

VAUMC Refugee Response

A resource to help Afghanistan Allies October Release

After the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan and the subsequent evacuation of a number of Afghan allies from Kabul, the Virginia Conference started a Refugee Response Team (RRT) to lead the conference's effort to assist in the resettlement of our new neighbors. The Refugee Response Team is here to educate and connect churches to the heart of Jesus who also was a refugee. The RRT is meeting every other week to find ways to provide resources as churches respond to the needs of Afghan refugees in their community. Because of the large numbers and staggered arrival of Afghan allies the belief is that churches will need to be involved for the long haul.

As Afghan allies are resettled in Virginia communities over the coming months and years consistent support to help them transition will be necessary. We understand that this has and will lead to many questions about the Afghans who are arriving and how to get involved in assisting them. We hope the following information is the most up-to-date information the RRT has and we hope it will help churches discern how to get involved. The RRT will do its best to keep accurate and up-to-date information available so churches are best equipped to serve refugees in their communities.

Understanding the SIV (Special Immigrant Visa) and Resettlement Process

1. Understanding the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV)

The US Government has established Operation Allies Welcome to help bring these Afghan immigrants to the United States. Afghan immigrants all face extensive background checks. For many of the SIV recipients, the checks were not completed before they were evacuated from Afghanistan and the process has continued at U.S. bases in the US and overseas. Immigrants are also undergoing medical exams, including screening and vaccinations for COVID and other communicable diseases. Once immigrants leave these bases, Resettlement Agencies, under contract to the State Department, will work to settle these newcomers into communities. The information below also describes other visas provided to some Afghans such as Priority 2 and Humanitarian Parolee.

Additional Resources

- [Operation Allies Welcome](#)
- [Department of State, Understanding Special Immigrant Visas \(SIV\)](#)

- [Department of State, Priority 2 Designation of Afghan](#)
- [Understanding Humanitarian Parole](#)
- [Understanding agencies involved in resettlement](#)



2. Understanding Resettlement Process

Afghan Allies who fled from their homeland need to go through a certain Resettlement process. VAUMC RRT has identified three stages of resettlement.


- 1. Stage 1. Screening** - As mentioned above, the S.I.V. and humanitarian parolee allies are staged at a U.S. military base for continued screening. For refugees that have arrived in Virginia, there are three bases that are hosting them until they are resettled: Fort Lee (1,700), Fort Pickett (5,900), and Marine Corps Base Quantico(3,700).
- 2. Stage 2. Temporary Settlement** - After going through the screening process, allies will be assigned to a resettlement agency and a caseworker. They will be housed in temporary housing, such as hotels or AirBnBs until a permanent settlement is secured.
- 3. Stage 3. Permanent Settlement** - As soon as affordable housing is available, they will be sent to permanent housing, as they establish grounds to integrate into the society.

Resettlement Process for Afghan Allies

How can the church help?

	
Stage 1 - Screening	
Screening mainly happens on U.S. Military bases, where the allies will be screened and process for their S.I.V	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donations of cloths • Volunteering sorting donations • Volunteering programs
Stage 2 - Temporary	
Allies will be assigned to resettlement agencies, where they are staged in temporary housing (Hotels, Air BnB).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with Resettlement agencies • Donation for temporary housing costs
Stage 3 - Permanent	
When housing is identified, allies will be moved to permanent communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donation of house • Donation for settlement (i.e. furniture, etc.) • Sponsor a family • Commit to long-term support

<https://vaumc.org/refugeeresponse/>



What can the church do?

The RRT believes the church's role will be essential in helping the Afghan Allies to resettle in this country, as our new neighbors.

1. **Pray** - Churches are asked to join in prayer for these families, who lost their nation, home, and were forced to abandon everything to merely survive. The work of compassion starts with prayer and should continue for the long haul.
2. **Educate** - Churches can start the process of understanding the reason why helping these families is important. Faith communities can also help the community at large to understand that these are allies who helped us. It is also important to help faith communities remember that the Bible calls for God's followers to reach out to the least and remind members how Jesus was once a refugee in Egypt.
3. **Connect** - Connect with groups and agencies who are helping in this resettlement process. Churches can also connect with representatives of the Virginia Conference, who can connect you with the agencies. You are encouraged to connect with other churches to unite in the effort to support Afghan allies.

Church's response to each stage

Stage 1. Screening

1. **In-kind Donations** - Churches are asked to join the effort to provide winter clothes for the families. VAUMC RRT has identified and partnered with [Team Rubicon](#) in their donation list. Each list identifies needs that are particular for each base, including winter clothing.

Amazon wish list for Quantico - [Check out my list on Amazon](#)

Amazon wish list for Fort Pickett - [Check out my list on Amazon](#)

An Amazon wish list is now being created for Fort Lee.

2. **Volunteering** - RRT is appointing representatives who will lead the effort of volunteer coordination with Team Rubicon. If your church is near the following three U.S. Bases please contact our representative and join in the effort to volunteer.
 - a. Fort Pickett - Crenshaw UMC, [Rev. Nadeem Khokhar](#)
 - b. Fort Lee - Blandford UMC
 - c. Marine Base in Quantico - Ebenezer UMC, [Amy Miller](#) Director of Missions and Outreach

Stage 2. Temporary Settlement

During this stage, the resettlement agencies are in need of monetary donations. The donations are used to cover the cost involved in temporary settlements, such as hotels and AirBnBs. The links below also provide info on family sponsorship and other opportunities to help.

- 1. UMCOR Global Migration Advance Special** - Sending your offerings to UMCOR or the Conference Center will directly support the resettlement effort for [Christian World Service](#). Click this [link to give online](#). CWS is also directly involved in resettling families in the Harrisonburg area.
- 2. NOVA area churches: Lutheran Social Service of the National Capital Area** - LSSNCA who is currently supporting around 1,000 S.I.Vs and Parolees. To give directly to LSSNCA, [use this link](#) and select Refugee Resettlement and Immigration (RIS). **Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC)** To give directly to ECDC use [this link](#) or to help co-sponsor a family with ECDC you can find more information at <https://www.ecdcus.org/community-sponsorship/>. **Catholic Charities, Diocese of Arlington's** [Amazon wish list](#) is and [a flyer](#) for other ways to help CCDA with Afghan Allies
- 3. Richmond, Roanoke, Newport News area: Commonwealth Catholic Charities** - CCC provides extensive support in the three areas. You may [donate or use the Amazon wish list](#) to help in this effort. Other ways to help from helping to furnish an apartment to donating a car can [be found here](#). **Richmond, Charlottesville area: International Rescue Committee:** IRC directly supports the resettlement process in the Richmond and Charlottesville area. You can find more information on their work and ways to be involved at <https://www.rescue.org/announcement/how-help-afghan-evacuees-virginia>. To give directly to IRC use [this link](#). To help sponsor a family, use [this link](#)- or to volunteer to assist with apartment set-up, transportation, and administrative support using [this link](#).

Stage 3. Permanent Settlement

RRT believes that this stage is when the church can truly shine in their love to share the hope, as the family resettles in this community. RRT is identifying district-level Refugee Response representatives who will coordinate the district's effort with the partnership of the resettlement agencies.

1. NoVA District Representative - [Sarah Casey](#), Director of Serve Ministries at Floris UMC
2. Richmond District Representative (TBD)
3. Charlottesville District Representative (TBD)
4. Roanoke District Representative - [Rev. Morris Fleischer](#)
5. Newport News District Representative - (TBD)
6. Harrisonburg District Representative - (TBD)

Connect with RRT

Connect with RRT to help continue its efforts to resource the churches in the process of resettlement. [Email Serving Ministries](#) for more information!

Or join the Refugee Response Resource Google Group to receive regular updates! Fill out [this form](#) to join this group!