

2023

# Good Neighbor Team Overview

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## What is a Good Neighbor Team

A Good Neighbor Team (GNT) is a small group of volunteers (usually 6-8) from a local church or organization that partners with World Relief to welcome and walk alongside a newly arrived refugee family. A GNT assists with practical resettlement tasks aimed at empowering the family to move towards self-sufficiency, while simultaneously building meaningful, long-lasting, and mutually enriching relationships.

By entering into a GNT agreement with World Relief, your team is committing to playing an integral part in the beginning of someone’s new life in the US, humbly guiding your new neighbors as they journey toward self-sufficiency. Through a relationship marked by a spirit of mutual edification, you can expect to learn stories of courage, resilience, and renewed hope, as well as see personal growth in yourself.

Your service is an opportunity to help people in vulnerable situations as you would wish to be helped; and, for Christians, it is an active response to the biblical command to care for people in need.

While you serve as a GNT, you will see discipleship breakthroughs and “aha” moments that bring transformation into the lives of everyone involved. And as your team tangibly follows Jesus by welcoming the stranger (Matthew 25), loving your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:27), and making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28), you will experience the Gospel lived, shared, and received in powerful ways.

*Thus says the Lord of hosts, render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart. —Zech. 7:9-10 ESV*

## Who are Refugees

Refugee is a legal term defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as, “Someone who has *fled their country* because of war, persecution, or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their race, religion, political opinion, national origin, or social group.”

More importantly, **refugees are survivors, leaders, and entrepreneurs who have so much to contribute to those of us who welcome and befriend them.** While refugees may have some significant needs as they first arrive and face the challenges of adjustment, they can be an incredible blessing to the community receiving them.

## Forming a Good Neighbor Team

One of the first activities for a GNT is to identify a Team Lead. This is someone who is able to commit to being available to provide ongoing support to their team and to be the point of contact for World Relief Staff.

Once you commit to forming a GNT, the Team Lead will collect the names and email address for each member and provide this list to the World Relief Staff. At this point, each member of the team who is not already a volunteer with World Relief, will fill out a World Relief volunteer application and submit a background check. Then, a World Relief Staff member will walk the newly formed team through the GNT pre-arrival training process.

When putting together your GNT, we highly recommend making sure that there is at least one time in the week that all team members are consistently available. This will enable the Team Lead and World Relief Staff to schedule regular team trainings and meetings. It is also valuable to *have at least one person on the team who has daytime availability and access to a vehicle* so that they can provide transportation to appointments, as needed. We also strongly recommend that you include a pastor/leader of your church or community group in this process, even if they are not part of the GNT.

## Time Commitment

*We ask for a six-month commitment with weekly visits to the refugee family.*

Weekly time commitments for each team member may vary throughout the Good Neighbor Team experience, depending on the number of team members and needs of the refugee family. **Generally, Good Neighbor Teams will volunteer more during the pre-arrival, arrival day, and early part of the resettlement period, as these involve more administrative tasks and specific appointments or services.**

## Phases of a GNT

**Pre-Arrival** is all about training and preparing for partnering with a family. You will fill out the World Relief volunteer application and meet as a team with a World Relief staff member to talk through logistics, communication, roles, and receive specific training. This time is capped by filling out and signing the GNT Agreement with a World Relief Staff Member, and being partnered with a family.

**Resettlement & Adjustment:** During this time, the GNT's primary role is to build a relationship with the family as they adjust. Typically, the first 30 days in Western NY are the most challenging for refugees as they adapt to a new culture and daily rhythms. Some teams may assist with tasks like securing a state ID, teaching the family where and how to buy groceries, how to use public transportation, or even how to greet someone in English. In addition to the as-needed conversations and talks, we will have three schedule check-ins throughout the six-month period: 1<sup>st</sup> month check-in with leader(s), 3<sup>rd</sup> month case update and check-in with the entire team, and a 6<sup>th</sup> month debrief & evaluation with the entire team.

## GNT Team Training

**Before you invest as a GNT in a relationship with a refugee family, World Relief wants to first invest in you. It is important to us that all team members feel ready and confident going into their Good Neighbor Team experience.**

To accomplish this, we provide four 90-minute, specialized, hands-on trainings for each GNT. These trainings can be in-person/online and at a time that works best for the GNT. Additionally, the first three trainings can be done together in a 4-hour "retreat." We will work with your GNT to schedule them for whenever/wherever works best for you.

**Training 1** covers the basic overview of World Relief, refugees, communication platforms, and GNTs. We will also take time to answer your specific questions.

**Training 2** focuses on cultural humility, trauma-informed care, and setting personal boundaries.

**Training 3** is all about helping without hurting. We talk about what poverty is and how we should respond to a variety of different situations.

**Training 4** is about getting you serving. We have a time of Q&A with World Relief Staff, will fill out your GNT Agreement, and will discuss next steps. The agreement includes basic biographical and contact information on the client(s), as well as several lists of tasks to be completed. The Team Lead and World Relief Staff will together assign responsibility for the tasks based on the availability, skills, and passions of the Good Neighbor Team. We treat the agreement as a tool to facilitate clear communication and establish responsibility for both the Good Neighbor Team and World Relief. It is not legally binding.

At the completion of the final training, the GNT will be ready to be matched with an arriving family. As our pipeline of incoming clients continually varies, it could take anywhere from a few days to several weeks before a successful match occurs. During this time, we encourage the GNT to confirm Volunteer Roles, create a Team Directory, and plan future meetings. Once a match is set, we recommend the GNT meet together day(s) before arrival to pray together and decide on next steps.

## Financial Commitment

We ask that each team partners with World Relief financially to support refugees and allow our organization to continue empowering the local church and community to welcome refugees. This commitment is not required and should never be a barrier to engaging as a Good Neighbor Team, but instead offers a great way to partner more effectively together.

## Next Steps

Once you have gathered some friends and decided a GNT is right for you, fill out and submit a GNT Interest Form to the World Relief WNY with the pertinent information for each member of your team. The GNT Interest Form is not a binding document, so you can submit it without committing to a GNT. Once you submit the GNT Interest Form, a member of the World Relief WNY staff will reach out to the Team Lead to set up a meeting to discuss what a GNT is and your next steps! While this meeting is being set-up, each member of the GNT can begin the individual World Relief volunteer onboarding.

## Individual Volunteer Onboarding

These onboarding steps are the same for every new World Relief Volunteer and should take around 1-hour in total to complete.

1. [Volunteer Application](#)
2. [US Program E-Learning Volunteer Orientation](#) – This 45 minute online training provides a general orientation to World Relief, key services we provide, and policies we have
3. Background Checks and Reference Checks

Appendix 1: GNT Timeline

# GOOD NEIGHBOR TEAM TIMELINE



## Appendix 2: Team Role Division

Many teams will divide responsibilities among members, ensuring everyone on the team gets involved and shares the workload. We find it best to assign a point person **to oversee each category that the Team agrees to help with. The point person would then assure completion of the task that the team commits to which falls under their category.** It is *not* the role of the point person to do everything in their assigned area.

Here is a list of some possible team roles:

**Team Lead** - The Team Lead's goal is to organize and coordinate the volunteer team so that they are available and effective in supporting the refugee family. The GNT Lead is the primary contact for World Relief.

**Transportation Coordinator** - The transportation coordinator's goal is to support the family by helping them navigate transportation options around the Rochester area, as the team is able.

**Community Orientation Coordinator** - The Community Orientation Coordinator's goal is to help the family feel welcomed and get acclimated to life in Western NY.

**Education Coordinator** - The Education Coordinator ensures the family is supported as they learn English or become more proficient in the language.

**Housing Coordinator** - The housing coordinator's goal is to assist the World Relief Staff in obtaining housing shortly after their placement with a family, along with helping the family navigate the relationship with their landlord and apartment.

**Employment Coordinator** - The Employment Coordinator assists employable adults in the refugee family get a job within the first few months of their arrival in the US: teach interview skills; help create a CV/resume; and help procure job-suitable clothing. Additionally, they assist the family in managing their finances: teaching them about credit, rental history, balancing cash/debt flows, and managing a bank account.



## Appendix 3: Keep in Mind

**Your time and friendship will mean more to your family than anything else you can give.** *You are their friend and neighbor, not their Case Manager.* GNTs best honor refugees when they come with hands that are both ready to serve and open to receive. Continually ask yourself, “Would I do this for a friend, or not?”

**Work With, Don’t Do For.** In all situations, remember that the family you are partnered with are resilient and intelligent. They want to become self-sustainable and learn how to live life in America. When they come across a problem, empower them to reach out to their Case Manager, figure out how to solve it, or work through it *with* them, making sure to show/talk through every step of the process.

**Avoid Assumptions.** With only a small amount of biographical information on the refugees, it is important that you avoid making assumptions about the family you are going to welcome. Be ready to love and support whoever steps off the airplane as you fulfill the role God has called you to play in the refugee family’s life. Additionally, we are not privy to the specific reasons why the family you are partnered with became refugees. This story may come up in conversations, however we don’t recommend that the topic is pushed. Be sensitive and allow your relationship to develop and dictate the pace of disclosure.

**Take time to breathe and pray.** The journey of a GNT can be challenging, but God has a plan for you and for this family. There will be bumps in the road, but we promise this adventure will be a rewarding one that will leave you with an abundance of stories and memories.

**You are not alone in this.** The staff at World Relief are here to facilitate the adjustment of the families, and are here to support your team to make sure your questions and concerns are addressed. At the end of the day, we all are learning from and teaching one another.



