

# Abstract Partners at North Side CYO Refugee Services

## Refugee Communities in Syracuse, NY: Refugee Resettlement Process In the United States and Barriers to Resettlement

Furahini Bahati

Onondaga County Health Department, Catholic Charities CYO

### Introduction

The goal of the resettlement process is to assist refugees in becoming economically self-sufficient as soon as possible.

#### Before a Refugee Enters the USA:

- Find shelter in neighboring countries/camps
- Interview with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – if approved:
  - Referral to resettlement in a third country (USA)
  - Security screenings
- In-person interview(s) with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) – if approved:
  - Medical screening
  - Orientation
  - Match refugee with a sponsor agency
  - Departure

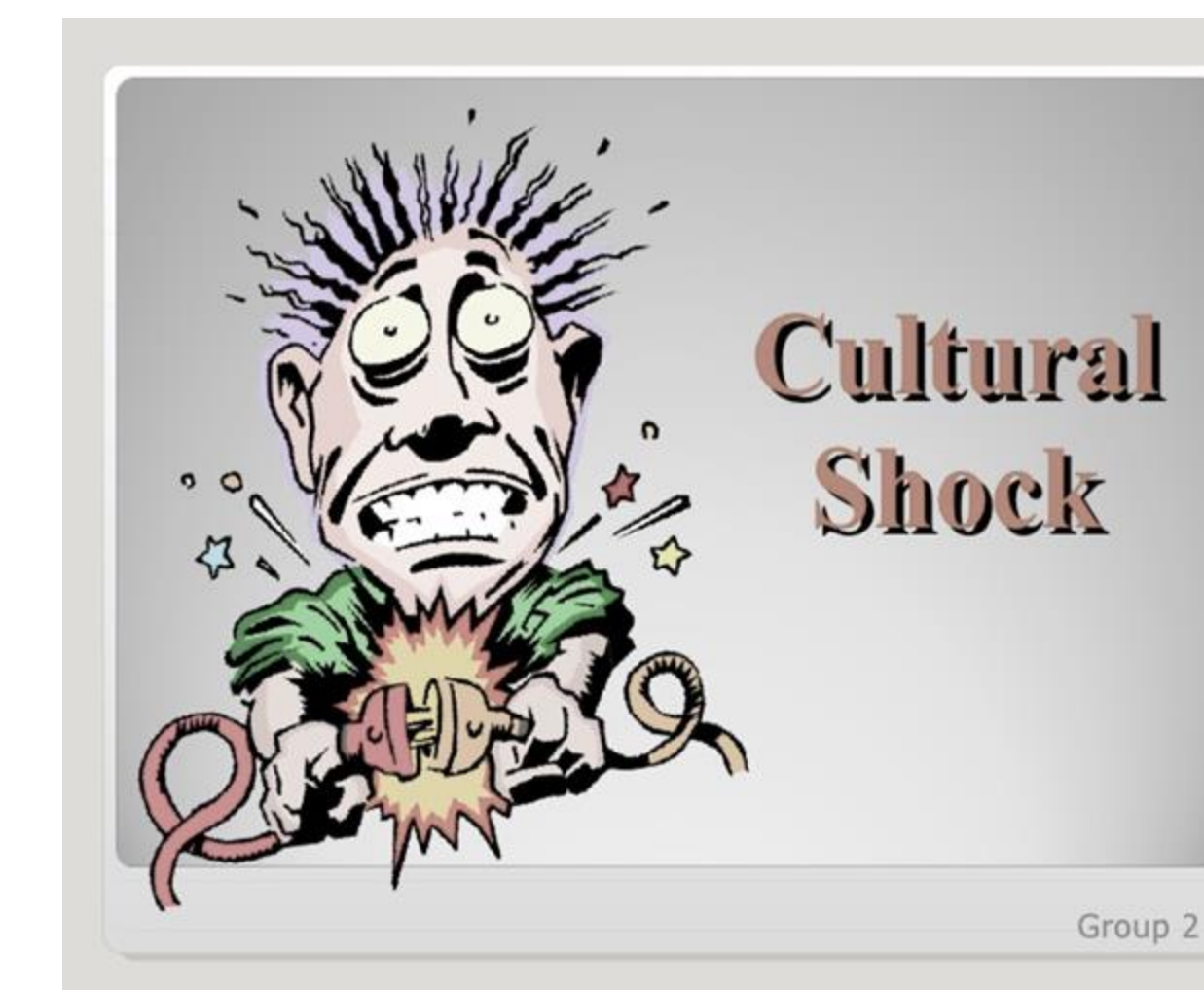
#### After Approval:

- Once refugees have been cleared for resettlement, each refugee/family are assigned to one of nine voluntary agencies (VOLAGs) to implement the refugee resettlement process.
- The voluntary agencies assign refugees to their local "affiliates".
- The organization assigns a case worker for each refugee/family to assist them upon arrival and up to 90 days. The family will also be assigned a health navigator who will continue working with them up to one year from their arrival.
- Upon arrival
  - VOLAGs must ensure that a refugee's basic needs are met – for a minimum of 30 days after arrival in the United States.



### Funds for Refugee Resettlement

- Welcome Money
  - A federal grant must be spent on refugees behalf upon arrival
- Some of the federal welfare programs include the following:
  - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
  - Medicaid
  - Food Stamps (SNAP)
  - Public Housing
  - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
  - Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- State and local welfare programs include but are not limited to:
  - English as a Second Language programs
  - Special education programs
  - Job training and employment search assistance
  - Immigration assistance programs (aiding in filing green card applications, citizenship applications, and petitions for relatives to immigrate to the U.S.)



### Language

- The language barrier makes it harder for refugees to find work and get an education.
- Also, it leaves them vulnerable to understand the legal system in the new country.

### Housing

- Finding safe, decent and affordable housing can be challenging
- Most refugees end up living in substandard housing
- Persons with disabilities face difficulty obtaining accessible housing
- Refugees do not report housing law violations
- Landlords face challenges

### Employment

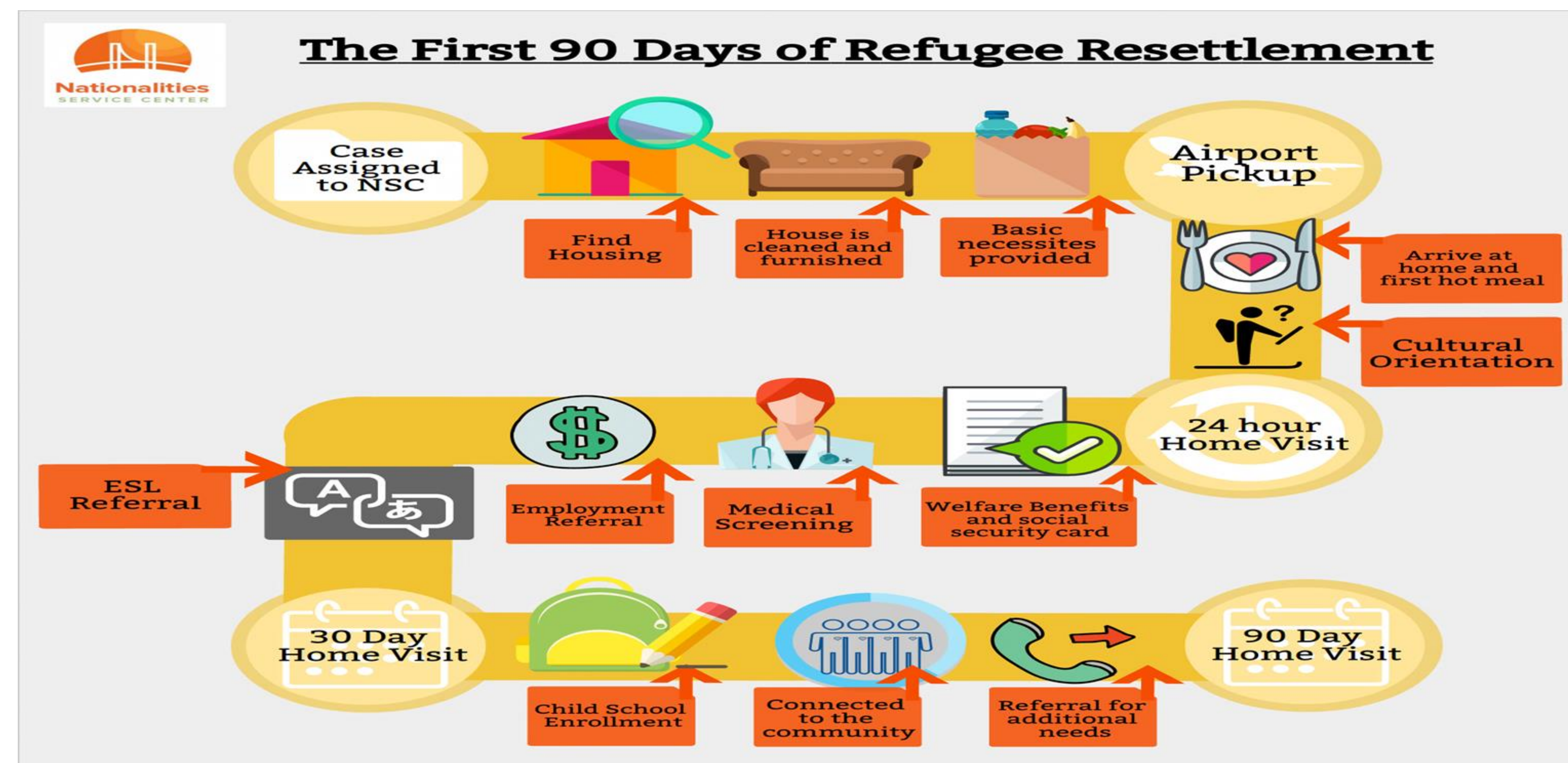
- Refugees are often unable to achieve the same career. Most refugees take whatever jobs that are available - lowest paid and least desirable. Finding an entry-level job can be incredibly difficult.
- Refugees can be easy victims for discrimination and exploitation. Employers face difficulties hiring refugees.
- According to the Center for Immigration Studies Fact Sheet on Refugees Resettlement in November 2015, the employment rates of refugee men in the 2009-2010 period exceeded those of their U.S.-born counterparts: 67 percent for refugee men vs. 60 percent for U.S.-born men. For women, the rate is similar for both categories: more than half work (54 percent).

### Resettlement Program Services at Catholic Charities CYO

- Before arrival:
  - Apartment set up (deposit, utilities, furniture, etc.)
- Airport pick up
- Cultural and Safety Orientation
- C.Y.O's role and responsibilities
  - Personal and public safety
  - Transportation
  - Hygiene standards
  - The importance of learning English
  - Personal finance
  - Travel loan repayment
  - Family reunification procedures
  - Citizenship
  - Benefit, social security, and health insurance applications
  - Medical evaluation & medical appointments
  - School registration (adults and children)
- Parenting classes: Educate clients on how to receive services and how to deal with children
- Support groups
- Employment services (RSSP – MG)
  - Resume
  - Job application assistance
  - Interview prep
  - New hire paperwork assistance
  - Transportation
  - Training
- Vocational trainings – require varying levels of English and often payments
- Legal Assistance
- Interpretation
- Adjustment of status applications



### The First 90 Days of Refugee Resettlement



### Primary Barriers

- Refugees face numerous challenges in the U.S.
  - Language
  - Culture shock
  - Education
  - Transportation
  - Accessing Services
  - Discrimination
  - Housing
  - Employment
- These factors can prolong the process of achieving their initial goals.
- New refugees wish to attain housing and jobs.



### Impact of Covid-19 on Refugees

- Living conditions and personal circumstances
- Work circumstances
- Underlying medical conditions and lower access to care

### Adjustment of Status

- Refugees get a work authorization card upon arrival
- Can apply for Permanent Resident Alien (PRA) status after they have been in the United States for one year. Four years later comes the citizenship application
- After the application, they go through a security screening
- Religion, race, nationality, and other factors can slow the process of adjustment
- Syrian refugees go through additional security screenings

### Solution to Challenges

- Creating job training programs and providing valuable information about job opportunities.
- Improving refugees' access to education.
- Decrease barriers that limit refugees access to healthcare such as language barrier by providing a medical interpreter and reduce institutional discrimination.
- All immigrants should be welcomed with love and without racism regardless of their country of origin or religion.
- Re-uniting formerly separated families. This allows easy transition of the refugees into their new community.

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