



---

**IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE  
OUTREACH CENTER**

**Adopt-a-Family Program Overview**

# Background on IROC

- IROC was founded in August 2019, by high school student Adrianna Lotfi
- We are a small, 100% volunteer-run 501(c)3 organization supporting refugees in the DMV metro area
- We do not have a physical location or office, all of our volunteer Directors work out of their homes (on top of working their full-time jobs)
- Our mission is to help connect newly arrived refugee families with the tools and resources needed to build a sustainable life in the United States. We strive to fill in the gaps where the resettlement agencies are unable to help.

# How Families Come to IROC

- Referred directly by one of the National Resettlement Agencies (IRC, Lutheran Social Services, ECDC, Catholic Charities)
- Referred by a friend, family, neighbor or other nonprofit
- The families reach out directly (they receive our information from friends/family in the area) and complete an intake form requesting help from IROC

The majority of our families have a formal caseworker assigned through one of the below resettlement agencies. The resettlement agencies are contracted by the federal government to assist refugees during their initial resettlement in the United States, including enrolling in employment services, registering youth for school, applying for Social Security cards, and connecting them with necessary social or language services.



# How does the 'adoption' process work?

IROC will provide you with details on your assigned family, including:

- Name
- Address
- Phone Number
- Ages/Gender of Family Members
- Clothing and Shoe Sizes (if we have them)
- Immediate Needs of the Family



You will then reach out to the family and introduce yourself as an IROC volunteer who will be assisting them with clothing and household items, as needed.



# What do the families already have?

It depends....

Some families will be moved into homes by the resettlement agencies that are already furnished and stocked with basic essentials (beds, sofa, plates, pots and pans, linens)

Some families will be moved into homes by the resettlement agencies that have not been furnished at all

Some recently arrived Afghan families have opted to 'walk-off' the military bases where they have been awaiting resettlement, and have found housing on their own - generally with zero furniture

# What do families need?

In terms of material goods...

- Bed Linens
- Towels
- Plates/Bowls
- Glasses
- Utensils
- Pots and Pans
- Rice Cookers
- Pressure Cookers
- Toiletries
- Electric Tea Kettle
- Garbage Bags
- Feminine Hygiene Pads
- Diapers/Wipes
- Area Rugs
- Shoe Racks
- Microwaves
- Paper Towels
- Toilet Paper
- Sewing Machines
- Electric Razors
- Irons
- Juicer
- Cell Phones
- Laptops/Tablets
- TV Antenna's
- Visa/MC Gift Cards
- Uber Gift Cards

and much, much more...

# How do I do all of this alone??

The good news is, you don't have to!

Many adopters will put together an Amazon, Walmart or Target wishlist that they can share with family, friends, neighbors and colleagues.

Some adopters will work with their community to gather gently used items for their family

You will be AMAZED at how much your community and network will chip in to help, once they learn what you are doing.

We try to have items delivered to the families within two weeks of assignment (at least the most critical items)

# **What do the families need in terms of support?**

- Help with creating a resume/CV and their overall job search
- Help learning and navigating public transportation
- Help finding driving classes and passing the driver's license test
- Help finding resources such as food banks, diaper banks, thrift stores, and more
- Help finding doctors and dentists who will accept Medicaid, and help getting to those appointments
- Helping finding and enrolling in ESL classes
- Help understanding American customs, traditions and ways of doing business
- Help setting up wi-fi in their homes
- And much, much more...

Caseworkers will help with some of these things, but likely won't be able to help with most.



# Good Things to Know

- You are not obligated or expected to provide your family with anything you are not comfortable with or are unable to provide (ie. big ticket items). IROC has nonprofit partners who can help provide computers to the families. Items do not have to be new. If your adopted family does not want to accept gently used items, please let us know and we can match you with another family. They are not obligated to accept our help and we are not obligated to provide anything beyond our means.
- [www.irocenter.org/resources](http://www.irocenter.org/resources) is a great place to find information you can share with your family.
- Families only receive a few months of rental assistance (varies by resettlement agency) before they are expected to find work and pay on their own. **IROC does not provide rental assistance at this time.** Encouraging them to find employment as soon as possible is critical.
- Many of our families have at least one English speaker in the home. If they do not, we can connect you with a volunteer translator from our team who can help you with communications with the family.
- There is currently a backlog and delay at the federal level when it comes to issuing Work Permits, Social Security Numbers, Medicaid and Food Stamps (SNAP). We are aware of this issue, as are the resettlement agencies and case workers. Please let us know if you have a concern regarding any of these issues as they pertain to your adopted family.

# Other Considerations

- **You are welcome to reach out to your family's caseworker directly.** Your family will have their caseworker's contact information. It is advisable to have the family email a statement to their caseworker stating you are authorized to discuss details about their case on their behalf, before reaching out directly.
- You will be amazed at the power of your community. Don't be afraid to reach out to local businesses and faith groups for help. They have been some of our best resources and allies.
- Some families don't realize we are all volunteers, using our personal time and resources to assist them. Many are used to receiving aid from NGO's back home, and don't realize we do not receive government funding. Please feel free to remind/inform them of this, if necessary.
- Some families may state that they do not want to receive "used" items. When this happens, I kindly remind them that we are helping hundreds of new families, some of whom don't yet have food or beds to sleep in. Donated items are what we have available. If they would like to decline our assistance, they are welcome to do so. We have plenty of other families who welcome our help.
- We try to avoid duplication of efforts whenever possible, however, families will often reach out to multiple groups for assistance, unsure of who will actually deliver. If we are aware of other groups who may also be assisting your family, we will let you know. But often, we are not aware of who the family has reached out to.
- Families don't always know which groups they have reached out to for assistance. Some fill out our intake sheet based on recommendation from family and friends, but don't realize it was for "IROC." If they seem unaware, remind them of the intake form they completed, requesting help.

# **Considerations when working with families from certain cultures or religions**

- Physically touching, especially between genders, should be avoided (no hugs). Some families may be comfortable with handshakes. Please follow their lead.
- Placing your hand over your heart is an appropriate way to show gratitude
- Please do not wear shoes in their home (you will see most families have a shoe rack or space for shoes by the front door)
- Hospitality is big in many cultures - You will likely be invited in for tea or lunch. You are welcome to accept or decline based on your comfort level. Declining is not considered rude.
- Some families may be more traditional/conservative than others, please follow their lead when it comes to interactions with spouses and children
- Women may never admit or openly say that they are pregnant in front of men. This discussion should be done one on one among women.
- Men generally will not want to buy or transfer womens sanitary or undergarments. Womens items should be separated and handed to women by a woman, whenever possible
- Young unmarried women should not be left along with a male

Thank  
you!