

# **18 Things You Need to Know About Resettling in the United States**

## ***Welcome to the United States!***

*This document was prepared to assist you in adjusting to your new life in the United States. Professional staff from non-profit resettlement agencies across the U.S. collaborated to identify key points on issues of primary concern to refugees and beneficiaries of Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) who have already been resettled. These suggestions were then collated by the Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration as a tool to help inform you about the many new experiences you will encounter as you resettle in your new home.*

### **Reception and Placement (R&P) Benefits and Other Assistance**

- 1) Your resettlement agency and its federal and local government partners have limited resources to meet your immediate basic needs upon arrival. The amount of resources available to you will depend on a variety of factors. Early employment and wise budgeting of money are crucial for your early self-sufficiency.
- 2) The cost of living and availability of public support varies throughout the U.S. The assistance that is provided to you will not be equivalent from one place to another. If your friends in one U.S. location tell you they are receiving certain benefits, this does not mean that you will receive the same benefits.
- 3) The Washington, DC metro area and some cities in California are very expensive places to live and it is difficult to find housing and employment. The resettlement benefits you receive there may not comfortably cover the cost of living in these areas. If you are making your own travel arrangements, unless you have strong ties (immediate family or very close friends who can assist you in paying for housing) in these locations, it may be best to travel to a different location in the U.S. If IOM is making your travel arrangements, it may be best to allow a resettlement agency to choose a more suitable location for you.
- 4) After arrival in the U.S., moving to another location may affect your resettlement benefits, as will refusing to go to your assigned U.S. destination. The resettlement agency in the new location may not be able to provide the same level of services and/or cash assistance. Before planning to relocate, be sure to discuss the idea with your resettlement agency.
- 5) There is no preferential treatment for SIV beneficiaries or refugees who worked for or were associated with the U.S. Government. Eligibility for resettlement benefits and services is not affected by nationality, race, religion, or gender.
- 6) You do not need to pay anyone - friends, relatives, or any agency - to sponsor you in the U.S.
- 7) You will begin to repay your IOM travel loan within six months of your arrival in the U.S.

## **Employment**

- 8) The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is designed to assist you with basic needs during your initial weeks in the United States. Finding employment will be one of your first goals when you arrive. It is important for you and your family members to learn English (if you are not already fluent), but it is equally important to accept the first job that becomes available. Being in a workplace provides an excellent opportunity to practice speaking English. The sooner you begin working, the sooner you will be able to pay your own living expenses. Many families find that both the husband and wife must work in order for the family to become economically self-sufficient.
- 9) You will be referred to an employment program and assisted with finding a job no matter where you are resettled.
- 10) It may take longer than you expect to find a job. Also, full-time or permanent positions may be harder to obtain at first.
- 11) Your first job in the U.S. will probably not be in the same profession or field as your job back home. Previous employment with the U.S. military or government does not guarantee any job in the U.S. Your first job may be an entry level non-professional job, and may even be temporary or part-time. You may eventually find a job in your field after you establish a work history in the U.S., gain proficiency in the English language, and obtain any required recertification or training. Until then, entry level employment is the best way to learn about the American workplace and build experience that will be appreciated by employers in future jobs.

## **Housing, Clothing, and Furnishings**

- 12) The initial assistance you receive for housing, household supplies, and furniture is very basic. Many items such as clothing and furniture may be used, secondhand, or very inexpensive, but all items provided will be clean and hygienic.
- 13) The U.S. Government requires the resettlement agencies to provide basic household goods and furnishings. This does NOT include luxury items such as: TVs, radios, telephones, DVD players, computers, vacuums, bicycles, cars, or air conditioners. These items may be available if the agency receives them as donations from other sources.
- 14) Apartments are the most accessible and affordable form of housing for many Americans, and this is what you should expect for your first home in the U.S. Single individuals may be placed with one or more other single people of the same gender to better afford living expenses. If you choose to do so, and respecting any lease agreement you may have signed, you may move after you start working and can afford the housing of your choice.

## **Health Care**

- 15) Public health care coverage is limited; dental or eye care may not be covered. It may take weeks to see a doctor for a routine appointment, although critical health needs will be met in a timely manner. Once you become employed and can purchase private medical insurance, your health care options will increase.

- 16) There is no stigma attached to mental health or psychosocial services in the U.S., and you should take advantage of these services if they are available and you think that they would help you. Your resettlement agency sponsor will assist you in finding appropriate health care services.

### **Cultural Adjustment**

- 17) Your first year in the U.S. will be a period of adjustment. You will be living in a new community, adhering to new laws, working in a new job, and making new friends. For the first few months, your resettlement agency staff will assist you in your efforts to rebuild your life and will do their best to help you become economically self-sufficient as soon as possible.
- 18) The U.S. consists of people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and the resettlement agencies that help refugees are equally diverse. Your case workers may be of any race, religion, ethnicity, or gender, and they have your best interest in mind.