

HEALTHCARE OVERVIEW



Newcomer's first contact with US healthcare will be at their initial health screening, but it is very likely that they will have follow ups, as well as need to learn how to navigate the confusing healthcare system. Part of the initial resettlement process includes setting up the newcomers with a Primary Care Physician who will continue to work with them.

OVERVIEW

- There are different types of care that newcomers can access. Educating them on these differences will help them make the best decision for what is needed as well as possibility save money and time. These are: Primary Care, Urgent Care, Emergency Care, Specialist Care, Dental, Vision.
- IDs and insurance cards are standard documents to have ready at all appointments. Let the newcomers know to always bring them. If they are establishing primary care, they should also bring any medical history documents they have. Check with World Relief for these if necessary.
- Let the newcomers know that it is normal if multiple appointments are required to address a medical concern.
- Talk through a transportation plan to and from the appointment with the newcomers.
- Explain healthcare confidentiality laws to the newcomers, ensuring that they understand it well. An example could be: "Healthcare is private by law. That means that no one can see your health information and records without your written permission. This even includes the government, employer, your friends, me, and not even your family. Only children under the age of 18 will have their information shared with their parents or legal caretakers."
- Volunteers should not ask for health details and records, make medical decisions, or give medical advice to newcomers.
- All appointments of minors must be accompanied by the parents or legal guardian.

PRIMARY CARE

Check with World Relief regarding establishing a primary care physician, as it may vary state to state. Volunteers are encouraged to advocate and help newcomers with this area as needed, and perhaps even doing some of the tasks, such as setting up appointments at the beginning. The ultimate goal is that the newcomers will be able to access healthcare independently. With that in mind, always include the newcomers in all steps along the way, encouraging them to make decisions for their needs.

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By law, clinics and hospitals must have interpretation services available for clients. Some practical things to consider when establishing primary care: location of the clinic and accessibility, insurance coverage, and personal preferences of the newcomers such as gender of their provider.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

All newcomers qualify for medical insurance through Medicaid for at least the first eight months upon their arrival. After that, insurance coverage may vary. It is important for newcomers to know that health insurance is often tied to employment in the US, as this may not be the case in other parts of the world. Once the adults in the household starts working, their health insurance will change. If needed, your team may speak to World Relief to learn more about health insurance guidelines, so that you can better help prepare the newcomers.

Dental and vision coverage are usually optional and limited. There may be local community programs that provide these services at a lower cost, especially for school age children.

PHARMACIES

- Help the family choose an accessible local pharmacy, usually one that is closest to their home.
- Even if there is not a need to pick up prescriptions at this time, visiting the pharmacy with the family and explaining the process might be helpful. How a prescription is given, how to pick it up, and how to refill.
- Explain over-the-counter medications and prescribed medications. Point out common items they might need such as pain relief medication, cough drops, cold/flu care, antibiotic creams, band-aids, anti-diarrhea medications, etc.

MENTAL HEALTH

In many parts of the world, even the US, mental health is stigmatized and often hard to talk about. In some countries and culture, diagnosis of a mental illness could mean being ostracized, publicly shamed, and perhaps even involve the government. While many refugees do experience mental health symptoms, it is important not to assume that is the case for the newcomer you are matched with. Your team can help support newcomers in terms of mental health by fostering positive community connections, reminding them of patient confidentiality and encouraging them to speak to their medical provider if they have questions or concerns.

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Should your team have concerns about a newcomer, but the newcomer is unwilling to share or speak to their physician about it, share these concerns with the World Relief staff and work together on how to best proceed.

REMEMBER TO

- Log your volunteer hours

KEEP IN MIND

Newcomers may arrive with varying levels of medical needs, and the first few months could have a lot of appointments. They may also not know that they are allowed to advocate and ask questions to their physician about their healthcare needs. Encourage them to dialogue and develop trust with their primary care.

Lastly, if you are transporting a newcomer to their appointment, you are not required to go into the actual appointment with the doctor.