

# Supporting Higher Education in Refugee Resettlement

*Building the capacity of colleges and universities to support resettlement.*



**PRESIDENTS' ALLIANCE** | ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND IMMIGRATION



**Refugee Housing**  
SOLUTIONS



## CAMPUS HOUSING FOR REFUGEES SHERR SPOTLIGHT WEBINAR CO-HOSTED WITH REFUGEE HOUSING SOLUTIONS

November 13, 2024

Funded by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration

## Supporting Higher Education in Refugee Resettlement

# ABOUT SHERR

**Purpose:** Increase higher ed engagement in resettlement, with the larger aim of growing and strengthening the domestic capacity for placement of refugees in communities across the U.S.

- Expanding and coordinating a network of higher education institutions across the U.S. committed to supporting refugees
- Identifying 'pathways of engagement' and supporting partnerships between higher ed and resettlement organizations
- Designing and coordinating toolkits, curricula, briefings, webinars, virtual trainings and communities of practice and action.



## **CAMPUS HOUSING FOR REFUGEES – WEBINAR LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- ✓ Understand models of refugee housing that U.S. colleges and universities have used
- ✓ Hear about ways in which campus communities benefit from hosting/housing refugees
- ✓ Learn about resources and partnership/support options to addressing challenges and seize the opportunities of hosting/housing refugees on campus



# Supporting Higher Education in Refugee Resettlement

## TODAY'S SPEAKERS



Leslie Wilson  
Refugee Housing Solutions



Dr. Diya Abdo  
ECAR and Guilford College



Dr. Emily Boersma  
Oklahoma State University



Tim Rivera  
World Learning/SIT



Kelley Gourley / USCRI  
Albany



Klaudia Gates  
SHERR / World Learning

# CONTEXT: HOUSING FOR REFUGEES

**Speaker and Panel Moderator: Leslie Wilson**

Associate Director, Special Projects, Refugee Housing Solutions (a project of Church World Service for all Resettlement Agencies)

*RHS is funded by the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)*

# Refugee Housing Solutions: Who We Are



	<b>Facilitate dialogue...</b>	among public, non-profit, and private sector affordable housing stakeholders
	<b>Promote collaboration and partnerships...</b>	with all affordable housing stakeholders – nationwide in the U.S. and globally
	<b>Lead alignment efforts...</b>	for all PRM and ORR funded national resettlement agencies and their local offices and affiliates
	<b>Catalyze housing innovation...</b>	with private sector stakeholders, including landlords, and with HUD
	<b>Expand information-sharing, technical assistance, and education/training...</b>	for all constituents, including individuals, families, and communities as well as resettlement agencies and housing provider, to expand newcomer housing

## Our Mission

Increasing access to dignified affordable housing for refugees and other newcomers to the United States.





The RHS team has experience in affordable housing, hospitality, & refugee resettlement, plus program design, strategy development, & communications.

We leverage our uniqueness to provide technical assistance, capacity development, and resources designed to help refugee housing stakeholders ideate and create housing solutions for national and local resettlement agency staff as they look for safe, dignified, and affordable housing for refugees and other newcomers across the U.S.

# RHS Stakeholder Outreach & Support



## Training & Technical Assistance

RHS offers group and 1-to-1 TA for national and local resettlement agency staff and volunteers, Sponsors, community stakeholders, et al. on issues like these:

- Addressing continuing challenges to finding permanent housing
- Incentivizing housing providers to rent to newcomers
- Benefiting newcomers with Housing and Urban Development programs
- Partnering across agencies in urban areas with 2+ resettlement agencies



## Webinars, Working Groups, Communities of Practice

RHS team members lead a variety of live and pre-recorded webinars on myriad topics, such as these:

- The U.S. Fair Housing Act
- How to Recruit and Retain Housing Providers
- How to Vet Housing Providers and Properties

### PLUS

- Custom education and training for individual RAs – local and national
- Monthly National Housing Working Group convenings
- Regional Housing Community of Practice calls



## Resources

RHS has a dynamic website and growing library of these resources:

- Toolkits for in-depths, step-by-step information and guidance for newcomer tenants, housing providers, and other stakeholders
- Summary Fact Sheets on key refugee / newcomer housing topics
- Original and other organizations' research and reports



## Innovations

RHS partners with a variety of stakeholders to bring ideas from other affordable housing constituents to benefit newcomers:

- ReHome Marketplace
- Verent Solutions
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Housing Counselling Program and Continuum of Care groups



## Partnership

Key to RHS success is the diversity of public, private, and non-profit partnerships that help expand newcomer housing:

- Resettlement Agency housing leadership
- State Refugee Coordinators/teams
- Every Campus a Refuge (ECAR)
- Supporting Higher Education in Refugee Resettlement (SHERR)
- Launch Capital Partners
- Marriott International
- National Apartment Association
- Entryway
- Whitestone & Co.





## Housing Hub & Housing Directory

The Housing Hub is a comprehensive platform providing educational materials and resources for all resettlement stakeholders, including newcomers and sponsors.

The Housing Directory is a centralized database to connect refugees and other resettlement stakeholders with essential location-specific housing support services and resources.



# RHS Resources

## Who is a Refugee, Asylum Seeker, or Humanitarian Parolee?



### Who is a Refugee?

A refugee is someone who has fled from their home country and cannot return because they have a well-founded fear of persecution based on religion, race, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.



According to the [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#), the number of people forced to flee their homes worldwide by the end of 2021 due to conflicts, violence, fear of persecution, and human rights violations was 89.3 million. This is more than double the 42.7 million people who remained forcibly displaced a decade ago, and is the most since World War II.

## Fair Housing Act and Reasonable Accommodation Tip Sheet



### Housing is a Human and Civil Right

Because housing is a human right, refugees and other newcomers to the United States [hereafter "newcomers"] deserve to live in a community of their choice free from discrimination. Safe, stable, and affordable housing is not a luxury, but a necessity. Unfortunately, some newcomers cannot secure safe, stable, affordable housing due to discriminatory practices. This tip sheet is offered to all U.S. rental market stakeholders to help everyone understand the Fair Housing Act of 1968 (FHA) and the protections and rights newcomers have under this law.

#### Fair Housing Act (FHA)

**What is the FHA?** The FHA codifies federal law prohibiting discriminatory housing practices based on a person's race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, or familial status. The Housing and Urban Development (HUD) overview page can help those interested learn more about the FHA and additional resources available to understand the Act and laws fully.

**Why is the FHA Important?** The FHA ensures that a person in a protected class (as cited above) is not discriminated against in housing transactions, i.e., buying, renting, lease terms, and lease renewal. Newcomers can be discriminated against if they are not educated about the FHA and their rights under it and related laws.

#### Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA)

**What is the ECOA?** This act makes it unlawful for any housing provider to discriminate against an individual in any aspect of a credit application based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or because income is from any public assistance program, including newcomer rent subsidies.

**Why is the ECOA Important?** This law ensures that a person receiving public assistance is not discriminated against during the housing application process. When newcomers know their rights under the ECOA, as with the FHA, they can assert themselves in the application process when presenting alternative income.



## Tenant Toolkit

## Leveraging College and University Housing for Refugee Newcomer Welcoming



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# PANEL DISCUSSION

**Dr. Diya Abdo**, Founding Director, Every Campus A Refuge (ECAR)

**Tim Rivera**, Sr Advisor for Innovation and Strategy, World Learning and School for International Training (SIT)

**Dr. Emily Boersma**, Director of English Language and Intercultural Center, Oklahoma State University

**Kelley Gourley**, Refugee Services Manager, USCRI Albany

**Moderator:** Leslie Wilson, Associate Director, Special Projects, RHS

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# HIGHER EDUCATION AND REFUGEE HOUSING – THE ECAR MODEL

**Speaker: Dr. Diya Abdo**

Founding Director of Every Campus A Refuge (ECAR) and Lincoln Financial  
Professor of English at Guilford College

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## EVERY CAMPUS A REFUGE (ECAR MODEL)

- Founded by Dr. Diya Abdo in September 2015 at Guilford College, North Carolina
- Mobilizes colleges and universities across the U.S. to host refugees on campus grounds and support them in their integration and resettlement while providing a transformative education to students
- College/university and local resettlement agency partnership operates as a co-sponsorship
- Example: In 2023, St. Ambrose University became the first ECAR campus in Iowa. The local World Relief office (Quad Cities) is the resettlement partner of St. Ambrose University



Photo Credit: ECAR

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## RESOURCES



[AHLAN: A Manual for  
Establishing Resettlement  
Campuses Together \(LINK\)](#)



[FAQs for Resettlement  
Agencies \(LINK\)](#)

**ECAR**  
EVERY CAMPUS A REFUGE<sup>®</sup>



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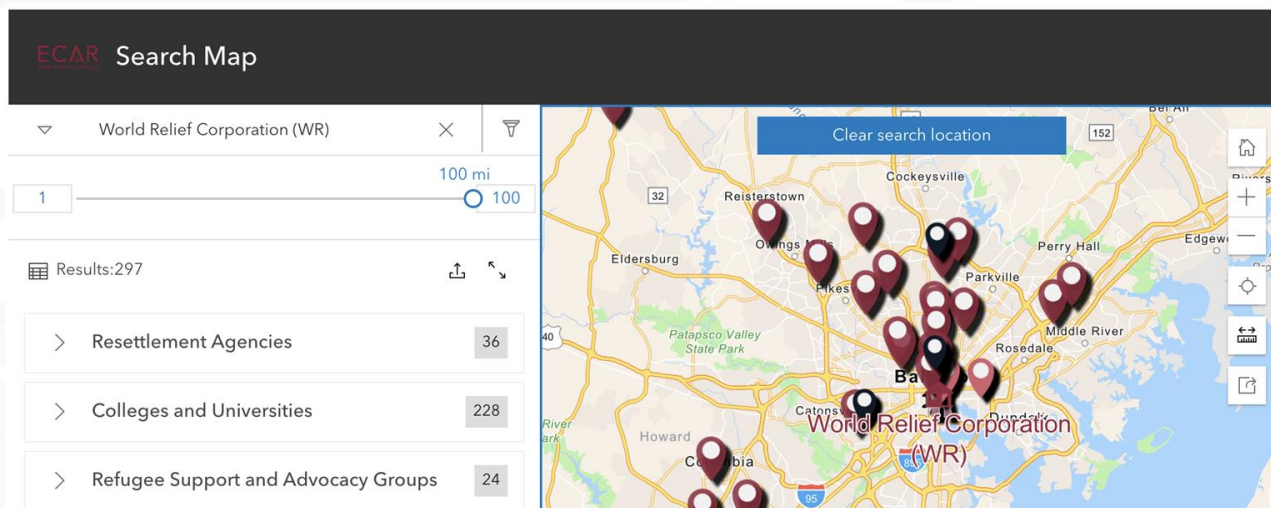
## ECAR Partnerships for Establishing Resettlement Campuses (PERC) Map

*(Helps national RAs and local affiliates find all colleges  
and universities within a 100-mile radius of them)*

# ECAR

EVERY CAMPUS A REFUGE<sup>®</sup>

Directly connect with ECAR by  
contacting Dr. Diya Abdo,  
Founder and Director:  
[diya@everycampusarefuge.org](mailto:diya@everycampusarefuge.org)



<https://everycampusarefuge.net/perc-map/>

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## **CAMPUS HOUSING FOR REFUGEES IN RURAL VERMONT**

### **SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING (SIT/WORLD LEARNING)**

**Speaker: Tim Rivera**

Senior Advisor for Innovation and Strategy, World Learning

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- >350 refugees since January 2022
- Capacity for 71-87 (or more with \$\$)
- ~\$500K in funding from Vermont State Legislature (required advocacy w/ partners)
- Campus Housing Manager supports refugees on campus
- Partners: ECDC (resettlement agency), BDCC (workforce development), SRC, VT Dept. of Health
- ECDC's Multicultural Community Center move to Bliss House = more integrated service provision
- Classrooms for English language, cultural orientation
- Public transportation to commercial centers, employers, etc. via the MOOver (incl. via microtransit)

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**Benefits to refugees:**

- Centralized services in rural context
- Save \$\$ before entering housing market
- Build social capital w/ New Vermonters, community
- Calm, quiet setting to get their bearings



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## **CAMPUS HOUSING FOR REFUGEES**

## **OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Speaker: Dr. Emily Boersma**

Director, English Language and Intercultural Center, Oklahoma State University

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# ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND INTERCULTURAL CENTER

OSU Global

Fall 2021: Oklahoma State University partnered with Catholic Charities of Eastern Oklahoma to welcome 72 Afghan evacuees

The ELIC created the Afghan Family Project to: offer intensive English instruction, aid in the transition of adults into the local workforce, and support families with social adjustment.

Afghan families filled 16 units in OSU's Family Housing; other families were housed nearby - rent was paid for one year by Community Partners

FY25: third year of OKDHS funding to offer wrap-around/case management services to reach self-sufficiency through employment, legal, and social support

## Update

### Fast Facts - Afghan Family Project

All Afghan neighbors remaining in Stillwater are thriving! Two are full-time undergraduate students at the University and two are full-time master's students; all of our new neighbors are currently employed aside from two stay-at-home moms. The Afghans who chose to leave Stillwater migrated to larger cities.



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## **CAMPUS HOUSING FOR REFUGEES**

# **USCRI ALBANY (RESETTLEMENT AGENCY PERSPECTIVE)**

**Speaker: Kelley Gourley**

Refugee Services Manager, USCRI Albany

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## Overview

- Resettled 6,158 refugees since 2005
- FY24—resettled 479 refugees and SIVS
- Original FY25 Projection: 512

## Housing in Albany

- Challenges: availability, affordability, quality, pace
- Strategies and Solutions: landlord engagement and community partnerships
- ECAR model has been going strong in the region since 2020

## Key Partners

- Russell Sage College
- Hudson Valley Community College
- Siena College
- University of Albany
- Bard College



## Benefits of Higher Ed Housing Partnership

- Soft landing for clients, financial leg up
- Extra supports through the college's faculty, staff, students, and programming
- Relief for resettlement agencies
- Learning opportunities for campus communities; leading directly to increased engagement in terms of volunteers and donors
- It's fun and exciting!

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## **CAMPUS HOUSING FOR REFUGEES**

# **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

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## **CAMPUS HOUSING FOR REFUGEES**

# **SUMMARY OF RESOURCES**

**Speaker: Klaudia Gates**

Senior Program Officer SHERR, World Learning

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## Supporting Higher Education in Refugee Resettlement

# APPROACHES/MODELS/EXAMPLES OF CAMPUS HOUSING

- Temporary housing through traditional residential agreements
  - Seasonal housing (esp. summer)
  - Leveraging unused and/or underutilized units/beds/buildings/residence real estate holdings/buildings (e.g. during COVID pandemic)
- 
- School for International Training (SIT)/ECDC Partnership in Brattleboro, Vermont
  - Oklahoma State University
  - Every Campus A Refuge (ECAR) model



# Supporting Higher Education in Refugee Resettlement

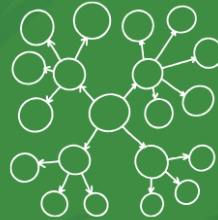
## REFUGEE RESOURCE HUB



Pathways of  
Engagement



Spotlights & Models



Eco-system  
of Orgs



Directory &  
Networks



Contextual Info on  
Refugee Resettlement



<https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/communities/refugee-hub/>



## Supporting Higher Education in Refugee Resettlement

# REFUGEE RESOURCE HUB SPOTLIGHTS & MODELS

### The University of Tulsa: leveraging housing on campus and partnering with local resettlement agencies to house newcomers



Since 2021, the [University of Tulsa \(TU\)](#) has housed refugee individuals on campus in unused student apartments. This housing program was developed in partnership with local resettlement agencies to address housing needs in the City of Tulsa. To date, TU has housed 38 non-student refugees on campus.

#### In this Article:

1. Purpose for the Program
2. Key to the Success of the Program
3. Key Actors and Participants
4. Impact and Outcomes
5. Implementation Steps
6. Challenges Faced
7. Resources and Partnerships
8. Looking to the Future
9. Contact and Additional Resources



# Supporting Higher Education in Refugee Resettlement

## CONSIDER JOINING THE WELCOME CAMPUS NETWORK

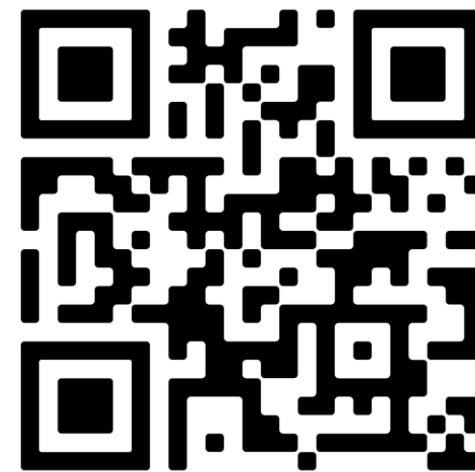


### WELCOME CAMPUS NETWORK

The Welcome Campus Network amplifies the work of colleges and universities in welcoming and supporting newcomers who are seeking safety from across the globe.



If interested in joining the Welcome Campus Network, visit our website and complete the membership form! (Membership is free.)



[Welcome.us/more-ways-to-help/welcome-campus-network](https://welcome.us/more-ways-to-help/welcome-campus-network)

# Supporting Higher Education in Refugee Resettlement

# ECAR

EVERY CAMPUS A REFUGE<sup>®</sup>

<https://everycampusarefuge.net/>



bitly

[AHLAN: A Manual for Establishing Resettlement Campuses Together](#)  
[\(LINK\)](#)

## RHS Resources

**Who is a Refugee, Asylum Seeker, or Humanitarian Parolee?**

**Who is a Refugee?**  
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According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of people forced to flee their homes worldwide by the end of 2021 due to conflicts, violence, fear of persecution, and human rights violations was 82.3 million. This is more than double the 42.7 million people who remained forcibly displaced a decade ago, and is the most since World War II.

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**Fair Housing Act and Reasonable Accommodation Tip Sheet**

**Housing is a Human and Civil Right**

Because housing is a human right, refugees and other newcomers to the United States have a "reasonable" chance to live in a community of their choice free from discrimination. Safe, stable, and affordable housing is not a luxury, but a necessity. Unfortunately, some newcomers cannot secure safe, stable, affordable housing due to discriminatory practices. This tip sheet (created by all U.S. federal, state, and local housing assistance providers) helps you understand the Fair Housing Act of 1968 (FHA) and the protections and rights newcomers have under this law.

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**Tenant Toolkit**

**Leveraging College and University Housing for Refugee Newcomer Welcoming**

- <https://refugeehousing.org/>
- <https://refugeehousing.org/resources/tenant-toolkit/>

## NEXT STEPS

- ✓ Map your campus and community for needs and opportunities
- ✓ Connect with local **resettlement office** OR connect with the **community engagement office** at a local college or university
- ✓ Connect with **Every Campus A Refugee (ECAR)** to explore support for housing
- ✓ Connect with an **RHS subject matter expert** for a technical assistance session
- ✓ Set up a meeting with a member of the **SHERR team**



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**Refugee Health**

*Higher Education Partnerships in Refugee Health (December 5, 2024)*

**Educational Opportunities**

*Enrolling and Supporting Resettled Refugee Students (January 22, 2025)*

**English Language Learning and Career Pathways**

*Supporting Refugees with English Language Learning and Career Pathways (February 12, 2025)*

View past webinars at: <https://www.worldlearning.org/sherr-webinars>

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# THANK YOU!

SHERR email address for questions and communications:

[SHERR@worldlearning.org](mailto:SHERR@worldlearning.org)