



Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

02/17/2022 Austin Refugee Roundtable Meeting

Attendees:

Aso "Mike" Kakarash, Caritas of Austin
Lauren Hargraves, USCRI
Mayra Lopez, CofA, Education Program
Lauren Detter, CofA, Education Program
Arlen Rodriguez Varela, Employment Specialist, Caritas of Austin
Lena Asensio, TXOR West
Tamara Goheen, Austin Public Library
Sara Acevedo, Family Connects/ Austin Public Health
Hannah Goldberg, RST
Harper McKnight, RST
Anjum Malik- Global Impact Initiative
Cameron Adil, RST Associate director
Anna Love, GirlForward Austin
Cecily Cook, USCRI
Annie Hardy, Cisco
Samsoor, Afghan community member, Austin & Refugees' parent Ambassador - AISD
Erika Humke, Interfaith Action of Central Texas (iACT) - adult refugee ESL program
Swathi Chilukuri, Tutoring support (Sathya Sai Center of Austin in collaboration with Global Impact Initiative)
Houmma Garba, City of Austin, Language Access Services
Mindy Sheldon, Volunteer with Gii and Salaam Neighbors
Diane Kanawati, Muslim Community Support Services (MCSS)
Kate Taylor, CST
Nell Guzman, Preferred Communities ICM Community Outreach Coordinator, RST-Austin
Kashif Akhlaque, Services Coordinator, North Austin Muslim Community (NAMCC)
Samuel Nizigiyimana - Refugee Family Liaison - AISD
Hasti Ahmadi, Austin ISD
Shubhada Saxena, SAIVA (South Asians' International Volunteer Association)
Rocio Villalobos, City of Austin Equity Office
Bridget Newell, Medical Social Worker, Refugee Medical Screening Clinic
Fetaine Seddighzadeh, Preferred Communities Intensive Case Management Program Supervisor (RST)

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

ARR Information

- Please add your organization's referral process information to our shared document: [a document for agency referral processes](#).
- To have your agency's logo included on the Austin Refugee Roundtable website, please share it with lzeidan@interfaithtexas.org.

Organization Updates:

USCRI Texas Refugee Health Current Opportunities:

- **Regional Refugee Health Officer** (multiple positions) [RRHO Position at USCRI TX](#)
- **Refugee Medical Screening Program Officer** [RMS Program Officer at USCRI TX](#)

USCRI Staffing Updates:

- **Cecily Cook** has transitioned from an RMS Program Officer role to a [Refugee Health Services Programs Manager](#) role (overseeing all TX-based health programs).
- **Lauren Hargraves** has joined the team as a [Refugee Wellness Program Officer for the Mental Health Awareness Training program](#) (funded by SAMHSA).

RST Staffing Update:

- **Hannah Goldberg** has joined the RST staff and this is her first meeting.

AISD Staffing Updates:

- New Employee Refugee Family liaison - **Hasmatullah** - began Monday.
- They recently posted another role on their website - Refugee Family Liaison - <https://www.applitrack.com/austinisd/onlineapp/default.aspx?AppliTrackPostingSearch=refugee>

Center for Survivors of Torture: Referrals have opened up for free mental health counseling. Call our Austin office at (512) 358 - 4612 to refer a client for CST's free mental health counseling services. You can contact Kate Taylor directly if you have any questions, email katetaylor@cstnet.org.

Caritas: 175 new walk-ins requesting services very recently, mostly from Cuba, some from Venezuela, Nicaragua, and recently, we're seeing Afghan arrivals. We are beyond capacity for the program projections and will likely stop taking new clients as soon as next week but will keep the group in the loop.

iACT (Interfaith Action of Central Texas) ESL: Classes continuing virtually - hope to get back to in-person meetings by March or April. Students must have a device and wifi or internet connection. Currently there



[Austin Refugee Roundtable](#) Running Agenda and Notes

is no equipment they can provide, but they're working on solutions. iACT is open to external referrals from any organization - just contact them directly (ehumke@interfaithtexas.org). Due to an influx of referrals, there is a bit of a wait to get into a class. Senior refugee, rolling-enrollment class begins next week. Any older refugees (50s+) who would benefit from supportive ESL with community integration themes, starting virtually, then moving to in-person classes in the downtown Austin class site. Erika Humke will send more information about the qualification criteria and more class details.

RST: Job fair resulted in 50 refugees getting jobs from local hotels - and the work continues. They are having no challenges with the Social Security Office. They are seeking success with HHSC as well - more success than rejections. Typically the issue is with having the incorrect identification documents, but when they reapply and pursue, they are seeing success. The services have improved a lot. For people who need support with HHSC benefits, they can contact Lena (Lena.Asensio@rescue.org) @ TXOR West (Texas Office for Refugees)

If you are an ARR member that was coordinating with Katie Rudnik as she transitioned out, please send an email to hmcknight@rstx.org and hgoldberg@rstx.org if a follow up is necessary. Thank you!

[View Open Positions at Refugee Services of Texas](#)

GII: GII is offering a 2-hour Sunday English conversation session offered to women and girls. Monday - Thursday evenings they are offering online homework support for any age children. They are offering resume writing support and job search help as well. For more information, contact GII.

Volunteers seeking to provide vehicles or transportation for refugees to access services and medical care can contact Fetaine Seddighzadeh - (need contact info)

GII will be hosting a toy drive soon and will reach out to the ARR when they have more information. For those looking to donate toys, they can also drop off toys with AISD

American Red Cross - south Central Texas Austin - will be offering "Even War Has Rules" classes to interested people, so for more information, contact Polly Alexander (polly.alexander@redcross.org).

Austin Public Library is moving to a fine-free model for library members.

NAMCC - Date TBD - but likely Feb 26th - NAMCC will invite 200 refugees in collaboration with RST, will have an all-day workshop around housing and medical challenges. RST will partner to bring case managers, go over resettlement challenges, especially for those who are coming to the end of their



Austin Refugee Roundtable

[Austin Refugee Roundtable](#) Running Agenda and Notes

benefits. These are RST-chosen folks facing immediate challenges due to ending benefits. Kashif will include more information

Project Access - Society of Doctors - provide medical care to residents of Travis County, no matter their citizenship status. Their program, established 2002, physicians have committed to help patients, for free, in their offices. It is free for the patient, no limit of visits. It's a one-year enrollment and you can continue to enroll annually. They cover the cost of all meds, hospitalization, imagine, and labs. Some of their physicians specialize in or feel comfortable managing behavioral health, as well. It's a work of Travis County Medical Society and hospitals in Travis County. Those who no longer qualify for Medicaid, those who have no access to benefits - those who have no access to government programs - they could be eligible. Or if they use a free or community clinic, you can apply to a Project Access specialist and use your home clinic for primary care. Contact Kathy Gichangah for more information -

Cisco:

Resource	Criteria	Job Location	Description
Cisco.com Jobs	Any language, any discipline	Global	Search for global jobs at Cisco across lots of corporate disciplines including and beyond technology, like fields like HR, operations, finance and more. Create an account at Cisco.com/jobs
Cisco Network Academy	English-speaking, interested in technical training	Global	Free technical training and community. Create an account at NetAcad.com Send applicant email address to annhardy@cisco.com
Cisco Talent Bridge Matching Engine	English-speaking, 5-10+ years of job experience, any discipline	Global	Job matching program to match candidates with open roles at our partners and resellers. Client is manually matched with jobs that are a good fit, across lots of corporate disciplines including and beyond technology, like fields like HR, operations, finance and more. More: netacad.com/careers/matching-engine
Upwardly Global	English speaking, 5-10+ years of job experience, any discipline	US based, permission to work in the US	Non-profit dedicated to job training and career connections for refugees. Apply for the program at UpwardlyGlobal.org

(Send email address of potential candidates to Annie at annhardy@cisco.com)

USCRI: Will start holding Mental Health First Aid trainings and developing Refugee Health Promotion program (Community Wellness Orientations). Email Lauren Hargraves (lhargraves@uscrimail.org) if you're interested in a training!

Family Connect - Sara Acevedo: Any family who is taking care of an infant, there is a nurse consultation for those families, for free. It was designed to be a home visit - but might now they're doing phone

The logo for the Austin Refugee Roundtable features a blue circle on the left side. The text "Austin Refugee Roundtable" is positioned to the right of the circle, with "Austin Refugee" on the top line and "Roundtable" on the bottom line in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

Austin Refugee Roundtable

[Austin Refugee Roundtable](https://www.familyconnectstexas.org/austin-travis-county) Running Agenda and Notes

consultations for nurse help, lactation consultants, or other concerns. Learn more at <https://www.familyconnectstexas.org/austin-travis-county>

City of Austin - upcoming fiscal year budget recommendation sessions for the public on refugee needs. Rocio will email log-on/call in info to attend.



[Austin Refugee Roundtable](#) Running Agenda and Notes

02/03/2022 Austin Refugee Roundtable Meeting

Attendees

Emily McKinnon- American Red Cross

Kadir Akkus - Raindrop Foundation Austin

Erika Humke - Interfaith Action of Central Texas (iACT), adult refugee ESL program

Chichi Armstrong, Ladies Let's Talk

Katie Rudnik, RST

Arlen Rodriguez Varela, Caritas of Austin

Russ Apfel, Austin Jews and Partners for Refugees

Kate Taylor, CST

Anjum Malik, Global Impact Initiative

Pete Salazar, CST

Shirdelle Cummings, The SAFE Alliance

Harper McKnight, RST

Samsoor- Afghan Community member - Austin, TX

Stacy Davenport, Global Impact Initiative

Annie Hardy, Cisco

Anna Dukes, The SAFE Alliance

Karen

Kathy Gichanagah -Project Access Austin

Swathi Chilukuri, Tutoring support (Sathya Sai Center of Austin in collaboration with Global Impact Initiative)

Anna, GirlForward

Kashif Akhlaque, Service Coordinator, NAMCC

Nancy Wolf, Austin Jews and Partners for Refugees

Suma Aithal

Polly Alexander



Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

Organization Updates

- Katie Rudnik will be leaving RST so this is her last ARR meeting. Her colleague Harper McKnight will join the ARR in her place.
- American Red Cross - Restoring Family Links to connect families around the world
- Austin Jews and Partners for Refugees
 - Salaam Neighbors - 5 teams and 7 families, 3-6months of support during resettlement process
 - Jewish Family Services (partner) grant to hire a case manager to support welcome teams and Salaam Neighbors teams, will post position soon
- Cisco - developing a Refugee Journey Map of key resources through contact with refugee service providers; Annie Hardy would love to convene tech community representatives to collaborate on projects around tech training.
- GirlForward - Austin and Chicago programs
- The SAFE Alliance - Strong Start Program (FREE parent ed. For Travis & Williamson Co.) - referrals to scummings@safeaustin.org
- Project Access - free medical care program (<https://projectaccessaustin.org/>)
- Global Impact Initiative - tutoring and employment assistance (interview preparation), also coordinating with SAIVA, receiving laptops and sewing machines to provide for refugee families - provide name and contact info, also coordinate a medical ESL program
- Austin Jews and Partners for Refugees - can also provide laptops and chromebooks, contact Russ Apfel for more information
- Katie Rudnik from RST received an inquiry regarding trying to organize an event to raise funds for the Afghan community. They are seeking to present Afghan music, dance, storytelling, poetry, etc.
- Annie Hardy asked about the possibility of the refugee community finding employment opportunities in food preparation and delivery. Pete and Anjum had some feedback on previous experiences, and Russ & Chichi also commented that AJR has experience with this in terms of providing welcome meals to new

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

families. Issues arise in terms of licensing, needing commercial kitchens, etc.

Samsoor shared that there are many cooks in the community who can prepare and provide Afghan, Indian, and Pakistani food - please reach out to him for their contact information (sm.mandozay@gmail.com)

- Sewing collective - coordinated by Elham Sadat, but Chichi mentioned that it's been difficult to get participants and overcome issues of childcare and transportation. RST also has coordinated sewing groups in the past.
- NAMCC event - 2/13/22 - Vision Screening and car seat distribution

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Austin Refugee Roundtable

[Austin Refugee Roundtable](#) Running Agenda and Notes

01/20/2022 Austin Refugee Roundtable Meeting

We will be addressing the questions [in this presentation](#) during today's meeting.

Don't forget about the [Austin Refugee Roundtable Facebook page!](#)

Attendees

Anjum Malik, Executive Director - Global Impact Initiative

Shawn Smith, Vice President - Global Impact Initiative

Chichi Armstrong, Ladies Let's Talk

Kaitlin Roberson, Director of Major Gift RST

Diana Miranda-Murillo Austin Public Library

Diane Kanawati - MCSS

Melinda Szabo, MRC

Erika Humke, Refugee ESL Program Coordinator, Interfaith Action of Central Texas (iACT)

Caitlin Admire, City of Austin, LEAPS Program (guest)

Swathi Chilukuri, Tutoring support (Sathya Sai Center of Austin in collaboration with Global Impact Initiative)

Kashif Akhlaque, Services Coordinator, NAMCC

Arlen Rodriguez Varela, Caritas of Austin

Rocio Villalobos - City of Austin Equity Office

Nancy Wolf Austin Jews and Partners for Refugees

Annie Hardy - Cisco, volunteer coordinator, serving as an independent volunteer

Kathy Gichangah - Project Access Austin

Katie Rudnik - RST

Organization Updates

Global Impact Initiative:

- Currently helping refugees find jobs. Have placed 8 in full time and 17 in part time positions thus far.
- Homework support lab for school going children held 5 days a week from 7-9PM online.

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- Mentoring for women 11AM on Sundays over Zoom starting February 6th.
- Yes, we are open to new referrals in all the above areas. The best way to refer clients to us is by sending an email to Anjum at anjum@globalimpactinitiative.com or sending a text at (512) 799-5044.

Multicultural Refugee Coalition:

- Currently hiring at the Open Arms Studio: [Industrial Sewing Machine Operator](#) and [Quality Control Associate](#)
- Future hiring at New Leaf Farm. Will share once we are officially hiring.

Agency Contacts

Anjum Malik, anjum@globalimpactinitiative.com (512) 799-5044

Shawn Smith, shawn@globalimpactinitiative.com

Chichi Armstrong, Ladies Let's Talk, 773 590 73

Laura Robinson, MRC, lrobinson@mrcaustin.org, 512-537-7312

Erika Humke, Interfaith Action of Central Texas (iACT) - Refugee ESL Program, ehumke@interfaithtexas.org

Diane Kanawati, info@mcssatx.com 512-240-2257

NAMCC: Kashif Akhlaque Kashif.Akhlaque@namcc.org 512-695-4380

Caitlin Admire, City of Austin LEAPS Program, caitlin.admire@austintexas.gov

Annie Hardy, Cisco, Volunteer coordinator, anniehardy1@gmail.com, 512-577-0828

Russ Apfel, Austin Jews and partners for Refugees, russapfel@yahoo.com, 512-4239146

Meeting Notes:

There have been a lot of leadership changes in ARR. Please consider volunteering to lead a meeting or take notes.

Questions for today

- 1) Capacity check
- 2) Is your organization open to referrals?

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- IACT - will continue to offer online classes and will restart in person classes for RSS eligible clients. They can still add new students. Most referrals are coming directly from RST and Caritas. Hope to have classes back at their downtown location and at the North Austin YMCA soon. IACT has a grant from the City of Austin to integrate the older refugee population. They would love referrals. She will send an email with more details.
- ESL - Russ suggested compiling a list of all ESL classes and creating a map. Annie Hardy said her volunteers can help with this. Austin Public Libraries has a list online <https://library.austintexas.gov/nip> Diana with APL said she can add more resources to this list. Please just email her. Here is a link to conversation classes at APL
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1JeNB8RqVREwcYDVFz22JIPlkyV4N3ABLK-crGQBnl_w/viewform?ts=5ed690f3&qxids=7628&edit_requested=true
- Cisco - Annie would like to map the journey of the refugee. She asked for help with this.
- CST - Website www.healtorture.org has an interactive map.
- AJR - Russ said there are lots of walk-ins coming to Austin who are not eligible for services. They will require a lot of support. Many families will start needing rent support. RST shared a referral link
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1JeNB8RqVREwcYDVFz22JIPlkyV4N3ABLK-crGQBnl_w/viewform?ts=5ed690f3&qxids=7628&edit_requested=true
- Caritas - We are taking new clients for employment assistance and cash assistance. Clients can walk in for assistance. Refugee cash assistance depends on the date of entry.
- GII - offers help with resumes and developing job interview skills

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- RST - offers a job assistance program for any RST clients who have been here less than 5 years. Kashif asked RST to provide a list of services that they provide for refugees.
- Kate with CST has volunteered to create [a document for agency referral processes](#) and share with the group
- RST will use a shared Zoom link to host the meeting. Meetings will be held every two weeks from now on.

Austin Refugee Roundtable Newsletter

- Please send any updates you would like to be shared in the ARR monthly newsletter with Lu Ziedan (lzeidan@interfaithtexas.org) by the 5th of each month.
- Is your agency listed on the [Austin Refugee Roundtable website](#)? If not, please contact Lu Ziedan (lzeidan@interfaithtexas.org) and Maggie Wagner (mwagner@interfaithtexas.org) to have your agency added.

ARR Listserv - please add your name + email address below if you would like to be added to the Austin Refugee Roundtable listserv (austinrr@googlegroups.com):

12/16/2021 Austin Refugee Roundtable Meeting

Attendees

Kate Taylor, CST

Kalissa Tozzi, COA, DSD, LEAPS Program

Melinda Szabo, MRC

Diane Kanawati, Muslim Community Support Services

Tamara Goheen, COA - Austin Public Library

Esther Diaz - Translator and Interpreter Trainer, Refugee Advocate

Kathy Gichangah - Project Access Austin

Erika Humke - iACT

Ryan Johnson - Refugee Services of Texas



Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

Katie Rudnik - Refugee Services of Texas

Updates

1. Introductions: Please call on someone after you introduce yourself. Only state your name and the agency you work for and in **one sentence your biggest concern or question.** (elaborations will come later)

2. General announcement to all present:
 - a. Children's Museum need for videos (Lu)
 - The Thinkery has a community night spotlight and it will be online. They are looking for partners to create under 10 minute video recordings. Lu suggested they go to the roundtable website and they can use World Refugee Day info and if they see anything they want to use Lu will get permission from the creator. They are willing to pay \$100 to cover costs. If you are interested Lu will connect you with the person to contact.

 - b. RST report on refugee arrivals and needs
 - Ryan stated that RST continues to see a heavy flow of arrivals. They haven't received information for arrivals past 12/22/2021. There are 60 individuals coming in next week. Housing is biggest issue. New partnerships have been formed with group that turns extended stay units into apartments. RST has also partnered with major property management company. They expect to see the same pace of arrivals until February. Mostly people who are coming from bases in the USA. All Afghans. Seeing high priority refugee arrivals as well.
 - Humanitarian parolees are the bulk of the new arrivals They are eligible to receive services. Generally clients are eligible for RST services for 5 years after their date of arrival but it can vary by program. The

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

Immigration lawyer at RST assists with immigration issues such as green cards and citizenship.

- iACT is between contracts with ORR and they do not know their budget so they cannot expand at this time and can only register new students with the staff that they have. Currently they are not having problems fitting people in their classes but have concerns about future capacity. There is a concern about the need for ESL classes. ESL classes at ACC were mentioned as an option but are not recommended for students who are illiterate.

c. AISD report on needs (Salimah)

- AISD has registered over 100 students in the past 3 months. They are working with the Refugee Clinic to get the about 70 students up to date on vaccinations that are waiting to be registered.
- The major issue that they are seeing are Afghan students who have received no formal education particularly Pashayee speakers. They are looking for volunteers or ESL teachers that are willing to tutor students 1 on 1 either in the classroom or virtually after school. Contact Salimah at salimah.shamsuddin@austinisd.org with any information.
- They are looking to hire a new family liaison who speaks Pashto. <https://www.applitrack.com/austinisd/onlineapp/default.aspx?AppliTrackPostingSearch=refugee>

d. Parolees and other Afghan reports (JFR, iACT, Refugee Clinic..)

- Austin Jews for Refugees (Austinjewsforrefugees.weebly.com) discussed their operations. They have a website that they can post needs and a volunteer sign up. The group does pick ups at the airport, they provide welcome meals, and volunteers the next day drop off groceries and halal meat. They do orientation to help with kitchen and appliances. When clients move into permanent housing there is an Apartment set up team. The issues that they are focusing on next are employment, health care and pregnant women and medical care, transportation. They are creating a project that matches groups of volunteers and families for 3 months to create a path to success.

- There are about 200 people in temporary housing. JFR and helping with food. They are also helping with medical care, pregnant women and identifying

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

clothing needs and taking them to families. Families in temporary housing are very large and broken up into 2-3 rooms. Some apartments don't have basic beds. The major needs are volunteers and money.

- JFR is an interfaith group, they have partners with churches and people of many different faiths.
 - JFR is mainly helping with the APA program.
- e. Other?
- RST is receiving clients from other countries. They are high priority Refugees and SIVs
 - IT was suggested to have more frequent meetings. Different groups that meet together to discuss specific issues. School issues could be one. We will follow up by e-mail to discuss it.
 - There was a Winter preparedness exercise at the city that was preparing for winter storm. Have there been conversations with families with preparedness? If the city is getting materials together. Let them know what languages that they need. We need to make sure families who weren't here are prepared for another potential winter storm. It was mentioned that they should include people with limited English in the exercise,
 - There were questions about Library resources with Pasto and Dari. Tamara will get numbers and they are ordering the books for the next year. Kate shared a resource, Diana.Miranda-Murillo@austintexas.gov
- f. Center for Survivors of Torture (CST) is accepting referrals in North Texas for in-person counseling with new DFW Director, Asma Attili. Please call 214-827-2314 to refer clients for free mental health counseling in the DFW area.

3. Answers to questions posed

4. Go around to those who wish to share an opportunity or a need.

- Can send requests to Lu to add to the newsletter.

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- Most families don't have snap benefits, AISD was giving HEB gift cards to large families. Looking for 50-100 gift cards a refugee office
- JFR: E-mail charityarmstrong48@gmail.com for clothing donations. They are on hold right now for many items and opening up again soon. They are Collecting furniture in good condition, bikes, sofas. You can also donate money on their website.
- RST is working on a facebook group to arrange furniture donation transportation.
- Wifi routers and technology are needs JFR are providing chromebook and cell phones to each family. E-mail Russell or visit the website about donations. For donations of furniture, cells phone can contact Russel.
- Austin resource/volunteer guide:
[-https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fE-2rm3L9qRxNJIN0I_kOjZdxhDYWqNqQmPavs2ekHg/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fE-2rm3L9qRxNJIN0I_kOjZdxhDYWqNqQmPavs2ekHg/edit?usp=sharing)

11/18/2021 Austin Refugee Roundtable Meeting

Attendees

Kate Taylor, CST

Tamara Goheen, COA-APL

Chichi Armstrong Ladies Let's Talk

Lauren Hargraves, CTOR

Mayra Lopez Gutierrez, Caritas of Austin

Diane Kanawati, Muslim Community Support Services (MCSS)

Rhonda Allen, Volunteer

Kaitlin Roberson, RST

Ayesha Hassan, CWS

Josué Zepeda Sanic, CST

Karin Montero, CST

Melinda Szabo, MRC

Russ Apfel, Austin Jews for Refugees

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

Bridget Newell,
Diana Miranda-Murillo, Austin Public Library
Katie Rudnik, RST
Houmma Garba, City of Austin
Anna, GirlForward
Kathy, Project Access Austin
Kadir Akkus, Raindrop Austin
Polly Alexander, Red Cross

Updates

Please direct holiday donations for refugees to the following agencies:

- CARE Austin, Tina Weinberger (tineweinberger@icloud.com)
- <https://austinjewsforrefugees.weebly.com/how-can-i-help.html>

Afghan Arrivals

- Does anyone know if these mosques/centers/stores speak Dari or Pashto?
 - https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1CAkvH9CtIpYrcLS2oFd47pYe_Q2I5W-Bu/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=104333211633169990210&rtpof=true&sd=true
- September arrivals will be at 90 days on Dec. 1. Russ Apfel (Austin Jews for Humanity, has 150 volunteers, partnered with RST and MSCC) reported 350 arrivals since Sept, and the same anticipated by Jan. Housing shortage - people are placed in Airbnb's, provide food and support (cell phones, acclimation to new settings, medical aid, etc.). Transportation is needed for airport pickups - requested of American Red Cross. Can send info and needs to Wade Waldron. walrond@redcross.org
- Meals on Wheels provides food, but it may not be halal. In SA, there is a weekly food call and they are able to provide this service. City of SA provides shuttles to hotels using unaccompanied minor program. Will look into Project Connect, Equity Office, Cap Metro, ABIA contacts and see what can be created for Austin.

Housing barriers - documentation, density. This is a citywide concern, RST has a Council Advocate. Ayesha has been working with immigrant leaders and had two meetings with Council, this is the primary concern for all Austin residents and Council members.



Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

Transportation is also an issue because people are moving further out. Please reach out to Ayesha if you wish to support efforts.

County housing initiatives? This is a broader discussion.

If families have a US tie, they can be placed in housing within 100 mi of Austin, if not, only 50 miles per RST.

Community Sponsorship program exists in SA and Lauren can learn more and report back about how it works. Catholic Charities and RAICES are in SA, and RST is opening up a new office. SA generally takes 20% of all APA's in US, and this pattern is continuing.

SA: https://afghansinsa.org/?mc_cid=3a0a132d51&mc_eid=8c25851cd5

DFW:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GoHqszkt75sfCotRHikoYQecnPwDSuiYRG2ZKvEIMbA/edit>

Suggestion to reach out specifically to Jennifer Long at Casa Marianella and Posada Esperanza to update and partner for December meeting.

Suggested to connect with hotels and other businesses who might benefit from extra support to partner with arrivals. If anyone has contacts, reach out.

HUD in PA reported that they were unaware of Airbnb usage. Response from federal and local gov't agencies has been slow. Possibility of more Section 8 housing opening up.

RST in conversation with COA and affordable housing properties. Federal programs do not allow for recent arrivals to move to front of line. There is little housing stock in Austin, even at universities. Austin is at capacity. USRP shut down due to high APA numbers. Units disappear immediately as soon as they become available.



[Austin Refugee Roundtable](#) Running Agenda and Notes

Co-op housing might be an option? This has been a long-time ongoing conversation. Could fed gov't ease restrictions on 50 mi radius if transportation and housing were available? This happens in other states.

CTOR is dissolving, new state designator between ORR and local resettlement agencies will be in place soon. They are expanding the match grant program to a longer time frame to help support greater numbers of arrivals.

Suggestion of using comms/marketing folks to convey dire need via meetings with governmental orgs and community providers to advocate for APAs.

Volunteers need support to learn how to more effectively use large pool of volunteers. Volunteer coordinator would be useful.

In absence of centralized site/organization, call out to begin amassing and actively updating orgs' capacity and needs in order to share out. Councilmember Altar is willing to share out through newsletters, etc. Streamline comms, orient volunteers to community, partner with mosques and community centers. Use ARR site and FB more regularly.

RST no longer has AmeriCorps VISTAs, but has in past. Melinda can help support in process if needed.

[Austin Refugee Roundtable Facebook Page](#) Updates

- Does anyone want to be added as a page moderator? Anyone need to be removed?
- Any updates that we want to share as a group or any requests that need to be posted?

Austin Public Library World Languages Selector Request

- Please email Diana Miranda-Murillo (diana.miranda-murillo@austintexas.gov) with the languages spoken by clients that your agency serves. Zip codes where each language is most prevalent is a bonus to ensure individual neighborhood libraries are stocked with appropriate literature and materials for their community!
- English, Spanish, French, Lingala, Nepali, Arabic, Dari, Pashto, Urdu, Burmese, Turkish,

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

World Refugee Day 2022

- Lu Ziedan has confirmed June 18, 2022 at the Bullock Museum for WRD 2022

Please add your name below if you would like to be added to the ARR listserv:

- Kadir - kadir.akkus@raindropaustin.org
 - Russ Apfel russapfel@yahoo.com
-

10/21/2021 Austin Refugee Roundtable Meeting

31 Attendees:

Lauren Hargraves, CTOR

Salimah Shamsuddin, AISD Refugee Office

Ayesha Hassan, CWS

Carolina Icazbalceta, RST Austin

Mariana Gama, RST Austin

Mayra Lopez, Caritas of Austin

Lubna Zeidan, iACT

Alicia Ramirez, Councilwoman Vanessa Fuentes

Dr. Katherine Selber, School of Social Work Texas State University ks15@txstate.edu

Melinda Szabo, MRC

Kate Taylor, Center for Survivors of Torture (CST)

Josué Zepeda Sanic, Center of Survivors of Torture (CST)

Mohammad Masood, Organizer of the New Afghan Cultural Center

Diane Kanawati, Muslim Community Support Services (MCSS)

Ahmed Abbas, Church World Service (CWS)

Arlen Rodriguez Varela, Caritas of Austin

Caleb Pritchard, District 1

Chi Chi Armstrong, Ladies Let's Talk

Chloe Scarborough, RST

Kaitlin Roberson, RST

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

Diana Miranda-Murillo, Austin Public Libraries

Erika Humke, Interfaith Action of Central Texas (iACT)

Anna Love, Girl Forward Austin

Houmma Garba, City of Austin

Lauren Ramirez, RST

Lisa David

Marisol Girela, RAÍCES

Melisa Markman, District 10

Nadine Pedusseau, Interim Employment Manager Caritas of Austin

Chichi Armstrong, Ladies Let's Talk, co-founder

Katie Rudnik, Development and Communications @ RST

Rocio Villalobos, City of Austin Equity Office

Nancy Wolf and Russ Apfel, Austin Jews for Refugees

Agenda:

- **Introduction**
 - Each member will introduce themselves by sharing their name, title, organization

- **Introduction to Refugee Resettlement Presentation**, Ayesha Hassan (CWS), Chloe Scarborough (RST), Carolina Icazbalceta (RST)

- **Afghan Refugee and SIV updates** (RST and Caritas)

- **Organizational Updates**

- **Please add your name below if you would like to be added to the ARR listserv:**
 - Carolina Icazbalceta - cicazbalceta@rstx.org
 - Kaitlin Roberson, kroberson@rstx.org
 - Erika Humke, ehumke@interfaithtexas.org
 - Arlen Rodriguez Varela, arodriguez@caritasofaustin.org
 - Katie Rudnik, krudnik@rstx.org
 - Caleb Pritchard, caleb.pritchard@austintexas.gov
 - Katherin Selber, ks15@txstate.edu

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- Melisa Markman, Melisa.Markman@austintexas.gov
- District 10, District10lists@gmail.com
- Tatiana Marchizano <tmarchizano@caritasofaustin.org>
- Garrett Schmitz <gschmitz@caritasofaustin.org>
- Nancy Wolf nwolf1000@gmail.com

How to Contact Council Member Alter's (District 10) office:

District 10 main line: (512) 978-2110

district10@austintexas.gov / melisa.markman@austintexas.gov

MPT Harper-Madison

Caleb Pritchard

512-978-2134

caleb.pritchard@austintexas.gov

09/16/2021 Austin Refugee Roundtable Meeting

Attendees:

Lauren Hargraves, CTOR

Salimah Shamsuddin, Austin ISD Refugee Family Support Coordinator

Caroline Haywood, Multicultural Refugee Coalition

Kate Taylor, CST

Josue Zepeda Sanic, CST

Diane Kanawati, MCSS

Tamara Goheen, COA APL

Ramjaane Niyoyita, The Ramjaane Joshua Foundation

Ahmed Abbas, CWS Call Center

Polly Alexander, Red Cross of South and Central Texas

Lu Ziedan, iACT



Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

Laura Erickson, Ladies Let's Talk
Chichi Armstrong, Ladies Let's Talk
Salimah Shamsuddin, AISD Refugee Coordinator
Lauren Hargraves, CTOR
Caroline Haywood, MRC
Bridget Newell, Refugee Medical Screening Clinic
Ayesha Hassan, CWS
Lynn Burdick, RST
Rocio Villalobos, COA Equity Office
Aso "Mike" Kakarash, Caritas of Austin

Agenda:

- **Introduction and community building question**
 - Each member will introduce themselves by sharing their name, title, organization and share with us how long they have been attending the ARR meetings for.

- **Afghan Refugee and SIV updates** (RST and Caritas)
 - Caritas: Hasn't seen many new Afghan arrivals at Caritas (doesn't have a resettlement program, so clients are self-referred). Will update when they start seeing Afghan arrivals from bases and possibly "lily pads" (other countries Afghan refugees are being sent to temporarily). Has interpreters that speak Dari and Pashto. Community has really been reaching out - CapMetro donated 150 bus passes in response.
 - RST: Already seen 30 Afghan refugees in August, have resettled 127 Afghan arrivals YTD. 55 in the pipeline.
 - 492 Afghan parolees projected to be resettled in Central/South Texas. 33,000 nationally. Afghan parolees are different from Afghan SIVs. Agencies trying to create a program to serve parolees.

- **Presidential Determination Updates** (Ayesha - CWS)
 - CWS Action Alert:
<https://cwsglobal.org/action-alerts/take-action-now-urge-president-biden-to-welcome-refugees-set-fy-2022-refugee-admissions-goal-at-20000/>

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- **Austin Resolution and Next Steps** (Ayesha - CWS)
 - Austin Resolution:
<https://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=366839>
 - Resolution sponsors: Mayor Steve Adler, Mayor Pro Tem Natasha Harper-Madison, Council Member Alison Alter, Council Member Leslie Pool, and Council Member Gregorio Casar.
 - Ayesha will invite City Council members to attend ARR meeting, would like to dedicate the first 30 minutes of meeting to provide overview of refugee resettlement.
 - Does anyone have an existing connection to City Council?
 - Lu/IACT recommended reaching out to [Simone Talma Flowers](#)
 - Kate/CST knows policy people (mostly LMSWs that work with City Council) and will ask
 - Bridget/Health Screening Clinic may know someone also
 - Please reach out to Ayesha
 - Ayesha will volunteer to facilitate presentation - there's an existing one from the Legislative days.
 - Lu will help with the IACT section
 - Ayesha would like to make this as inclusive as possible - if there are other agencies that would like to add something to the presentation, would like to include them.
 - Salimah/AISD would like to look at the presentation and assist with planning. She does a lot of professional development for professionals.
 - Polly could discuss what Red Cross does (restoring family links and resources Red Cross provides such as phones on bases)

- **Afghan Community Leader Introduction**
 - Mohammad Waseel and Samsoor Mandozay ([New Afghan Culture Center of Texas](#)) - go back and forth from Pflugerville and El Paso. Seeking donations such as clothes (esp. Women and children), hygiene items, blankets, shoes, etc. for evacuees coming through the base in El Paso.
 - "The New Afghan Cultural Center serves the Texas Afghan community. We have been receiving lots of requests for how the community can

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

help. Since August, several hundred Afghan refugees (men, women, and children) have arrived in El Paso and are currently in need of the following items. We are currently accepting NEW toiletries - regular size (toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss, soap, deodorant, shampoo, conditioner, hairbrush, first aid items, sanitary napkins, diapers-all sizes), NEW or like new kid and adult clothes all sizes, used/good condition children's books, and sturdy bags to carry donations. For donation deliveries, please contact Mohammad Masood, Afghan Community Organizer at 1-512-999-0781 or email him at waseel.masood21@gmail.com. We plan to drop off donations to El Paso at the end of the month (September 2021).“

- Planning on meeting with the Mayor in El Paso to discuss assisting Afghan people at the bases. Salimah will have an official and more detailed list of needs that will be shared after the meeting with the Mayor.
- There's also not a solid timeline for Afghan evacuees to be processed at the bases - could be a month, could be a year.
- Mayor of El Paso says donations would better be received through Red Cross, so opportunity to connect Polly/Red Cross and Afghan Cultural Center. Contact: wade.waldron@redcross.org and polly.alexander@redcross.org
- There's a related Afghan Culture Center in Houston.
- Samsoor clarifies that once people are processed and leaving bases, then RST and other resettlement sites will take care of them because they'll be receiving (hopefully) funding from the federal government. The Cultural Center is assisting people while they are on the bases.
- Lu asked if there is a physical address where agencies can refer public donations to.
- Chichi recommended the Amazon Wish List as a way to quickly and efficiently provide requested items directly to El Paso.
- Red Cross is capable to provide a service called “Red Cross Messaging” where people here can send messages from the U.S. to the International Red Cross Afghanistan.
- **Organizational updates**

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- Are IACT and Caritas taking new referrals?
 - Lu says they are starting 2 new classes next week - so send them info, but no guarantees. Classes are still virtual and were not taking asylum-seekers for a while, but hopefully for October they can take a few.
 - Mike says due to CMA Covid Extension Waiver expiring that Caritas will have new capacity to take clients again. Caritas provides both virtual and in-person classes following CDC guidelines and on a case-by-case situation.
 - CWS has Call Specialist specifically for Afghan arrivals (speak Pashto, Dari, Farsi, etc.) to connect them to services. Ahmed will send out flyer to the ARR Gmail Group.
 - MRC is looking to hire or recruit volunteers for ESL classes starting at end of October.
 - Community supported agriculture program supporting refugee farmers in the Austin area - if interested in getting local fresh vegetables while supporting refugees: <https://www.mrcaustin.org/csa>.
 - Lu recommended that Literacy Coalition has AmeriCorps members who need service hours that might provide resources.
 - AISD is also looking for a new Family Support Liaison (FT, hopefully speaking Pashto and Dari)
 - Remember that the Austin Refugee Roundtable Facebook page is active and a good outlet for sharing information to the community!
 - Send Lu or Kate (Taylor) new member information
- **Notes:**
 - **Each organization will have to send out Zoom link for the ARR meeting they are facilitating. *Please delete the invite from Miranda and accept new invites***
 - **Salimah Shamsuddin will send out the next invite for October 21st, 2021**
-

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

08/19/2021 Austin Refugee Roundtable Meeting

Attendees:

Kate Taylor, CST
Miranda Roberts, RST
Salimah Shamsuddin, Austin ISD
Ayesha Hassan, CWS
Lubna Zeidan, iACT
Lauren Hargraves, CTOR
Chichi Armstrong, LLT
Laura Erickson - LLT
Aso "Mike" Kakarash, Caritas
Bridget Newell
Melinda Szabo, MRC
Houmma Garba
Caroline Haywood -- MRC
Diane Kanawati - MCSS
Rocio Villalobos, COA

CWS Updates on Afghanistan (if any):

- No clear updates, had a good meeting with Senator Cornyn staff and hoping to get to talk to more folks
- <https://cwsglobal.org/action-alerts/take-action-urge-the-administration-to-expand-refugee-protections-for-afghans-fleeing-violence-and-persecution/>
- CWS is partnering with Asian Family Support Services of Austin to host a mental health and wellness training in Dari via Zoom. We will be sending out a flyer soon. <https://www.facebook.com/events/621369375497808>

Organization Updates:

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

RST:

- Receiving lots of incoming families, getting about 8 hour notice for families coming in
- 56 arrivals scheduled for August- refugees also included
- Waiting to hear on added arrivals from Afghanistan, EMM sending more assurances for those specific cases
- Possible processing available at bases where families are going - Ft. Lee and Dulles
- Needing housing for bigger families (more than 2 bedroom)
- Furniture needed: tables and chairs, sofas
- Any donation requests for RST can go to Lynn (lburdick@rstx.org)
- Last known that incoming families are being tested for COVID upon landing

Center for Survivors of Torture (CST): We will be making an official statement tomorrow about incoming SIVs and support for Afghanistan allies. We are currently providing all services remotely which include individual and group counseling and clinical case management services. Our current groups include meditation, women's yoga, coping skills and we will likely be hosting a case management resource group in the near future that we would love to highlight our ARR partners in. We are still accepting new client referrals in Austin and in Dallas. Please **call** to refer clients for CST's services. Austin - (512) 358-4612 / Dallas - (214) 827-2314.

In order to refer a client, please make sure that they meet one of the two following definitions:

Primary survivor: An individual who is determined eligible for services based on a direct experience of torture including being forced to witness the torture of another individual. Clients who also qualify as secondary survivors should only be reported once as primary survivors.

Secondary survivor: An individual who is a member of the same family as or a close intimate of a primary survivor and has been adversely affected by the torture experience of the primary survivor, but did not witness the torture of another individual.

- There is currently a waitlist for services in Austin, typically 2-4 weeks before initial intake
- Currently taking referrals for eligible survivors in Central and North Texas
- New referrals may be added immediately to CST's group if the client is interested, no waitlist for our meditation or coping skills groups
- CST provides professional interpreters for counseling as needed

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

MRC

- Fundraiser happening: [A Cause for Celebration](#), in person with virtual option and online silent auction!
- [Fall CSA](#) starts 9/20
- ESL classes still going well
 - Looking for in-person ESL Teacher!
 - Volunteers coming back in September
- No hiring currently, will look closer to holidays to hire staff again!

LLT

- Starting up again after September/Labor Day
 - Will send posters to pass along to clients who want to join
- Working with St. Matthews to store furniture for RST

AISD

- Yes to virtual learning for KG - 6 grade
- Looking for Pashto interpreter to work as a contract interpreter
 - Flexible with their own hours
 - Certified interpreters will get paid more
 - Not required
- Adding 3rd person to team (yay!)
 - Onboarded by September

IACT

- English classes still going and still virtual
 - 8 classes currently, looking to add more with Afghan arrivals
 - Classes will remain virtual through January
- Youth programming
 - If new students/teens, IACT offers mentorship
 - Send referrals over
 - Mentors do not need to be bilingual, bonus if they are
 - Tutoring
 - Possible in-person, still virtual

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- There are clients still in Afghanistan for the summer- working to find out where families are
 - Send list to Ayesha Hassan

Caritas

- No arriving families, will refer to RST if resettlement services needed
 - Still serving clients through CMA and Employment Services
- New staff starting from Afghanistan
 - Has worked with families before, great resource!

Muslim Community Support Services

- No updates, working with a few families to get paperwork processed to start receiving services

COA

- Recently released a report in collaboration with the LBJ School around inclusion challenges faced by immigrant communities, as well as policy recommendations in order to advance immigrant incorporation
- COVID 19 Impact Survey for New American Economy
 - Looking at BIPOC info
 - Going to release broad overview report of 5 cities (including austin) by end of August
 - Recs for city to continue to address needs around emergency response and management
- Welcoming week (Sept. 10-19)
 - Goal of having an in-person naturalization ceremony on 9/17 (citizenship day)
 - Will be highlighting stories via social media during Welcoming Week - please feel free to reshare to your own social media channels
 - If graphics or language - send to Rocio and will add to newsletter and Welcoming Week website

Added notes:

- From Lu:

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- please remember to send me info you want to get out for the newsletter. Especially for help you might need or volunteers
-

07/15/2021 Austin Refugee Roundtable Meeting

Attendees:

Miranda Roberts, RST
Melinda Szabo-MRC
Chichi Armstrong - LLT
Rocio Villalobos - COA Equity Office
Ayesha Hassan - CWS
Mike Kakarash-Caritas
Bridget Newell-Refugee Medical Screening Clinic
Salimah Shamsuddin-AISD
Lu Zeidan-iACT
Houmma Garba-City of Austin
Elena Lopez-RST
Ramjaane Joshua Niyoyita
Polly Alexander-American Red Cross (polly.alexander@redcross.org)

Post WRD Thoughts:

- Attendance #'s
 - MRC Volunteer Day: 6 signed up, 3 attended
- Events:
 - Marketing panels bigger/across the board
 - Faith communities
 - Kiwanis/Rotary/Lions Clubs
 - Local civic organizations
 - Eventbrite signups for more auto promotion through website
 - Zoom isn't always reliable
 - 2022:
 - In-person event
 - Possible partnership with City of Austin

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- Parks department?
- Austin Public Library?
- Community Centers (AARC, Mexican American Cultural Center, etc)
- Graphics:
 - Logo for ARR to add to email signature for ARR members
 - Link to ARR website with event information
- Invitations
 - Local + State representative(s)
 - Fan fare to sign proclamation
- Press Release
 - To include citizenship ceremony

Organization updates:

AISD- Salimah

- Back to school bash Saturday 8/7 at Palmer Events Center
 - 9AM - 1PM
 - School registration
 - Languages offered, Salimah will send list of interpreters
 - Free haircuts for kids
 - School back in-person, no virtual optional
 - School starts 8/17
 - Vaccine Clinic
 - AISD will shuttle
 - Flyer has info on locations
 - 7:30AM - 1:30PM
 - Salimah will send flyer with all languages to ARR
- Salimah's programs will move over to Webb Middle School
 - International Welcome Center to also move over for better access to families
- Hiring for Refugee Family Liaison
 - Open until 7/23
 - Pashto or Burmese speaker for position

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- Application here:
<https://www.applitrack.com/austinisd/onlineapp/1BrowseFile.aspx?id=672098>

Ladies Let's Talk

- Finishing up 3rd year of being an org
- Working on strategic planning for what's in future
- Looking at being in-person again
 - Covenant Presbyterian willing to donate space for meetings
 - Not sure if Delta variant will keep all things virtual
- Ramping up outreach
- Additional workshops added for pronunciation
 - Volunteer speech therapists

MRC

- Taking August off at the farm
 - Too hot
 - Last volunteer day is 7/31
 - CSA starts up again in September
- 3rd session of ESL to start in August
- Cause for Celebration Event
 - 9/29
 - Mercury Hall
 - Live music
 - drinks/snacks
 - Silent auction
 - Melinda will share flyer

iACT

- Back in person in October for new fiscal year
 - Going to keep a remote component
 - Evening class possibility
- Lots of new referrals
 - No new asylum seekers, will refer to LLT, other programs
 - Manos de Cristo possible for men's talking group

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- Starting in September
- Summer program happening through end of July
 - Teen mentorship starting at beginning of the school year
 - New arrivals, 9th grade and up
 - In person

Caritas:

- Back to 100% in office
- Lots of cuban/haitian arrivals
- 2 Employment Specialist openings- <https://caritasofaustin.org/who-we-are/careers/>
 - Immediate openings to fill

City of Austin Update: Rocio

- launched the Immigrant Integration Grant
- Welcoming Week planning
 - 9/10 - 9/19
 - All virtual due to COVID rise in cases
 - Would like help to feature some community members through our various channels and would love your help in identifying people that would be interested in being featured

Red Cross: Polly Alexander

- Restoring Family Links
 - Available to families who lost contact with their family members
- Cultural Orientation
 - Presentation for natural disasters and emergencies (preparedness training)
 - Can do presentations virtually

RST:

- Working on cookbook + events

04/15/2021 Austin Refugee Roundtable Meeting



Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

Attendees:

Lauren Hargraves, CTOR
Lynn Burdick - RST
Kate Taylor, CST
Arielle Levin, GirlForward
Julia Montoya, Caritas of Austin
Salimah Shamsuddin, AISD
Tamara Goheen, COA Public Library tamara.goheen@austintexas.gov
Ayesha Hassan, Church World Service - ahasan@cwsglobal.org
Elena Lopez, RST
Michel Byamugu, Caritas of Austin
Mayra Lopez, Caritas of Austin
Miranda Roberts, RST
Diane Kanwati, Muslim Community Support Services (MCSS)
Rocio Villalobos, COA Equity Office - Immigrant Affairs
Melinda Szabo, MRC - Americorps VISTA
Lubna Zeidan-iACT

Intro of NEW attendees:

Kim Williams, CST
Nick Morciglio, CST

Upcoming Events:

World Refugee Day (June 20)

- Date of celebration set to June 19 (Sat) also noted: Juneteenth
 - Want to acknowledge and fold in Juneteenth
 - Voted in favor of spreading out events across the month for this year (5 weeks)
 - Different theme each week:
 - film and books (first week),
 - process of resettlement,
 - defining/clarifying immigration terms (maybe),
 - leaders in refugee communities (Ayesha, Kate),
 - language and culture (including food)
 - Be mindful of strengths based language and messaging/presentation

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- Want to appeal to a wide/varying audience, including local refugees
- Invite refugee community leaders to WRD meeting to ask for feedback on engagement
- Notes for future WRD:
 - Have it be a month or week long event with activities, hopefully not have it compete with Juneteenth
 - Showcasing different restaurants, activities, etc.
- What was suggested to be included, let's make a firm plan:
 - Film screening (LIVE)
 - Week of suggested films
 - Discussion after film (LIVE discussion preferred)
 - Poem "Home" by Warsan Shire:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nl9D92Xiygo>
 - Language lessons (pre-recorded)
 - Panel discussion of some of the current major conflicts happening (Myanmar/Burma, DRC, or Eritrea?) to put into context the reason people are fleeing (pre-recorded OR LIVE,
 - RST has Book Club on calendar 10AM-1130AM, refugee centered book
 - Recording from Ahmed interviewing a client in French (with captions) about her experience - maybe share that?
 - Local refugee leader/comedian having a possible comedy show/event

Action Items

- Ayesha will obtain Austin proclamation
- Miranda will create spreadsheet for WRD calendar
- APL and City of Austin Equity Office hosting naturalization ceremonies at Twin Oaks branch in May (14th, 28th) and June (11th)
 - Rocio can find someone to help with photos and videos to stream/share
 - Agencies might have advanced knowledge of who will be naturalized, maybe ask clients to volunteer their story?
 - APL is looking for a partner for virtual citizenship classes (Southeast branch), contact Tamara Goheen (Tamara.Goheen@austintexas.gov)
- Kate and Miranda will work on Canva graphic for ARR/WRD outreach

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- Round table discussions- live-how to support refugees in your community (iACT has a group of teens working with refugees)
 - Ayesha volunteering to facilitate next meeting call
- Rotating host responsibilities for the ARR Zoom
- Site cleaning on ARR website (<http://austinrefugees.org/>) → send recommendations to Lu and Maggie @ IACT

Organizational updates:

Hope Clinic (www.hopeclinicaustin.org) - received grant to get more doses of vaccines, also applying for grant to assist with community messaging and vaccine hesitancy; accepting appointments (not walk-ins) currently, see clients primary care and chronic disease management, well-women's exams, some screenings, can provide free meds to patients, try to be "one-stop-shop" as much as possible; located on Cameron rd., donation based (suggested \$10 but do not turn down clients)

IACT - contacted by Social Hackers Academy working with refugees in Europe for WRD, do web design/creative content and would like to start (virtual) classes for refugees in Austin w/certificate at end of program

GirlForward - Beginning to recruit new mentees for upcoming school year; please send referrals of rising 9th-12th grade girls to Arielle (arielle.levin@girlforward.org)

CST - Please invite others to "like" the ARR FB page and request for admin privileges

RST - bus campaign w/RST imaging with CapMetro during WRD (May - August)

Refugee Leaders to invite to WRD meeting:

Nagendra Basnet, basnetn145@gmail.com

Next ARR Meeting: May 20th



Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

03/18/2021 Austin Refugee Roundtable Meeting

Attendees:

Chichi Armstrong, Ladies Let's Talk
Lynn Burdick - Refugee Services of TX
Lauren Hargraves, CTOR
Kate Taylor, CST
Melinda Szabo, MRC
Tamara Goheen, COA Public Library
Diane Kanawati, Muslim Community Support Services
Niyenth Iyengar, Friends of MSF at UT Austin
Miranda Roberts, RST
Elena Lopez, RST
Rachel Hanover, RST
Ayesha Hassan, CWS

Intro of NEW attendees:

None

Upcoming Events:

TX Refugee Advocacy Week (March 22-26)

- Webinar for state representatives March 22
- Texas Welcomes Refugees (March 22) Register for the webinar here: <http://bit.ly/TexasWebinar1>; FB Event link [HERE](#).
- Women In Refugee Resettlement (March 24th) Register for this virtual event here: <http://bit.ly/WomenInResettlement>; FB Event link [HERE](#).
- Day of Action (March 24)

World Refugee Day (June 20)

Update requests:

- update on the Texas/southern border situation

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- Red Cross National Team on the ground, helping shelter (minors?) and reconnect w/ties
 - Want to make sure that Austin is prepared to receive unanticipated arrivals (asylees)
 - ~3,000 minors sent to Dallas for a shelter
 - CST in Dallas has higher capacity for new clients than in Austin currently, feel free to send referrals their way
 - Ayesha will be sending out emails tomorrow and early next week with more information from on the ground
-
- Have refugee families received their stimulus checks? Should there be a plan on getting some info to refugees on what they can expect and if there are things out there they should follow up on?
 - RST discussing and looking into the issue, discussed if clients have previously received stimulus checks and they had not
 - Foundation Communities Tax Help program can help folks w/stimulus checks (have Spanish and English); Also assist asylum seekers
 - Is FC assisting the community w/disaster unemployment assistance applications (through FEMA)? They're helping with Texas Rent Relief applications, helping with a variety of things. Contact Lynn (lynn.cowles@Foundcom.org).
 - Tax deadline just extended to May 17
 - Also, Vita Clinic helps w/filing taxes
(<https://www.uwct.org/who-we-help/vita-free-tax-preparation>)

Organizational updates:

- Center for Survivors of Torture (CST) has two new groups for our clients. We are beginning a female-identifying Zoom yoga class as well as a Survivor Support Group. We are still accepting referrals by phone call to (512) 358-4612 and clients will be referred to existing groups at CST upon intake. As a reminder, CST serves all immigrant trauma survivors (regardless of current immigration status). New staff member, Kim Williams (LCSW)
- LLT will be resuming a session after Ramadan (April - May)
- APL has been meeting w/USCIS to get naturalization ceremonies outside of public libraries. In San Antonio, doing same-day ceremonies as much as possible (sometimes

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

30-40 people). Still have hotspots available (for loan), hopefully Google chromebooks to loan long-term (for people with students in the household, doesn't have to be specifically used for school or by the students -- don't need a library card, APL can deliver)

- RST working on WRD and cookbook idea w/clients (if you have anyone interested, contact Elena aelopez@rstx.org)
- Casa Marianella: RENT 3.0 was announced this week and case managers at Casa Marianella can assist with applications for this assistance
- Caritas preparing for Texas Advocacy week; expecting increase in unanticipated arrivals (asylees) and ready to accept clients enrolled into job readiness classes; clients will enroll in a tech literacy class in-person and then continue services virtually
- Ayesha preparing for Texas Advocacy Week (see above events) -- they will be recorded; closed legislative meetings with resettlement agencies and legislators, the other events are open. Will be sending out action alerts for next week. Presidential Determination has not been signed yet, over 700 refugee cases already cancelled - want to push the administration to get that signed
- Red Cross is doing restoring family links work, trying to find someone, Tirhas Wondifraw from Ethiopia, to get her reconnected with family. Call Emily @ 512-364-5137.
- MRC working on storm recovery, lost a lot of seedlings but were able to protect some crops in the field. Pivoted Amplify Austin to cover staff wages. Offering staff w/ESL and GED classes (12-week sessions, looking for ~6-8 more ESL volunteers). Hiring at the Open Arms studio -- open to all migrants, not just refugees. Seeking affordable childcare resources for staff -- contact Melinda (mszabo@mrcaustin.org). Hiring page: <https://www.mrcaustin.org/join-our-team>
 - Volunteers do not need to be in Austin, all classes are virtual
 - Childcare resources (from CST) - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1l088YIMc7jE2Pmzf-EpSLuQUbNTZBt65uR1KZdXauZw/edit#>
 - Also, Girl Scouts who are Babysitter Certified may be a childcare resource (volunteers)
 - Red Cross does the Babysitter Certification
- City of Austin Equity Office is working on a mini-grant program for immigrant integration (broadly categorized) - may be a good source of funding for WRD (June) or

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

Welcoming Week (September) events/activities. Rocio will send more information out soon. Organizations who are collaborating scored more highly on proposals, depends on how ARR wants to approach application

World Refugee Day planning (last 30 min)

- 3 months away
- Should we look into a film?
- Do we want to plan for the 19th or 20th?
 - Saturday, June 19
 - Sunday, June 20
 - Many clients have church on Sundays, many votes for Saturday the 19th
- Do we want to open up WRD and put some emphasis on Asylum Seekers?
 - Seems like general support from group
 - Ayesha volunteered to spearhead this particular initiative
 - Miranda will share the documentary screening “Oh Mercy” or contacts involved in that event
 - Kate suggested clarifying/teaching on terms commonly used in immigration sphere (asylum seeker vs asylee vs refugee) (maybe create/find an infographic to share on FB page)
 - Fireside chat suggestion with everyone from different “refugee” categories (VOTs, asylees, SIVs, refugees) to talk about their experiences
- Can re-use previous activities
 - Miranda really enjoyed the language lessons, open up more opportunities for new/returning clients who want to be involved and have more languages
 - Spanish
 - Kiswahili
 - Dari
 - Many more clients have computers now which hopefully will see a more robust participation and attendance
- Create a sheet to send to clients on how they can get involved in WRD
- Have a calendar set by the beginning of May so we can “run-of-show” to translate for clients and share out in preparation/build-up for WRD in June

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- Hopefully promote cookbook by releasing the cover and maybe simple demonstration (preview) from cookbook
 - Chichi suggested it be recorded, not live
- RST has morning bi-monthly book club - for June "Somewhere in the Unknown World" by Kao Kalia Yang (10 refugee stories)
 - Kalia Yang read her children's book at the Thinkery that was recorded and could be shared
 - Coloring page for kiddos - Miranda already has a template that could be easily implemented/sent out
- North Texas had a drum group perform and dance lesson (performed in a park with camera set up, very interactive) -- maybe something to look into locally
- North Texas Giving Day also did a Zumba lesson (RST has an on-staff Zumba instructor)
- Ayesha suggested having a panel discussion of some of the current major conflicts happening (Myanmar/Burma, DRC, or Eritrea?) to put into context the reason people are fleeing
 - Maybe a connection through NCTTP
 - Maybe a contact w/RST
- Recording from Ahmed interviewing a client in French (with captions) about her experience - maybe share that
- Ayesha will try to work on getting a resolution w/Mayor for WRD
- Possibility of coordinating meals to deliver to participants during another event (could be a fundraiser to support local refugee/immigrant businesses or do a drawing a gift card to local restaurants)

01/28/2021 Austin Refugee Roundtable Meeting

Attendees:

Ahmed Abbas, RST



[Austin Refugee Roundtable](#) Running Agenda and Notes

Annali Fuentes, E@W/IET, Literacy Coalition of Central Texas - annali.fuentes@willread.org
Arielle Levin, GirlForward
Ayesha Hassan, Church World Service
Berenice Jaramillo Caritas of Austin
Bridget Newell, Refugee Medical Screening Clinic
Carson Lehmann, E@W/IET, Literacy Coalition of Central Texas
Chichi Armstrong, Ladies Let's Talk
Diane Kanawati, Muslim Community Support Services
Elena Lopez, RST
Emily McKinnon- American Red Cross (Contact: Emily.McKinnon 2@Redcross.org)
Holly Sewell Every. Last. One.
Houmma Garba, City of Austin
Julia Montoya Caritas of Austin
Kate Taylor, CST
Kathryne, Project Access Austin
Lauren Hargraves, Central Texas Office for Refugees (CTOR)
Lu Zeidan, iACT
Lynn Burdick - Refugee Services of TX
Mayra Lopez Gutierrez Caritas of Austin
Miranda Roberts, RST
Niyenth Iyengar, Friends of MSF at UT Austin
Rachel Hanover, RST
Salimah Shamsuddin, Austin ISD
Susan Stasney, RST
Tamara Goheen, APL

Introductions:



Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

Any new agencies or groups? Please provide some info on your work and your needs!

Update from Debra Adler with TX RX card

- Prescription assistance program, partnered w/Texas Nurses' Association
- Everything approved by FDA
- HIPAA compliant - no personal information tied to card in anyway
- Every time a prescription is run through - a donation is made to Texas Childrens'
- Have an app and website where you can price prescriptions through the program and participating pharmacies
- Has a toolkit for participants - Debra will send to Miranda, Miranda will send out to group

Organizational updates:

Going through the ARR contact list to see if anything has changed as far as contacts, please respond to add new people or change staff.

ARR

- Updating the ARR list of participants
 - Will send email to verify all contacts to make sure list is clean

RST

- RST - Pause to USCIS program for 100 days, hasn't directly impacted resettlement just yet. Rumors about executive order to increase PD/pipeline to resettlement program. Received several arrival notices for throughout February (no new countries yet). ASAP: serve asylum-seekers, started to focus on basic needs in the beginning of the program. Referrals to MAP, legal services such as American Gateways and Texas Rio Grande, food banks (also deliver food to clients each Monday from volunteers), and other misc. donations from RST donors. No money or assistance for this population. Now clients get free tablets to attend ELI and navigate technology. Can sometimes give rental assistance depending on financial donations. Connected 3 families to 3 donors to receive vehicles. Open to referrals.
- No new countries of populations coming through, waiting for new administration to give executive order to see where arrivals will be for the rest of FY21

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- The executive order may be delayed - don't fret :)

Ayesha/CWS:

- Executive Order may be delayed, but still set to come out. Anti-racism group follow-up, wants to make sure we keep to that promise. Will send out Doodle to set up separate call to start addressing some of these important and critical issues.

IACT

- Asylum seekers are invited if space is available in classes
- All classes are held on Zoom
- Clients who have been in U.S. any length of time can go to classes, need to apply through IACT
- New tech class started, taking students from current English classes
 - Working on getting devices to students to learn on
- - 4 levels of classes, a few multi-level classes in evenings (all via Zoom). Getting to where they are actually teaching English, which is good. Clients learning devices quickly. Waiver for 5+ years of services (until end of April). Also has in-person, socially distanced tech (digital literacy) class to teach clients how to learn to use devices and to give out devices. Given out 12 devices and 6 wifi hotspots, has more to give out. Please send referrals to Lu.

AISD

- Re-registering parents for school next year
- - AISD Curbside Meals for all students: Free 7 day meal packs will be available each Thursday at more than 40 curbside locations throughout Austin. To find the nearest meal site please visit <https://www.austinisd.org/openforlearning/meals>. Meals are pre-packaged and already cooked. Her office continues to help w/crisis intervention. Continue to re-register parents for next school year.

Ladies Let's Talk ltaustin.org

- Conversation classes Thursday at 7 pm; Friday at 10:30 am
- Pronunciation workshops at 7 pm Monday (Middle Eastern First Language), Tuesday (Asian First Language) and Wednesday (Spanish First Language)

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- Now doing 2 conversation sessions on Thursday evenings + Friday mornings. Added 3 one-hour sessions with speech therapists to assist clients.

Project Access Austin

- Access to care needed since 2002
 - Austin/Travis County provider
 - Medical care for free
 - Anyone who is not MAP, Medicaid eligible can apply for services (projectaccess.org)
 - Age 19+
 - Must live in Travis county
 - Income-based
- Free services by physicians that have signed on as partners. Includes specialty care, hospital care, medication, durable health devices, labwork, imaging, dental services, etc. Includes those that are not MAP, Medicare/Medicaid eligible. 19+ years older w/no other healthcare coverage are eligible. No age restriction beyond 19 years old. Assistance w/transportation to get to appointments. ProjectAccessAustin.org - application online. Have the beginnings of translations of the application in the works.
 - Kathy Gichangah 512-206-1118 kgichangah@tcms.com or
 - Jose Diaz 512-206-1164 jdiaz@tcms.com

Girl Forward

- currently serving 30 mentees and several college girls who attend virtual tutoring.
 - Any girls in 9th-12th grade who are refugees, asylum seekers, asylees, English Language Learners, are eligible for our mentoring program, and girls in high school or college are eligible for tutoring
- If you know a girl who might be interested in joining, please reach out to Arielle!

Friends of MSF(UT) - no real change from last meeting- we are still meeting virtually, so if you have any volunteer opportunities (virtual especially!) please let me know so I can reach out to our members to inform them of it and help them get involved

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

Austin Public Library

- working to get our hotspots distributed to anyone who needs them. The ones that are earmarked for households with students (K-12) are all spoken for, but we still have some that are available for adults through agreement with your agencies. Chromebooks for students will be coming soon. If you are working with any household that could use them, please get in touch. Tamara.goheen@austintexas.gov

CST

- Taking referrals
 - Center for Survivors of Torture (CST)
 - Austin: 512-358-4612
 - Dallas: 214-827-2314
 - www.cstnet.org
 - Groups: Art class, meditation groups for Spanish/English/French/Nepali speakers, Coping Skills group for Nepali and Spanish speakers, Case management resource group
 - All services are virtual currently (on Zoom), we can provide our clients with Chromebooks.
 - Participants must be CST clients - art class, meditation groups, resource/case management, coping skills groups. Medical doctor on staff to help w/forensic evaluations. Have an office in Dallas and serve clients all over Texas. All CST services are currently being hosted virtually. Groups and individual counseling are hosted via Zoom or phone call.

Caritas

- All classes are virtual except for the Virtual Learning Class series. Classes are face to face and asynchronous for classes who need to attend in the evenings. Computers, routers and wifi hotspots are available for clients.
- Provide employment services for refugees. Still taking unanticipated arrivals. Just hired new Employment Specialist - will be announcing soon. Hiring another Employment Specialist as well. Working on Asylee/Underserved populations hotline, working on getting flyer on CapMetro buses. Working w/IACT, RST, & Ayesha for Refugee



Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

Advocacy Days. Offering all classes virtually and also offering one in-person class for tech literacy. Have routers and hotspots available for clients to use throughout the duration of the program. Clients experiencing challenges on navigating and getting used to technology which can take longer (much like IACT).

Language Access/City of Austin

- COVID testing: 2 sites will be closing at Montopolis and at Little Walnut, consolidating w/other 4 sites. Appointments will be transferred to other sites, the sites closing will be listed online, and maps available. Language interpretation services available. Using iSpeak Austin language identification cards. For vaccine sites: have 2 sites the City runs @ DelCo and Dove Springs Recreation Centers. A 3rd vaccine site is run by UT. Saturday will start having vaccine site in Pflugerville mainly for teachers. DelCo and Dove Springs have Spanish interpreters or bilingual staff on-site. Staff can help fill out iSpeak language identification form. ****Only those that have an appointment may show up and stand in line.**** Makes it difficult for refugees and others who do not speak English and may want to invite other family members. But City staff are equipped to serve everybody with appointment who come to the sites.

Bridget/RHSC

- giving vaccines, received 100. Already gave all 100 vaccines in 1A and 1B group. Not sure if getting anymore vaccines. RST has a waiting list already for if/when clinic receives more vaccines. Suggested others to go through Austin Public Health as that may be quicker avenue. Will follow-up and can answer questions, esp. for clients that are 65+ years. Can also vaccinate people from the public, if they receive vaccines and will go off a second waiting list. Bridget will be out on Maternity leave soon.

The Literacy Coalition of Central Texas

- New CEO - Janet Torres
- Upcoming Coalition Cafe on 2/26 at 9:30am
 - To register check out our website: <https://willread.org/partner-network/>
 - To be added to our email list and receive our newsletter please email our Partnerships Program Manager, sarah.forbes@willread.org
- English At Work

Austin Refugee Roundtable

Austin Refugee Roundtable Running Agenda and Notes

- Offers ESL classes in the workplace which eliminates barriers such as work schedule conflicts, child care and transportation
- No requirements for students, just need to be employed by the business that contracts with us
- Classes are multi lingual and vary in ESL levels
- For more information, please contact program manager
annali.fuentes@willread.org

Every. Last. One.

- Emergency intervention and stabilization program working with children and families traumatized by the US immigration policies whether held in American detention facilities, forced to remain in deadly conditions of Mexico through the MPP program, or deported to countries where they are without any caretakers and are often facing death threats from organized crime.
- The only organization providing independent sponsorship opportunities for the most vulnerable children who have been detained the longest and have no relatives in the US as sponsors. The program provides loving family homes that can support their healthy physical, emotional and educational growth and development.

Needs:

- Referrals for potential family sponsors open to taking in teenagers - cat 4 detainees
Any potential sponsors please read through our sponsorship section on our website at <https://www.everylastone.org/get-involved/>
- Awareness spread that this is an option for detained children. Many LSP's and CM's at ORR still don't know this is something that can be done.

Holly Sewell

holly@everylastone.org

Anti-Racism Working Group - potential next steps

Upcoming events:

Amplify Austin (March 4-5)

Shalom Supper (March 7)

Austin Refugee Roundtable

[Austin Refugee Roundtable](#) Running Agenda and Notes

- Miranda to update

TX Refugee Advocacy Week (March 22-26)

- Webinar for state representatives March 22 (tentative)
- Day of Action (March 24)

World Refugee Day (June 20)

polly.alexander@redcross.org

Restoring Family Links

Even War has Rules 1 hour class on zoom

Possible Transportation for Refugee's