



Process Well Established For Resettling Refugees In Oklahoma City

Catholic Charities OKC serves as resettlement site through work with federal and state governments

Oklahoma City, OK, November 17, 2015 – Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City (CCAOKC) has worked with refugee populations from around the world, beginning in the 1950s with the Communist invasion of Hungary and expanding in the 1970s after the Vietnam War.

In a typical year, the United States resettles 70,000 – 80,000 refugees in coordination with state governments and local organizations. Acting as a refugee resettlement site for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Catholic Charities welcomes refugees to Oklahoma and ensures they transition well to their new home. As one of nine domestic, nongovernmental agencies receiving funding from the U.S. Department of State, the USCCB annually resettles approximately 26 percent of refugees invited to live in the United States.

Local resettlement agencies such as Catholic Charities play no role in determining whom is brought to the United States. Refugees, often living in camps for years, must apply and be accepted by the State Department to begin their resettlement process. Each person undergoes rigorous background, security and health checks led by the State Department in coordination with other federal agencies, including the U.S. Departments of Health & Human Services and Homeland Security. Only upon approval does the State Department notify the USCCB and its partner agencies, such as Catholic Charities, of the pending arrival of refugees.

All individuals and families are received in Oklahoma City by CCAOKC after they have completed this regulated process – many reuniting with families who have been in the community for years. Upon arrival, Catholic Charities provides programs to help them become responsible residents in their new communities.

Oklahoma City has been a welcoming home for decades to refugees from Hungary, Vietnam, Poland, Cuba and most recently the Congo, Iraq, Afghanistan and Burma. On average, CCAOKC resettles 150-190 refugees annually. Last year, 61 percent came from East Asia, 16 percent from Cuba, 14 percent from the Near East, and 9 percent from Africa. These refugees arrived for resettlement to Oklahoma City after undergoing a multi-year health and security screening process led by the State Department. Upon arrival, Catholic Charities' Refugee Resettlement staff greets refugees at the airport and immediately transports them to housing,

assists them with required health appointments, completes necessary documentation, helps to secure employment and enroll children in local schools.

Founded in 1912, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City serves all regardless of race, religion or national origin through its mission is to provide help and hope in the Catholic tradition of service. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, with regional service locations in Ardmore, Clinton, Enid, Guymon and Lawton and women's homeless programs in Norman and Midwest City, Catholic Charities serves more than 13,500 Oklahomans annually through more than 15 social service programs. To learn more about Catholic Charities, visit www.catholiccharitiesok.org.

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