on the roles and responsibilities of circles
- Submit a "Welcome Plan" listing the ways a group will connect Ukrainian newcomers to support and services during the initial resettlement phase
- Commit to providing direct support to newcomers, including, but not limited to: greeting new families at the airport, finding and furnishing housing, finding jobs, enrolling kids in school, and helping newcomers access the public benefits to which they are entitled

WJCI will support Welcome Circles, providing funding, technical and operational resources on best practices in refugee resettlement, peer-to-peer mentoring, and Jewish resources to ground the experience and the work.

The Ukraine Resettlement Grant Initiative is a partnership between the Jewish Federations of North America and local Federations (grantees). Funding for this project was also provided by the UJA-Federation of N.Y. and The Shapiro Foundation.

If your congregation or organization is interested in forming a HIAS Welcome Circle for Ukrainians, please fill out this form or email info@wjci.org.