

**Every Campus a
Refuge at Clemson**

**Volunteer
Information Packet**

Adapted from ECAR at Guilford

Updated on Jul 20, 2023

What is Every Campus a Refuge?

What is Every Campus A Refuge (ECAR)?

ECAR is a higher-education initiative founded in 2015 at Guilford College in NC. Its mission is to partner every U.S. higher education institution with local refugee resettlement agencies as co-sponsors to host refugees on campuses and support their resettlement. Its vision is to transform the landscape of refugee resettlement and higher education by creating thousands of sustainable resettlement campus ecosystems. ECAR's primary goals are to:

- 1) Leverage existing material and human resources at colleges and universities to provide welcome, resettlement, and integration support for refugees
- 2) Provide powerful opportunities for community engagement and service learning for higher education institutions and transform U.S. students' place-based and experiential learning practices. Student volunteers gain practical experience and learn ethical ways to collaborate with refugee neighbors, co-creators, and partners in resettlement, integration, and community building.

What makes colleges and universities especially well-suited to host refugees?

Campuses are like cities with everything necessary to welcome a refugee family and support their integration: housing, facilities, human resources, expertise in many areas, and a built-in cohesive community of welcome. ECAR has been adopted by public and private colleges and universities hosting 200+ refugees.

How does ECAR work, and what are its current activities?

The university partners with a local refugee resettlement agency. The resettlement agency assigns a family to the university but remains responsible for overseeing the interaction. ECAR at Clemson has partnered with Lutheran Services Carolina, our local resettlement agency. Each organization is separate, but we have conjoined forces to create a partnership. This partnership has made our work with resettled families possible.

Tips for Cross-Cultural Communication

- SLOW DOWN. Speak clearly and enunciate.
 - Avoid phrases with both positive and negative language (e.g., “No, I’m good”)
 - Avoid “negative” questions (instead of “Are you not hungry?” ask “Are you hungry?”)
 - Speak simply and straightforwardly
 - Avoid slang
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- If you are unsure they understand, write the word down, find an alternate word, or use google translate to look up English words they don’t understand in their preferred language.
 - Be supportive and encouraging to help build confidence and trust.
 - Check often they understand what you are saying. Summarize what has been discussed after the conversation.
 - Be mindful of humor (it could be confusing or insulting).
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SOME TOOLS/APPS FOR LANGUAGE

- **Tarjimly**: A free volunteer-based app giving access to live interpreters
- **Google Translate**: another free option (app or online) for basic translation

The Refugee's Journey to America

Definition of a Refugee

The U.S. Refugee Act of 1980 adopted the United Nations' definition of a refugee as “a person with a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.”



Flees country of origin to a relatively safe neighboring country or refugee camp

Apply to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for protection. Apply for permanent resettlement in a resettlement country where the UNHCR makes sure you qualify as a refugee.

Wait for an overseas Processing Entity (an agency contracted with the Department of State Bureau of Population and Migration) to prepare a case file

Interview with the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration services to demonstrate you qualify as a refugee.

Receives a medical examination and basic cultural orientation to the U.S.

If you qualify your application becomes a “case” and is assigned to a national agency such as Church World Service.

Leave country of asylum and arrive at the airport, being met by staff from the local agency and welcome them to North Carolina.

More Important Definitions

Definitions adapted from Dr. Diya Abdo's *American Refuge: True Stories of the Refugee Experience* (2022), pp 126-135.

Refugee: As a legal term, it refers to a person recognized by the UN and/or a State as unable to return to their country of origin for fear of losing their life and, therefore, “requires” international protection. This legal definition is crucial because it translates to “legal” status, especially when resettling refugees. The UNHCR and UNRWA definitions of refugees suggest a kind of interminability. Once you are a refugee (made so by the impossibility of return), should that one condition of non-refoulement remain present, you are always, in a sense, a refugee.

Displaced: Someone who has been forced to leave their home for whatever reason. There are more than 82.4 million forcibly displaced individuals in the world today. This number never stops increasing.

Asylum seeker: Legally speaking, a refugee in the making. A refugee is recognized as such and can enjoy international protection and assistance because their plight has been documented and registered or acknowledged by the international community as a refugee. An asylum seeker is exercising their human right to seek safety and asylum. They must make their case - that their life hangs in the balance unless they are taken in.

Migrant: Migrants sometimes move without incident. They choose to move rather than being forced to move. Choice and force, however, are not objective concepts. One does not choose poverty; one does not choose climate disasters that burn towns; one does not choose a burning love for literature or astrophysics that cannot be quenched within a country's borders. One does not choose to love a person who has left and now expects the beloved to follow; one does not choose the businesses and corporations that flatten the country's resources and leave its people empty-handed. What is crucial here is the ability to return. Even if you are forced to move for one of those reasons, what makes you a migrant is that the return to your country does not carry the same danger, the same fear for life and freedom. This is why migrants are

not eligible for the same kinds of international protections afforded to refugees, especially with regard to admission, settlement, and resettlement in other countries.

Immigrant: a migrant who has stayed. As we can see, there is a common thread - a migrating body is on the move because it does not have everything it needs where it is: resources, community, opportunities, and a future.

Expatriate: White immigrants. Immigrants are brown and black bodies moving into white spaces. Expatriates are white bodies moving into black and brown spaces. Expatriates are ideologically conceptualized as those who bring with them good things, and prestige, to their new home. Immigrants are ideologically conceptualized as those who need things from their new homes. Neither of these ideological conceptualizations is objective, transparent, or true.

Undocumented: In the American context, the term refers to an individual who has entered the US through either legal means (some kind of visa) or “illegal” means (crossing borders without presenting oneself to authorities to seek asylum) and does not currently have the necessary paperwork to allow them to remain in the country. There are eleven million “undocumented” individuals in the US. It is essential to note the problematic usage of the term. Not until recently (since the early twentieth century) could a person be any other immigrant. All bodies on the move were “undocumented.”

Resettlement: [? shall we add a note about less than 1 percent of refugees get resettled etc? From 133)

Empowerment in Action

Definition of Empowerment

“The process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.”

Basic Tenants of the Empowerment Model

- All services are tied to self-sufficiency; they are deliberate and progressive.
- The least intrusive path to service delivery is followed at all times
- Refugees are individuals who demand respect and autonomy; their lives, decisions, and personal information are theirs alone.

Empowerment in Action

Every interaction with a newcomer is a learning experience for them. In every action, we must ask ourselves, “How can I perform this task in a way that empowers them to do it for themselves next time?” Swap the common “helping” actions below for ones that will instead move refugees closer to self-sufficiency.

HELPING (ENABLING)	EMPOWERING
Driving someone to a medical appointment	Teaching the family how to take the bus to their medical appointment
Calling the children’s school to schedule a parent/teacher conference	Having the parent call to make the appointment on their own while you stand by to help. Practice through role playing telephone calls, writing out note cards or helping them find a neighbor who can assist until their English improves.
Sorting through the family’s mail, tossing out the unimportant things	Make a list for the family of what items are important. Keep samples of the utility bill, letters from the school, etc.
Agreeing to do things for someone who has asked for help because they “can’t” do it on their own	Make “Yes, you can” your #1 most often used phrase. Teach your refugee friends how to ask for help in a way that is self-empowering. Every ask for help should start with “how” (as in “how do I write a check?”) instead of “can” (“can you write this check for me?”)

Case Notes/Volunteer Reports Are Essential

One of the most important contributions you can make to refugee resettlement is **documenting your work by creating a case note**. Whether you are taking a client to an appointment or simply visiting a family in their apartment, you should create a case note to ensure official documentation of your services. We've found that the best notes are created within 24 hours of service delivery, so you remember all the meeting details.

There are two ways in which you should track your volunteering. You should track your volunteer hours for Lutheran Services Carolinas (our partner organization and local resettlement agency) and Every Campus a Refuge. ECAR acts as a community partner to LSC, but each is a separate organization, which is why volunteers must track their volunteer hours for both organizations by filling out two forms. Tracking your hours with LSC helps raise funds and support for their clients, such as through matching grant programs. You should also track your hours for ECAR. Our funding and sustainability as an organization depend upon it!

Creating a case note and tracking your hours is easy! All you need to do is:

- Fill out the Lutheran Services Carolinas (LSC) Volunteer Tracker Form: <https://form.jotform.com/221083995571160>.
- Fill out the ECAR at Clemson Volunteer Case Notes Report Form: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdqy2uu0M9GehOqN-8-gnTKYidBVxGursYr9pZLdHo2dSj2iQ/viewform?usp=sharing>.

Frequently Asked Questions

How can we build trust and acknowledge migration-related trauma with the people we serve?

It's important to acknowledge that every individual you work with has garnered unique life experiences. Work to eliminate any implicit biases you may carry in order to see them for who they are: a person with strengths and passions, **not defined by their demographics or trauma**. Honor their dignity and respect their culture. There is no need to be afraid of asking them to share their experiences with the understanding that they have the ability to withhold whatever information they aren't comfortable sharing. Take on the position of a learner and express curiosity about their culture and way of life (beyond their traumatic experiences). Seize every opportunity to remind them they are powerful and help them build up their own sense of self-efficacy.

Practical Example: If you're working with an EAL learner, ask them to bring one of their favorite recipes to your next meeting and to explain how to make the dish in English!

How should I handle communication across a language barrier?

Communication can be challenging when you and the person you are working with don't share a first language, but it's not impossible! Sometimes we make judgments and assumptions about accents and linguistic proficiency. Before you begin working directly with refugees, take a few moments to reflect on your unconscious biases.

- Make a consistent effort to challenge your biases and keep an open mind during conversations with others.
- Be understanding and encouraging! Create a space where the person you're working with feels comfortable making linguistic mistakes by admitting and correcting your own mistakes. If it takes the individual you're working with to grasp a concept or share their thoughts, wait patiently. By not jumping in too quickly, you give them the time and the space they need to learn.
- If you are working with someone on EAL, don't be afraid to correct them (gently)! Be conscious of the way you're doing so.

- If you can't get the point across, don't hesitate to use non-verbal communication or even Google Translate!
- **Celebrate successes in communication!**

Practical Example: Express an interest in the language(s) your partner speaks. Ask how to say some English words you are working on in their native language.

What if I experience compassion fatigue and burnout?

There is an important distinction between compassion fatigue and burnout. When you are experiencing compassion fatigue, you are tired, but not so tired as not to be rejuvenated by a break. Burnout, however, often translates to apathy. If you are experiencing burnout, it is important that you make changes to your work habits. Find ways to make time to take care of your mental and physical health throughout the work week. Needing time away from work or the community you work with doesn't mean you aren't passionate or don't care deeply about either. Small breaks will allow you to work more effectively in the long run.

Practical Example: Use the reflection prompt in the ECAR volunteer report form to write about what you learned from a tutoring session or volunteering experience. Don't be afraid to consider both challenges and positive outcomes.

How do I show interest in people and their stories without crossing boundaries that make them uncomfortable?

Practice active listening! Invest in developing a relationship with the people/person you work with, and when challenging topics naturally come up in conversation, make sure they know you are happy to listen. Always express curiosity about who a person is and the way they live their life, and if they seem like they might be open to sharing about their past experiences, don't be afraid to ask with the understanding that they might not be willing to share. You already practice the skills required to listen well and display care for others in your everyday life. Don't be afraid to flex them while working with refugees. Finally, remember to give yourself grace when you feel you have misstepped.

THANK YOU!

We are delighted to extend our heartfelt appreciation to each and every one of you for generously dedicating your time and effort to volunteer for Every Campus a Refuge at Clemson University. Your commitment to making a difference in the lives of refugees and resettled families is commendable, and we are incredibly grateful for your involvement in this national initiative.

Your decision to participate in this noble cause demonstrates your compassionate spirit and genuine concern for those displaced from their homes and communities. Extending a warm welcome and providing essential support and resources creates an environment of compassion, understanding, and empowerment for these individuals and families. Your contributions will make a meaningful impact on the lives of the refugees and resettled families and foster a sense of unity and inclusivity within our campus community.

We recognize that volunteering requires significant time and energy, and we are truly grateful for your willingness to invest these precious resources. Your efforts will undoubtedly impact the lives of the individuals you engage with and the broader community. Your actions offer practical support and convey a powerful message of solidarity and compassion.

As we embark on this journey together, we assure you that your dedication does not go unnoticed. Your involvement will transform the lives of the refugees and resettled families and provide you with a rich and rewarding experience that will stay with you for a lifetime.

Once again, we extend our deepest gratitude for your commitment and selflessness. Thank you for being the driving force behind this remarkable initiative and for embodying the values of Every Campus a Refuge at Clemson University.

Check Out Our Website, Follow Us On Social Media, & Contact Us!



We will update the link soon!



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Join our Volunteer Listserv if you haven't already:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1XvXeTzMer68ReaGAsQc0KNKV4oiXXyLFsgeEsaxc6X0/edit?usp=sharing>