



Welcome the stranger.  
Protect the refugee.

# Welcome Circles Guidebook

2022

# HIAS Welcome Circles for Ukrainians Guidebook



**Welcome the stranger.  
Protect the refugee.**

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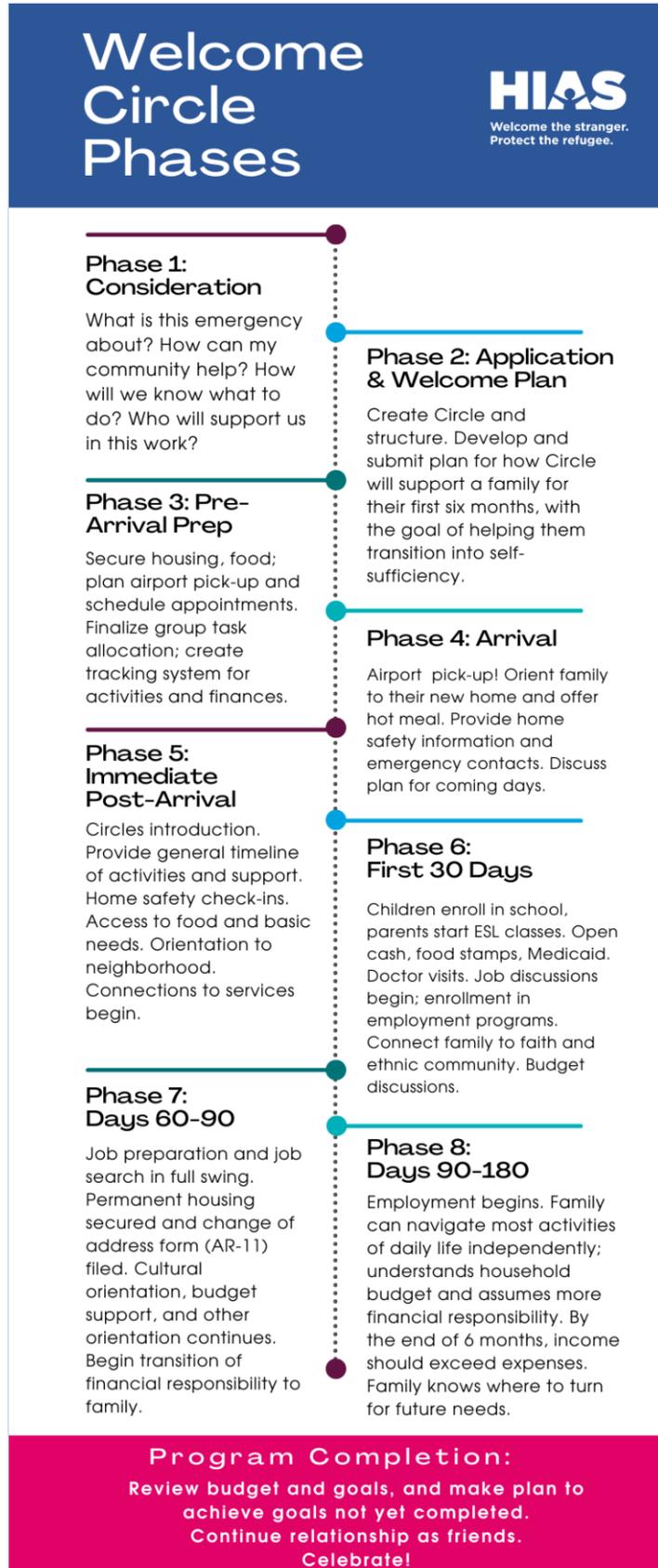
## About This Guide

This guide will provide you with an overview of the Welcome Circle process, from conceptualization to project completion.

As you read through the guide, you will find more information about each of the phases outlined in the timeline overview to the right, including what your circle should be considering or doing during that phase and what resources you can turn to for guidance.

Because each community is different, we encourage you to think of this as a resource to help inform your decisions as you manage this project, rather than as an instruction manual.

*This document has been created using resources developed by the Community Sponsorship Hub (CSH), with some additional information and resources added by HIAS.*



## PHASE 1: Consideration

*Grounding thought: The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” --Leviticus 19:33-34*

### What you should be thinking about:

What is the need? What can we do?

How do we know what to do?

Who will provide guidance?

How do we apply?

Take some time to familiarize yourself with the Ukraine emergency & U.S. response:

- [Ukraine situational overview](#) from UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency
- [Uniting for Ukraine](#) information from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
- [HIAS and VOICE rapid assessment](#) of Ukraine and five bordering countries to assess the needs of women and girls affected by the war

Learn more about the new U.S. response to the crisis – private Welcome Circles:

- [Sponsor Circles website](#)
- [New York Times article on private sponsorship](#)
- [The case for private sponsorship](#)
- [Article in Hadassah Magazine about private sponsorship](#)

Familiarize yourself with HIAS and with HIAS’ Welcome Circle model:

- [What is HIAS?](#)
- HIAS Welcome Circle model: [HIAS Welcome Circles FAQ](#) | [HIAS webinar recording](#)

Get to know the application process:

- [Sponsor Circles Application Process](#)



WATCH:

[What’s it like to sponsor a family \(Canada\)](#)

## PHASE 2: Application & Welcome Plan

*Grounding thought: “How wonderful it is that no one need wait a single moment to start to improve the world.” —Anne Frank*

### What circles should be thinking about

What does the application entail?  
Who will help with/assess the application?  
What makes a good circle? How much money must we raise?  
How do we find housing and resources in our community?  
What types of tasks will we be undertaking?  
What does self-sufficiency mean for the newcomers?

### In this section, you’ll find:

1. [Group Communication: Defining Roles](#)
2. [Group Lines of Communication](#)
3. [Housing](#)
4. [Arranging for Interpretation and Translation](#)
5. [Navigating Benefits](#)
6. [Supporting Access to Employment](#)
7. [Enrolling Children in School](#)
8. [Accessing Legal Assistance](#)
9. [Additional Resources](#)

### **Group Communication: Defining Roles**

In the Welcome Plan, Welcome Circles will be asked to complete an arrival and welcome checklist identifying which group members will be responsible for leading on which core resettlement tasks.

In determining this division of responsibilities, Welcome Circles may want to consider diving even deeper. Having a dedicated discussion early in the preparatory phase can be helpful to learn about each member’s interests, experiences, and skills. A sample group structure can be found [here](#).

In defining roles, it will also be important to identify a member or members as leader/co-leaders of the group. Welcome Circle lead(s) can ensure that the group members are communicating among each other and with HIAS, organize the group’s performance of resettlement tasks, and ensure that the group submits its day 30 and 90 reports.

Welcome Circles should be mindful of the fact that some responsibilities may be more intensive than others at various periods of the sponsorship. For instance, finding housing may take a significant effort early in the sponsorship, but once permanent housing is secured, the support burden lessens. Some tasks are necessary before the arrival of the newcomers to the community – e.g., fundraising. In assigning tasks, Welcome Circles should consider their daytime availability and spread out tasks based on overall group capacity.

### **Group Lines of Communication**

Regular meetings among Welcome Circle members are strongly recommended.

Prior to the newcomers' arrival, you'll need to have some important discussions about setting expectations, completing the Welcome Plan and application, fundraising, collecting donations, and other preparations.

Following arrival, Welcome Circles will likely encounter unexpected situations that will require circles to respond flexibly to the newcomers' circumstances and stated needs. Meeting every week or even more frequently will allow the Welcome Circles to discuss challenges, celebrate successes, and plan for the coming days and weeks. Meetings can be in-person, over the phone, or via videoconference. Welcome Circles should also consider tools for more regular, real-time communication. A WhatsApp or Signal group can be helpful to share updates, plans, and any questions that may arise.

Welcome Circles will be the primary point of contact for the newcomers. Newcomers should be provided with contact details for all Welcome Circle members with whom they will interact.

Newcomers will also have contact information for a neutral representative of the Community Sponsorship Hub to be able to report any concerns. If the Community Sponsorship Hub receives any concerns from a newcomer, it will notify HIAS to discuss the issue raised and the need for any potential follow-up.

### **Housing**

Welcome Circles are responsible for securing safe, sanitary, and affordable housing for the Ukrainian newcomer(s).

#### **Temporary Housing:**

- In many circumstances, securing adequate permanent housing may take time, and Welcome Circles may need to identify temporary arrangements.

- Because of the emergency situation, it will be acceptable for Welcome Circle members to offer spaces in their own homes as temporary housing. It is best practice for this type of housing to have a separate entrance and kitchen. However, shared kitchens may be acceptable on a short-term basis as long as families have their own bathrooms.
- Welcome Circles may be able to secure free or discounted temporary housing via [airbnb.org](https://www.airbnb.org). For more information on the process, click [here](#).

### Permanent Housing:

- Within the first 90 days of the Ukrainian newcomers' arrival in the community, it is expected that Welcome Circles will help them secure safe, sanitary, accessible, and affordable permanent housing. Housing is among the most challenging core resettlement responsibilities to meet, and circles may benefit from having several dedicated group members working together to find an appropriate housing solution.
- Welcome Circles should seek housing that the newcomers will have a good chance of being able to afford on their own at the end of a 180-day period.
- Welcome Circles should consider minimum wage as well as government benefit rates as an indicator of subsequent affordability.
- Welcome Circle members should leverage their personal networks and share housing asks publicly.
- If the Welcome Circle members live in a more expensive area, consider searching for housing in nearby cities or towns that are more affordable. Typically, areas that are more affordable for low-income individuals and families are also more likely to have other useful resources such as ESL classes, food pantries, and public transportation.
- Newcomers should be listed as tenants on their lease agreements, and they will be expected to sign the lease. Most landlords will require a guarantor or co-signer since the family will have no credit history. Welcome Circles will need to determine which member will feel comfortable co-signing the lease. [Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services](#) provides helpful best practices and information on this process that can be adapted to support Welcome Circles' conversations with landlords.
- Landlords generally require a deposit equal to 1-2 months' rent. Welcome Circles will need to account for this in the Welcome Plan budget.

## Arranging for Interpretation and Translation

Welcome Circles will need to explain in the Welcome Plan how they plan to communicate with the newcomer family they will support.

More formal interpretation and translation services may be especially needed in the first month post-arrival, so that Welcome Circles can clearly communicate with newcomers regarding setting mutual expectations, understanding family budgets, technical details of benefits and service access, home setup, etc.

Professional interpretation services are recommended for visits to healthcare and other service providers. Sometimes this will be provided, since any agency that receives federal funds (e.g., Social Security Administration or Department of Social Services) is responsible for ensuring language access.

Potential sources of low-cost or free interpreters are colleges/universities (e.g., Ukrainian or Eastern European student groups, synagogues, churches, and cultural groups). LanguageLine is a telephonic interpretation service that has offered a HIAS discount to Welcome Circles as well (find out more [here](#)). If professional interpretation comes at a cost, Welcome Circles should budget for this in advance.

After getting to know the newcomers a bit more, or for more informal interactions, Welcome Circles can also think about using more informal interpretation/translation aids, such as the Google Translate app. Patience is required, as not everything is always translated accurately, and some re-phrasing might be needed to convey messages.

## Navigating Benefits

Examples of **federally funded benefits** for which humanitarian parolees may be eligible include:

- Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps
- Medicaid
- Refugee Cash Assistance
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Refugee Medical Assistance
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

**Local benefits** for which humanitarian parolees may be eligible include:

- Public library programs
- Low-income assistance programs
- Mutual aid programs
- Mental health services

- Pro bono legal services

In researching which public benefits are available and how to access them, Welcome Circles should consider:

- Reviewing the information sheet from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) [here](#).
- Identifying a [local state government benefits office or State Refugee Coordinator](#), contacting them to learn about available ORR benefits (Refugee Cash Assistance, ORR Matching Grant Program, Refugee Medical Assistance) and services and application processes in advance, and arranging an appointment soon after the newcomer's arrival.
- Identifying the local Department of Social Services office, contacting them to learn about the application process in advance, and arranging an appointment soon after the newcomers' arrival.
- Learning about [Medicaid eligibility](#) and how to apply via either the [state Medicaid agency](#) or via [healthcare.gov](#).
- Learning about [Supplemental Security Income \(SSI\)](#) eligibility and how to apply for newcomers of different ages.
- Learning about [Temporary Assistance to Needy Families \(TANF\)](#) programs in your State to find out if the newcomers are eligible, and if so, how to apply.
- Searching for additional online resources using tools like [this benefits assistance search engine](#).
- Identifying and contacting the local government or social service provider to find out about additional local benefits that might be available.
- Researching what services might be available through public libraries, local places of worship, community centers, etc.

### **Supporting Access to Employment**

Although the wider sponsor circle program asks for a 90-day financial commitment, HIAS Welcome Circles are asked to plan for a 180-day period. It is therefore important that Welcome Circles support adult newcomers in finding initial employment as soon as possible after arrival.

Exploration of employment opportunities should begin even before the newcomer arrives in the community. In the Welcome Plan, your Welcome Circle will need to describe any affordable employment counseling or other employment-related programming in your community. Welcome Circles should be aware of any upcoming job fairs, for example.

Welcome Circles will also need to describe a plan for informal employment support, e.g., helping to create resumes/CVs, search online job boards, practice for interviews, support transportation to interviews, etc. Your Welcome Circle should survey the employment

landscape in your community for entry-level and reasonably accessible jobs that can accommodate language learners.

Many newcomer families may have a wealth of work experience or even specializations; however, language barriers, foreign certifications, and a lack of familiarity with the U.S. systems mean finding work in higher-level roles will take time. Therefore, it will be important for Welcome Circles to manage newcomers' expectations and emphasize how important it is for them to accept the first job offer they receive, even if it is entry-level. Even if it is not the job that provides self-sufficiency, it will lead to better or full-time employment with the same, or a different, employer down the line. Getting a higher-level job is easier when a newcomer already is working. Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services provides some additional helpful [guidance](#) that Welcome Circles may consider when supporting newcomers in accessing employment opportunities.

Welcome Circles will be expected to leverage personal networks to support the newcomers' employment search. Welcome Circles are not required to employ the newcomers, but there may be Welcome Circle members who might be willing to offer employment. Such arrangements should be approached with full sensitivity around and commitment to mitigating the potential power dynamics at play. Newcomers may feel indebted or pressured to work for a Welcome Circle member – it is important to both understand and emphasize to the newcomers that they have autonomy in their employment decisions. The Community Sponsorship hub has a module in their [Knowledge Check](#) course on power considerations in sponsorship that may be useful to review.

Note: Families with working parents may find it challenging to arrange for affordable childcare. Learn more about U.S. childcare programs and subsidies [here](#). Those newcomers with extended family or friends in the area may be able to access community members for childcare as well.

### **Enrolling Children in School**

Welcome Circles will be responsible for supporting any school-aged children in the newcomer family in the public education system within the first two weeks of the family's arrival.

In your Welcome plan, your Welcome Circle will need to describe details regarding the enrollment process in your community, including needed immunizations and your district's point of contact responsible for enrollment.

The outreach that Welcome Circles do in the preparatory phase will also help the school district prepare to welcome the newcomer children into schools. Thus, if possible, it is recommended that a Welcome Circle reach out to the district contact point to discuss enrollment processes

and how to best support children in their school integration prior to the family's arrival in the community.

Note: Finding affordable housing is a significant challenge in most communities in the U.S., and at times, newcomers may find themselves in temporary housing longer than expected. While it is preferable to move out of temporary housing quickly so children can start school in the district they will remain in long-term, this is not possible. However, access to education remains essential. Click [here](#) to download a guide from Switchboard about school enrollment for children and youth facing these circumstances.

### **Legal Assistance**

Ukrainians who want to seek permanent status in the U.S. will need to speak with an immigration attorney about their options. Every immigration case is different, so Ukrainian parolees must receive individualized advice about their specific cases and circumstances. Many Ukrainians may not have a pathway to permanent residency in the U.S. at this time.

There may be pro bono or low-cost immigration services in your area, and some law schools have immigration clinics. Through your connections, you may be able to find an immigration attorney to conduct a legal intake on behalf of the Ukrainians you are serving to identify if they are eligible for any additional immigration benefits. These connections should be made as soon as possible after arrival, as the immigration system is slow-moving. Ukrainian parolees will need to file for work authorizations.

NOTE: Do not practice law unless you are legally qualified. Errors could have devastating ramifications.

### **Additional Resources**

For more information about the application, fundraising requirements, the circle's role, program training, and background check requirements, check out these resources:

- [Sponsor Circles website](#)
- [Sample Circle Structure and Roles](#)
- [HIAS Welcome Circles FAQ](#)

Resources for volunteers working with resettlement agencies under Co-Sponsorship Model:

*Note: Welcome Circles are part of a separate program and do not work with resettlement agencies; however, much of the information in these resources is universal or applies to both programs.*

- [IRIS resources](#) and [IRIS manual for community sponsorship](#)
- [Church World Service manual](#)

Resources from national refugee technical assistance sites:

- [Resource identification: Find Hello](#)
- [Employment and case management](#)
- State Refugee Coordinators contact info: [State Refugee Coordinator](#)
- [Welcome.US](#)
- [Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange](#)
- [Community sponsor resource](#) from CORE (Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange)
- [Info on school enrollment for children in temporary housing](#) from Switchboard

Local service providers to research:

- County Assistance Office (cash assistance, food stamps, Medicaid) – check if your area has a refugee site
- Department of Health (vaccinations)
- Health clinics (primary care)
- School district (enrollment info for English language learners)
- English as a Second Language classes
- Job centers, possibly local refugee providers
- Legal immigration clinics
- United Way 2-1-1 search

## PHASE 3: Pre-Arrival Prep

*Grounding Thought: "We are here to change the world with small acts of thoughtfulness done daily rather than with one great breakthrough."  
– Rabbi Harold Kushner*

### What circles should be thinking about:

Housing search, interpretation setup, apartment furnishings, culturally appropriate food provision, technology provision, finalizing contacts for key services, creating financial/task tracking documents, planning airport pickup, and first-week activities.

Training/education on Ukrainian culture, working with interpreters, cultural humility, boundary-setting, self-care, child safety, and trauma-informed approach.

### In this section, you'll find:

1. [Tips: Donations and Discounts](#)
2. [Basic Necessities: Clothing](#)
3. [Basic Necessities: Food Staples](#)
4. [Basic Necessities: Utilities](#)
5. [Basic Necessities: Phone and Internet](#)
6. [Additional Resources](#)

### Tips: Donations and Discounts

Much of the furniture and home furnishings can be collected by Welcome Circles as in-kind donations. Welcome Circles should be encouraged to leverage their networks to solicit donations where possible. Any donated items should be clean and in good condition.

Second-hand stores or online platforms like Kijiji or Facebook marketplace should also be explored for discounted items.

Some items, such as bedding, towels, and personal hygiene items should be in excellent condition if used or purchased new. Welcome Circles should be encouraged to find low-cost options for purchasing such goods (e.g., dollar stores). Welcome Circles should think about the budget for these items from the outset, as it will need to be reflected in the Welcome Plan.

### **Basic Necessities: Clothing**

Welcome Circles can collect donated clothing for the newcomers but should be mindful of the fact that circles may not know the needs and sizes of the newcomer family members ahead of their arrival in the community. If you have gathered donations of goods that end up being unsuitable for the family members, plan to donate them to others who may be in need.

Some clothing will need to be purchased new (e.g., socks and underwear). Welcome Circles could consider taking the newcomers on an initial shopping trip shortly after arrival to purchase clothing and other basic goods. This trip can also include stops to introduce newcomers to secondhand clothing stores in the community.

Welcome Circles should be mindful that providing too much new clothing or other goods may establish an expectation that the group will not be able to continue to fulfill.

Special consideration should be paid to securing seasonally appropriate clothing.

Many Welcome Circles may find themselves deluged with donated items and that their expenditures on clothing and other goods are negligible. Think about the budget for these items from the outset, as you will need to reflect this in the Welcome Plan and budget addendum.

### **Basic Necessities: Food Staples**

Welcome Circles may consider arranging a culturally familiar meal for the newcomers on their arrival. This can serve as a warm introduction to both the group and community and help put the newcomers at ease.

Welcome Circles should purchase some basic food staples ahead of the family's arrival to ensure sufficient provisions to get by in the first few days after their arrival. Welcome Circles should research what food staples are common in Ukrainian cuisine. For example, [this pantry list](#) gives some helpful tips.

Welcome Circles should remember to provide baby food, as applicable.

Welcome Circles should plan (and budget for) a grocery trip with the newcomers soon after arrival so that the newcomers can stock up on food items of their liking. The group should orient itself to affordable grocery store options in the community.

Welcome Circles should also budget for ongoing grocery costs for the newcomers' first 180 days in the community.

### **Basic Necessities: Utilities**

Welcome Circles will be responsible for helping the newcomer family establish utility accounts associated with their permanent housing.

Ukrainian newcomers will likely need their social security numbers to register for utilities. The request for a social security number is included in the application for employment authorization (the I-765) so the sooner you complete this step, the faster the newcomer(s) will be on their way to receiving this documentation. To ensure the newcomers receive their social security cards, Welcome Circles will need to help them complete a change of address with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and with the U.S. Postal Service as soon as they are established in their permanent housing. If there is a delay in receiving the social security cards, Welcome Circles should be prepared to establish utility accounts themselves using a group member's social security card. Responsibility for the accounts can be transferred once the newcomers' social security cards arrive.

Some local communities may offer utility subsidies for low-income families through [LIHEAP](#). Welcome Circles should research whether any other local benefits are available to lower the monthly costs of utilities. Welcome Circles should orient themselves to the process of registering for utilities in advance, as well as the estimated monthly costs of utilities in the first 180 days.

### **Basic Necessities: Phone and Internet**

**Telephone:** Welcome Circles should plan for the provision of at least one cell phone in good and working condition to the family, as well as covering the initial costs of the phone plan (first 180 days). Donated cell phones are acceptable, and smartphones are strongly recommended. Welcome Circles should research service providers to identify affordable plans and describe this in the Welcome Plan.

**Internet:** Welcome Circles should plan to help the newcomers register for an internet plan for their permanent housing. Welcome Circles should research available service providers to identify affordable plans and describe this process in the Welcome Plan.

## **Additional Resources**

Housing guidance and recommendations:

- [Finding housing](#)
- [4Stay room rental search engine](#)
- [Benefits of renting to refugees](#)
- [Recommended Safe Housing checklist](#)
- Setting up housing: [JRC RRIJ Apartment Furnishing Process.pdf](#)
- [Refugee housing FAQ](#)
- [Affordable housing locator resource from HUD](#)

Best practices:

- Working with Interpreters Training [video](#)
- [How to Access a HIAS discount](#) for LanguageLine Telephone Interpretation
- [HIAS guide to using volunteer interpreters/translators](#) (pages 14-28)
- [Free interpretation resources](#)
- [Trauma & trauma-informed care guide](#)
- [Boundary setting guide](#)
- [Boundary setting one-pager](#)
- [Cultural Orientation](#)
- [Adult learning](#)
- [Teaching plans and resources](#)
- [Fundraising resources](#)
- [HIAS custom budget tool](#) (click the link within the page to download the spreadsheet)

## PHASE 4: Arrival

*Grounding thought: Let no sadness come through this gate. Let no trouble come to this dwelling. Let no fear come through this door. Let no conflict be in this place. Let this home be filled with the blessing of joy and peace. – Birkat HaBayit*

### What circles should be thinking about:

Airport pick-up  
Home and safety orientation  
Hot meal and food supplies  
Early timeline

### In this section, you'll find:

1. [Meeting Newcomers at Their Point of Arrival](#)
2. [Priorities in the First 24 Hours](#)
3. [Additional Notes and Resources](#)

### **Meeting Newcomers at Their Point of Arrival**

Mixed emotions surrounding the actual arrival of newcomers highlight how important the first meeting is, and how lasting its impression. When Welcome Circles receive the newcomers at their point of arrival, be aware that they may be experiencing a bewildering number of things all at once:

- **They may be exhausted and/or scared.** They have not left their country by choice. They are likely to have experienced a traumatizing exit from Ukraine and may have had a stressful journey to get to your community that likely involved long stays in reception centers or journeys crossing multiple borders. Their feelings might be quite different from those of the Welcome Circle and very mixed.
- **Meeting new people can be exhausting.** Welcome Circles should carefully consider who among their core members should greet the newcomers at the point of arrival, and keep in mind that having too many greeters can be overwhelming. Although groups may feel like celebrating immediately after arrival, the newcomers' first need will likely be for rest.

It helps if Welcome Circles always communicate to the newcomers about what you are doing and why and to allow them as much privacy as possible.

**It is recommended to bring a qualified interpreter to the initial point of arrival** to help provide a warm welcome by communicating in the newcomers' language.

Welcome Circles should then bring newcomers directly to their initial accommodations. Newcomers should not be separated from each other or from their belongings during this journey.

Source: [RSTP Handbook, Chapter 7 on Settlement Preparation](#).

### **Priorities in the First 24 Hours**

The first 24 hours (and the first few days) are critical in newcomers' lives. First impressions are formed, and vivid memories of these days are likely to remain with them for the rest of their lives. While your Welcome Circle will want to ensure that you are addressing the necessary practical issues during this time, it will also be important for members to focus on the newcomers' emotional needs.

This **suggested checklist** addresses a few of the immediate practical concerns in the first 24 hours:

- Ensure newcomers' accommodation is stocked with sufficient food supplies for a few days, and that newcomers are greeted with a warm, culturally appropriate meal.
- Orient newcomers to how to use things in their accommodation – e.g., faucets, telephones, basic household equipment, and objects that might be unknown to them or difficult to figure out, such as fire alarms.
- Ensure newcomers know how to contact someone from the Welcome Circle at any time, day or night. Provide several numbers and develop a system to communicate when in need of help if English is poor (such as Google Translate). **Make sure they know who to call in case of emergency.**
- Support the newcomers in making any desired phone calls to relatives or loved ones.
- Provide newcomers with some pocket money in case they need to leave the accommodation to purchase any goods.
- Arrange a time for a deeper orientation meeting the next day with a qualified interpreter.

Source: [RSTP Handbook, Chapter 7 on Settlement Preparation](#).

### **Additional Notes and Resources**

#### Airport pick-up guidance:

- It is best practice to try and bring an interpreter, if possible. If that is not possible, consider having a phone interpreter available ([click here](#) for details about how to access a HIAS discount for LanguageLine phone interpreters).
- Try to get permission to meet the family at the gate.
- Create a welcome sign with the family's name.
- Do not take photos without permission.
- Do not touch the newcomers without permission.

#### Hot meal upon arrival:

- We recommend that you provide a hot meal the newcomer family upon their arrival at their accommodation. If possible, you may want to try and make this a culturally appropriate meal, though that is not a requirement.
- Consider asking a Ukrainian neighbor, if available, to cook for the family. You may want to provide money or a gift card to cover the expenses.

#### Home and safety preparation and orientation:

- Review our [Suggested Safe Housing checklist](#)
- [Household Supplies List](#)
- [Pantry List](#)

## PHASE 5: Immediate Post-Arrival

*Grounding thought: “To be kind is more important than to be right. Many times what people need is not a brilliant mind that speaks but a special heart that listens.” —Rabbi Menachem Mendel*

### What circles should be thinking about:

Providing welcome  
Explaining Circles  
Orientation to neighborhood/community  
Expectations  
Lease-signing  
Documentation collection  
Money distribution

### In this section, you’ll find:

1. [Orientation Meeting](#)
2. [Priorities in Week 1](#)
3. [Money Management](#)
4. [Additional Resources](#)

### **Orientation Meeting**

A best practice for Welcome Circles to follow is to arrange an orientation meeting with the newcomers within the first 24 hours of arrival, but *after* the newcomers have had an opportunity to rest in their initial accommodation.

During this orientation meeting, it will be important for Welcome Circles to:

- **Introduce** the newcomers to all the members of the Welcome Circle and explain (simply!) how the group members have divided their responsibilities.
- **Set expectations** by explaining the resettlement support the Welcome Circle will be providing, and for how long (180 days).
- **Provide an overview** of key appointments that the newcomers should expect in the first week and other plans (e.g., trip to the grocery store).
- **Introduce the budget** to the newcomer family and have a transparent discussion regarding plans for spending funds on the newcomers’ behalf.
- Ensure newcomers are aware of their **rights and responsibilities** in the U.S. Welcome Circles should never make decisions for the newcomers, but rather make decisions

together with them. Whenever possible, mentor newcomers by providing alternatives and resources.

**It is strongly recommended that this first meeting take place with the presence of a qualified interpreter**, so that newcomers feel as comfortable as possible asking questions regarding the Welcome Circle members, the Welcome Circle Program, their new community, and what to expect as they get adjusted.

### **Priorities in Week 1**

During the first week after arrival, Welcome Circles should prioritize tasks that will be critical to orienting the newcomers to how they can access necessities, obtain key documentation needed to establish themselves in the community, and begin to access critical benefits and services. We advise Welcome Circles to arrange any needed appointments ahead of the newcomer's arrival to avoid unnecessary delays in access to critical benefits and services, if at all possible.

Priorities should include:

- An **initial shopping trip** for groceries and other necessities, neighborhood walk-about, and initial orientation to public transportation options.
- Obtaining a **cell phone and plan**.
- **Applying for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD)** through an I-765 petition. This allows the newcomer(s) to begin working and includes a request for a social security number. Because this needs to be done as soon as possible, the newcomer(s) may not have a permanent address yet. Consider using the address of the lead circle member.
- **Attending appointments** at the local state government **benefits** office, local **SNAP** office, and other locations, and/or completing relevant **online applications** to secure any benefits the newcomers might be eligible for.
- Attending an initial appointment with the **local health department** and the local **department of social services** to access health insurance and connect the family to health practitioners.
  - Every individual in the family should get an initial health screening. This is a type of health screening that newly arrived refugees receive, and Ukrainian newcomers should receive this same comprehensive exam. In most cases, this screening will be easiest to get at an FQHC (Federally Qualified Health Center), especially before Medicaid has come through. This [site](#) can help you locate an FQHC, though it may not be an exhaustive list.
  - If the newcomer family needs emergency care before Medicaid comes through, they must ask for Presumptive Eligibility (PE), an emergent coverage while Medicaid is processing.

- Enrolling newcomer adults in **English language classes** appropriate to their circumstances, taking into consideration any childcare needs.
- Continuing discussions about **money management and budgeting**.

**\*Important:** Welcome Circles should remain mindful of the newcomers' emotional needs during their initial week after arrival and watch for signs of stress or culture shock. The [Knowledge Check](#) course from Community Sponsorship Hub has a module on power, culture, religion, language, trauma, and privacy, as well as communication considerations that will be helpful for navigating these initial, busy days.

### **Money Management**

Depending on where you live, the way money moves between the circle and family may affect benefits eligibility. HIAS has been advised that under SNAP, RCA, and TANF rules, payments made directly to a vendor (for example, paying the rent directly to the landlord) should not count as income for the family. Also, one lump sum payment up front is excluded from income because it's not a "regular" or normal payment. Essentially, the less money that flows through the hands of the family, the better. In that sense, the best practice for families being supported by Welcome Circles would be for circles to pay all bills directly to the vendor.

However, this method of money management does not promote self-sufficiency. That's why education and open communication become very important. Helping families fill out budgeting worksheets and having them participate in preparing, mailing, and documenting those payments are important steps to building financial knowledge. You can find resources to support this financial education in the "Additional Resources" on the next page.

While it ultimately will come down to a conversation between the circle and the family being supported, it may be that the benefit of short-term full government support outweighs the detriment in terms of self-reliance, especially if these educational measures are taken.

It is important to stress that **benefits eligibility will vary by state**. For example, in Oregon, any physical cash given to the family by the Circle would count against their SNAP as income, but not their cash assistance. In Alabama, a letter must be sent describing what kind of support the Circle would be providing for the family so that it would not count against their cash aid.

### **Additional Resources**

Getting to Know You:

- [Possible welcoming activities/icebreakers](#)

#### Basic Services:

- [Try using this sample suggested basic services checklist tool](#) to track what tasks need to be done and when we recommend completing them.

*Note: Welcome Circles are not required to follow this timeline, but most of these tasks will apply and the dates the tool suggests are considered best practices.*

#### Orientations:

- Do your best to orient the family to the circle members, structure, roles, money disbursement, activities, and goals.
- Help them to better understand their new neighborhood and community.

#### Money Management:

- [Budget estimator tool](#) and [manual](#) from IRIS
- [Money management resource](#)

#### Employment Authorization Document (EAD):

- [HIAS EAD Toolkit](#) (this is a general Employment Authorization toolkit designed to be used by legal professionals)

#### Lease-signing, as applicable:

- We recommend that you use interpretation to ensure the newcomers understand this legal document.
- Try to ensure that both the newcomer family and the Welcome Circle understand the lease length, protections, consequences of breaking the lease, and apartment maintenance requirements.
- [Housing guide](#) for family
- [Landlord repair guide](#)
- [Newcomer Housing Suggestions](#) from Community Sponsorship Hub
- [HIAS letter to landlords](#)

#### Handling Expectations:

- This [Canadian program document](#) is a useful resource for setting and managing expectations.

## PHASE 6: The First 30 Days

*Grounding thought: “Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated, thus, everyone’s task is unique as his specific opportunity to implement it.” – Viktor E. Frankl*

### What circles should be thinking about:

Core service provision  
Expectations  
Tracking activities  
Appointment follow-up  
Cultural orientation  
Completing the AR-11

### In this section, you’ll find:

1. [Priorities in Month 1](#)
2. [Days 30 and 90 Reports](#)
3. [Understanding the Adjustment Period](#)
4. [Supporting the Adjustment Period](#)
5. [Recognizing and Responding to Emergencies](#)
6. [When to Pursue Mental Health Care](#)
7. [Additional Resources](#)

### Priorities in Month 1

The first month after arrival is critical for the newcomers to begin feeling settled and establish a routine in their new community. Priorities for Welcome Circles during this period should include:

- **Completing any tasks from the “[Priorities in Week 1](#)” checklist** that the Welcome Circle may not have been able to complete immediately.
- **Enrolling school-aged children** in educational institutions (within the first two weeks).
- **Obtaining a State ID card** through your state’s Department of Motor Vehicles. Use the national directory [here](#) to find information about your state’s individual requirements.
- **Opening a bank account** (within the first two weeks – note that this requires the arrival of the newcomers’ social security cards).
- Helping adult newcomers **adjust to a routine** of attending language classes.

- **Attending an appointment with an employment counselor**, if available, and otherwise beginning to provide employment coaching and job search support to adult newcomers.
- Attending an initial appointment with a **legal professional** to begin the asylum process.
- Offering and facilitating **cultural connections** as the family desires.
- **Supporting transportation needs**, while encouraging the family to gradually begin navigating their community independently.
- **Beginning the search for permanent housing** – the sooner the newcomers are settled in their permanent home, the more settled they will feel in the community.
- **Completing a change of address** with the Dept. of Homeland Security and with the U.S. Postal Service once the family has moved from temporary to permanent housing ([click here](#) for instructions on how to complete the online AR-11 form). This only needs to be done once the family is in **permanent housing**. When going through the Priorities in Week 1 checklist, you began the I-765 petition to apply for work authorization. The address you used in that application is where the SS cards and EADs (work authorization) will be sent if the case is adjudicated before newcomers are settled into their permanent housing and change their address. That location will also be the address you list on the new AR-11 as the “previous address.”

### Days 30 and 90 Reports

Proactive check-ins will take the following forms:

- A day 30 online report
- A day 90 online report

The Community Sponsorship Hub is designing these reports, and they will be provided to circles via their HIAS Welcome Circle Liaisons.

### Understanding the Adjustment Period

The resettlement experience comes with several stages of adjustment. Welcome Circles should be aware of possible stages the newcomers may be experiencing, including:

- **Honeymoon**: excitement, anticipation, hopefulness, eagerness
- **Hostility**: frustration, anxiety, anger, depression, fear, mistrust
- **Humor**: learning new things, understanding culture, meeting new people, feeling more comfortable
- **Home**: feeling adjusted, comfortable, hopeful, positive, able to cope, teaching and supporting others

Welcome Circles can help newcomers through these stages in various ways, including providing friendship, support, and community connections; linking newcomers with people, events,

goods, and services from their own culture; and organizing time for social and recreational interactions.

### **Supporting the Adjustment Period**

Refugee newcomers often have an adjustment period, during which certain mental health symptoms may appear that will later dissipate once certain factors are in place. Factors that can help improve mental health include employment, language acquisition, meeting new people, and being able to send money to family. Before assuming that there is a mental health problem, Welcome Circles should do their best to gather more information while continuing to respect the newcomers' right to privacy:

- **Listen to and empathize with the newcomer(s):** Is this a global distress issue having to do with the stress of adjustment, paying rent, learning English, missing loved ones, and/or uncertainty of where loved ones are? These stressors are very common for newcomers. Or is it a more serious mental health problem?
- **Ask questions, be curious, and engage in conversation:** Helpful prompts can include, "What is going on?" "What made you upset today?" "What happened?" "Tell me how you are feeling" "How long has it been going on?" "Have you been treated for this issue in the past? With medication?"



### **Recognizing and Responding to Emergencies**

Welcome Circles should be prepared to watch for and recognize **signs of an emergency**, which can include:

- When a newcomer has expressed suicidal thoughts in the present and/or has expressed a plan
- When a newcomer has expressed homicidal thoughts
- When a newcomer is incoherent, unable to respond, and/or has a flat affect
- When a newcomer is expressing hallucinations – visual, audible, and/or tactile
- When a newcomer is acting erratically, exhibiting bizarre behaviors, and/or exhibiting violent behaviors
- When there is a real or perceived need for immediate professional assistance

**If a Welcome Circle recognizes signs of an emergency**, the following actions should be considered, as appropriate:

- Plan ahead by being aware of local mental health services in your area
- Call 911 – explain that it is a mental health emergency that needs a mental health professional present when responding
- Bring the newcomer to the emergency room and explain that there is a mental health emergency. The emergency room attendant will assess and admit the newcomer to emergency psychiatric care if they deem it necessary.

## When to Pursue Mental Health Care

Welcome Circles may consider encouraging the newcomers to access mental health care in the following circumstances:

- When the newcomer expresses that they need extra support
- When the newcomer is exhibiting behaviors that are concerning and chronic, for example:
  - not sleeping
  - not eating
  - not being able to get out of bed or leave the house
  - paranoid/hyper-vigilant behavior
  - experiencing audible/visual/tactile hallucinations
  - experiencing constant panic attacks
  - expressing or threatening violence to self or others

### Additional Resources

Suggested basic service provision:

- [Try using this sample checklist tool](#) to track recommended basic services and timelines.

Resources for volunteers working with resettlement agencies under the Community Sponsorship Model:

*Note: Circles do not work with resettlement agencies; however, there is some universal info in the guides.*

- [IRIS resources](#) and [IRIS manual for community sponsorship](#)

Change of Address Form (AR-11) and Employment Authorization Document (I-765):

- [Changing One's Address with U.S. Immigration Services: The AR-11](#)
- [Instructions: How to Complete the AR-11 Change of Address Form](#)
- [Applying for an Employment Authorization Document \(EAD\)](#) with an I-765 petition
- [HIAS EAD Toolkit](#) (this is a general Employment Authorization toolkit and is designed to be used by lawyers)

Cultural orientation tools and resources:

- [Activities](#)
- Cultural orientation training (in English and Russian) at [Cultural Resource Exchange \(CORE\)](#)
- [Community sponsor resource](#) from CORE (Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange)

Appointments (medical, welfare, school, ESL, legal immigration, etc.) and language:

- Right to interpretation at providers [resource](#)
- [Duolingo English lessons](#)
- More on [English Language Learning](#) from Community Sponsorship Hub

Resources for starting to seek employment:

- Seek enrollment into refugee employment/case management services (if available).
- For high skilled/English speakers, [contact Upwardly Global for career services.](#)
- [Letter and Checklist for Circles from Upwardly Global](#) about employment resources
- [Job Seeker Journey Map](#) from Upwardly Global
- [Decision Tree for Women](#) from Upwardly Global
- [Job readiness curriculum](#) from Switchboard
- [Newcomer employment basics](#) from IRIS

English Language Learning:

- [ESOL resources for true beginners](#) from IRIS (zip file of PDF resources)
- More on [English Language Learning](#) from Community Sponsorship Hub (developed for Afghan newcomers, but links are helpful for newly arriving Ukrainians as well)

Money management conversations:

- [Money management resource](#)
- [HIAS custom budget tool](#) (click the link within the page to download the spreadsheet)

Mental health guides:

- IRIS, [“Refugee Mental Health Info for Cosponsors”](#)
- RSTP, [“Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder”](#)
- Maria Popova, [“The Science of How Our Minds and Bodies Converge in the Healing of Trauma”](#)



WATCH:

RSTP webinar: [“Preserving and Improving the Mental Health of Refugees, their Sponsors and Supporters”](#)

RSTP webinar: [“Supporting Refugee Mental Health”](#)

## PHASE 7: Days 30-90

*Grounding thought: “The greatest level, above which there is no greater, is to support a person by endowing them with a gift or loan, or entering into a partnership with him, or finding employment for him, in order to strengthen his hand so that he will not need to be dependent upon others...” – Maimonides’ Eight Levels of Charity, Mishnah Torah)*

### What circles should be thinking about:

Job search  
Money management  
Budgeting  
Ongoing basic services  
Referrals to services

### In this section, you’ll find:

1. [Priorities in Month 2](#)
2. [Priorities in Month 3](#)
3. [Additional Resources](#)

### Priorities in Month 2

By the second month, newcomers should be reasonably settled into a routine of attending school or language classes, be actively searching for employment and permanent housing (if not yet secured), be receiving benefits and accessing other relevant services, and feel more comfortable navigating their surroundings to obtain groceries and other basic necessities.

During this period, Welcome Circles should focus on ensuring:

- That any **outstanding tasks from the “Priorities in Month 1” list** are fulfilled.
- If **permanent housing** has not yet been located, the search should intensify so that the newcomers can settle in as quickly as possible.
- If **employment** has not yet been secured, the search should intensify so that the newcomers can strengthen their financial security as quickly as possible.
- The newcomers are aware of **recreational opportunities** in the community and can find opportunities to have fun in their new surroundings.

While it is likely the newcomers will continue to be busy navigating appointments and attending to administrative matters during this time, hopefully the intensity of the first month will have somewhat abated, enabling the Welcome Circles to focus on providing mentorship on day-to-day challenges that may arise and arranging fun opportunities for the newcomer(s) to get to know the community.

### **Priorities in Month 3**

**By the third month, newcomers should be settling into their daily routines.** Ideally, they will have secured employment and moved into permanent housing. The third month should be focused on beginning the gradual transition to self-sufficiency. Ensure outstanding resettlement supports have been provided (click [here](#) for a sample services checklist), and that the family feels equipped to enter the next stages in as self-sufficient a manner as possible. Moving forward, you should continue to be available as a resource and friend, but the family should be in the “driver’s seat” as much as possible.

During this period, Welcome Circles should focus on ensuring:

- That all **outstanding tasks from the “[Priorities in Month 2](#)” list** have been completed.
- If **employment** has not yet been supported, Welcome Circles should dedicate significant energy and time to connecting newcomers to employment opportunities.
- If **permanent housing** has not yet been secured, Welcome Circles should dedicate significant energy and time to the housing search, providing accompanying needs for furniture and other household furnishings, and ensuring appropriate utility hook-ups and account registrations.
- That the newcomers feel comfortable **navigating their community independently**.
- That the newcomers feel comfortable **budgeting** for their needs and understand how to navigate the American **banking** system.

### **Additional Resources**

Planning for self-sufficiency:

- [Money management](#)

Refugee service providers:

- [Refugee Support Services: focus on employment](#)
- [Intensive case management for refugees with high needs](#)

Mainstream employment services:

- [TANF employment and training services](#) (for families with children under 18 receiving cash assistance)
- [SNAP employment and training services](#) (for families not receiving cash assistance)

## PHASE 8: Days 90-180

*Grounding thought: “You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it” – Pirkei Avot: 2:21*

### What circles should be thinking about:

Employment start  
Transition to financial self-sufficiency  
Connections to ongoing resources  
Changing circle’s role

### In this section, you’ll find:

1. [Best Practice: Transition Planning](#)
2. [Additional Resources](#)

#### **Best Practice: Transition Planning**

About two weeks before the conclusion of the sponsorship period, you may want to convene a discussion with your HIAS Welcome Circle Liaison about the goals the circle and family have achieved and what tasks you might need to undertake before the sponsorship comes to an end to ensure as smooth a transition as possible for the newcomers.

A best practice for Welcome Circles is to also arrange a similar transition meeting with the newcomers, using the [Transition to Self Sufficiency](#) checklist. Welcome Circles should always carry out their responsibilities with a view to an eventual transition to self-sufficiency.

Some topics for discussion during this meeting could include:

- Have the newcomers become comfortable with **purchasing groceries and household items** on their own?
- Are the newcomers **oriented to the public transportation** system and able to navigate their community independently?
- How are the newcomers doing in terms of the **employment search and language acquisition**?

- Are there any concerns relating to the newcomers' **ability to continue to support themselves following the sponsorship**?
- Do the Welcome Circle members plan to continue offering any support after the conclusion of the formal sponsorship period, whether financial or non-financial? \*

*Note: This is not required, but some groups may find themselves wanting to continue to support newcomers on their paths to self-sufficiency. Some helpful considerations the Circle members might discuss include their personal capacities to offer ongoing support, the newcomers' needs to attain eventual self-sufficiency, any impact on the newcomers' ability to continue receiving public benefits, and the newcomers' right to self-determination.*

#### **Additional Resources**

- [Career laddering resources](#)
- [Transition to Self Sufficiency](#) checklist

## COMPLETION

**What circles should be thinking about:**

- Review budget and goals
- Make a plan to achieve goals not yet completed
- Celebrate completion
- Continue relationship as friends
- Group celebrates among themselves!

Congratulations! Your Welcome Circle has taken a chance and embarked on a challenging and exciting journey to support your new neighbors during a time when they needed you most. Along the way, you will almost certainly have had more successes and more unexpected hurdles than you could have imagined, and you have made it through together, in partnership with the newcomer family. As a result, your community is stronger and more welcoming. You should take this moment to celebrate the immensity of your accomplishments together with your new neighbors!