

EMPLOYMENT MENTORSHIP



After the newcomers have arrived in the U.S. and all basic needs are met, the focus will shift to assist them in becoming self-sufficient. An important aspect of this will be employment.

EARLY EMPLOYMENT

Self-sufficiency, as it relates to employment, is the ability of an individual or family to financially cover all of their living costs. The ultimate objective is full-time, year-round employment with benefits. Ideally, every newcomer that is of age and employable, will be working within 3-6 months after arrival.

It is important to emphasize the difficulty of finding any job and therefore the importance of accepting a job when offered one. 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. In most cases, newcomers will begin their employment in the U.S. with entry level positions, often in service related or factory jobs. Job advancement is certainly a goal, but the first and foremost objective is early employment so that they will be able to start paying their bills and become as economically self-sufficient as possible.

The emphasis on self-sufficiency, especially economic independence, may be a challenge for newcomers and for your group. It is not uncommon to ask questions such as, “Why don’t newcomers receive more financial support? Why is their rent not paid for over a longer period of time? Why are they renting an apartment in a low-income area?”

Though these questions and the desire to do more are often driven by compassion, too much help can result in unhealthy relationship dynamics and setbacks to newcomer’s independence and integration.

Remember to ask yourself, “What could help the individual or family become more self-sufficient and support their long-term integration?” Encouraging the attainment of these goals will help them achieve long-term success. Once newcomers reach stability they are in a much better place to begin considering education or career goals.

Note: It is important to realize that some refugees can be selected for resettlement due to disabilities or health reasons. Those individuals may not be able to work and will need family and public assistance.

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UNDERSTAND THE REFUGEE'S BACKGROUND AND SKILLS

Sit down with the refugee to understand their education, work experience, skills, and aspirations.

Check-in with the WR office to see if there has already been a resume created for the newcomer. If not, use a questionnaire to gather key information like:

- Previous job experience (if any)
- Professional skills (technical, language, interpersonal)
- Educational background
- Preferred work sector or type of job
- Any certifications or licenses

BUILD A STRONG RESUME AND COVER LETTER

Help the individual create or update their resume and cover letter if they do not have one already.

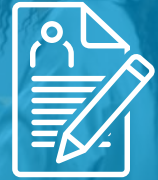
- Check out [Harvard College Resumes & Cover Letter Guide](#) if you do not have experience writing resumes, or try out Chat GPT and plug in their skills/interests and see what type of resume they build.

IDENTIFY BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Together, assess potential barriers the refugee may face in finding work. Below are some areas we commonly see as barriers you can work on with your friend,

- Language barrier: Determine if language skills are a barrier, if so consider working on English skills together.
- Cultural differences: Understand if cultural adaptation might be a concern. If so, consider a brief employment orientation.
- Work permits: Most refugees should already have their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) but sometimes we've seen job placement success for individuals with an EAD and state ID. Ask if they'd like to get this, or if they've seen this as a request from prospective employers.
- Transport/Logistics: Help talk through transportation needs and work to understand the commute distance of jobs they're interested in.

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JOB SEARCH AND NETWORKING

- Research potential job opportunities, using online job boards (LinkedIn, Indeed), local staffing agencies, and company websites.
- Guide them to create a LinkedIn profile or use other relevant professional networks.
- Encourage networking: Help the refugee connect with individuals who can offer advice, mentorship, or job leads.

APPLY FOR JOBS

Assist with filling out job applications and submitting resumes.

- Check in on your companion to ensure applications are complete and submitted on time.
- Ask if there are any questions they have when it comes to applying for a job.
- Ask if there are any jobs they recently applied to that they're excited about.

PREPARE FOR INTERVIEWS

- Conduct mock interviews to practice common questions and responses.
- Provide guidance on interview etiquette (e.g., dress code, punctuality, body language).
- Offer tips on explaining gaps in employment or challenges related to the refugee's background.
- Practice English together!

FOLLOW UP AND ENCOURAGE - STAY IN TOUCH

- Encourage the individual to follow up on job applications and interviews with polite emails or phone calls.
- Be a source of encouragement and a listening ear.
- Celebrate small wins along the way, such as successful applications or interviews.

CELEBRATE SUCCESS

- Once the refugee secures a job, celebrate the achievement with them!
- Provide guidance on job transition, understanding the new work culture, and preparing for the first day.
- If necessary, assist with initial challenges on the job (e.g., communication issues, transportation, or adjusting to the new environment).

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES IN AUSTIN



TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Research employment programs in the area that might offer employment programming to aid the individual and your group. Consult with WR to determine which employment service will be best for the newcomers.

Here are some employment resources that are in the Austin area:

- Department of Social Services Employment Programs
- Temp Agencies
- Texas Workforce Commission
- Global Impact Initiative Bazaars and Job Fairs
- Job Seeker Networks
- ONIN Staffing

KEEP IN MIND

Employment will be an ongoing part of the resettlement and integration process. The first step is to recognize the importance of early employment and placement in their first job. Your support and connections will be very valuable.

REMEMBER TO

- Log your volunteer hours in your Volunteer Portal