



Newcomer, Refugee, & Asylum Seeker Support Guide: Districts & Families

(Updated January 2023)

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The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvement Act of 2011 (107-110) states that homeless children are to have access to education and other services. The McKinney-Vento Act specifically states that barriers to enrollment must be removed. Children and youths who **lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence** are eligible to receive services under Title VI, Subtitle B of the McKinney-Vento Act. Please understand that many refugees/unaccompanied youth may temporarily resettle in hotels, which makes them eligible for services under the Act.

–([105 ILCS 45/](#)) [Education for Homeless Children Act](#)

[McKinney-Vento Eligibility & Quick Guide](#)

[Homeless Education, ISBE](#)

[Homeless Caregivers Enrollment Authorization Form](#): This form may be completed by caregivers of those supporting an unaccompanied youth (form is recommended, not required). This form would be signed by the unaccompanied youth, the caregiver/adult giving authorization, and the district's McKinney-Vento liaison. The school district should retain a copy of this form.

Refugee Assistance & Support in Illinois

- **[Findhelp.org](#)**: Add the zipcode of the person in need of support and find resources for: food, housing, goods, transportation, health, financial assistance, medical care, legal services, employment issues, and education.

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- **Family Focus:** Family Focus invests in strengthening families and their children in Chicago and NE Illinois so they build social capital and achieve upward economic mobility through high-quality innovative programs and services, grounded in anti-racism and social justice.
 - **The Refugee Center:** Our professional staff understand what you are going through, and we are here to help you settle and thrive in your new home. We are available to accompany you to appointments, meetings, and other situations where you need help with translation or interpretation. We offer counseling services to help you prepare for these events.

Services: Social services, mediation services, language assistance

Email: admin@ecirmac.org

Phone: 217-344-8455

Fax: 217-239-0159

Hours: Office open 9am-5pm M-F or by appointment

- **RefugeeOne:** Every year, RefugeeOne welcomes hundreds of refugees through the U.S. State Department's Refugee Admissions Program. Having fled violence, persecution, and war, vulnerable refugees from around the world come to the U.S. to rebuild their lives. Resettlement is a long and often difficult process. With your support, RefugeeOne not only equips refugees with the skills needed to survive, but also provides a full range of coordinated services that empower refugees to build the foundation for a flourishing life here in the United States.

Services: Resettlement services, English language training, workforce development, wellness program, sewing studio, Youth & Young Adults Program, women's services, immigration assistance

Email: info@refugeeone.org

Phone: (773) 989-5647

Fax: (773) 989-0484

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

- **Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), Refugee and Immigrant Services:** This website describes and provides links for many Illinois programs for refugee families including the Illinois Welcoming Center (IWC), the New Americans Initiative (NAI), and the Immigrant Family Resource Program (IFRP).

- [List of Agencies Serving Immigrants](#)

Services: Interpretation/translation services - Provide translation and interpretation services for LEP immigrants/refugees seeking to apply for, or in meeting requirements of public benefits such as TANF, SNAP, Medicaid, or childcare. Outreach and community education to educate the respective immigrant communities on public benefits and other human services. Case management services including needs assessment, benefits screening, assistance with benefits application and linkages with appropriate IDHS offices.

Food Sources

- **FoodFinder App Available to Assist Food Insecure Families:** FoodFinder has partnered with the University of Illinois Extension SNAP-Ed program to create [Find Food IL](#), an Illinois-specific food resource tool. Families can use the [Find Food IL map](#) to find places in your community offering free food or meals, stores and markets that accept SNAP/LINK or WIC coupons, and the closest Illinois Department of Human Services or WIC office.

North Cook County's Township Food Pantries:

- [Barrington Township Food Pantry](#)
 - [Elk Grove Township Food Pantry](#)
 - [Evanston Township Food Pantry](#)
 - [Maine Township Food Pantry](#)
 - [New Trier Township Food Pantry](#)
 - [Niles Township Food Pantry](#)
 - [Northfield Township Food Pantry](#)
 - [Palatine Township Food Pantry](#)
 - [Schaumburg Township Food Pantry](#)
 - [Wheeling Township Food Pantry](#)
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Childhood Trauma

- [Center for Childhood Resilience](#)
- [Illinois ACEs Response Collaborative](#)
- [Illinois Childhood Trauma Coalition](#)

Resources for Educators & Families

Illinois Early Learning Project, Web Resources

- [Cultural Backgrounders on Various Refugee and Cultural Groups New to the United States](#)

Source: Head Start ECLKC

This series of resources provide general cultural information on various refugee and cultural groups new to the United States. It is always best to get to know each family and learn their individual characteristics, as every family is unique and cultural practices vary by household and by generation. These resources provide basic information to help staff begin discussions with families and communities.

- [Fact Sheet: U.S. Refugee Resettlement](#)

Source: National Immigration Forum

This resource explains who a refugee is, where refugees come from, how long it takes to screen and vet a refugee, if refugees can legally work in the U.S., and many other commonly asked questions about refugees in the United States.

- [Guidance on Working with Refugee Children Struggling with Stress and Trauma](#)

Source: United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), The UN Refugee Agency

This resource explains to teachers what experiences cause stress or trauma in refugee children, what symptoms a child might display, and how teachers and schools can help refugee children.

- [Helping Refugee Students Feel Safe](#)

Source: Edutopia

Creating an environment of safety and security is crucial for inclusion of refugee students in the classroom. This article focuses on how teachers can support refugee students by respecting their experiences, offering routines and communication, and showing compassion.

- [How to Support Refugee Students in your School Community](#)

Source: Colorin Colorado

Learn how educators of refugees can support students' social-emotional health, academic instruction, and acclimation to a new life in the U.S. This article also offers strategies for smoothing the transition for both refugees and mainstream students and supporting students through the COVID-19 pandemic.

- [Many Languages, One Classroom: Supporting Children in Superdiverse Settings](#)

Source: National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

This article gives educators strategies to support dual language learners' language

development through family engagement, environmental supports, and dual-language models.

- [**Mitigating the Effects of Trauma among Young Children of Immigrants and Refugees: The Role of Early Childhood Programs**](#)

Source: Migration Policy Institute

This issue briefly provides an overview of the experiences of young children of immigrant and refugee families in the U.S. Opportunities for early childhood programs to expand access including integrating trauma-informed strategies, ensuring home-visiting programs are equipped to serve diverse families, and encouraging collaboration and referral among agencies are described.

- [**Partnering with Newcomer Families**](#)

Source: Harvard Graduate School of Education

This article provides educators with strategies for working across language and cultural differences to make families feel at home in new schools.

- [**Raising Young Children in a New Country: Early Learning and Healthy Development Handbook**](#)

Source: Head Start ECLKC

This handbook and associated tip sheets provide families with information on six themes: family well-being, health and safety, healthy brain development, early learning and school readiness, guidance and discipline, and family engagement in early care and education. Programs serving refugee families, newly arrived immigrant families, and others may use these resources with parents to help ease their transition to a new country. Also available in Arabic.

- [**Social and Emotional Support for Refugee Families: A School Psychology Perspective**](#)

Source: Colorin Colorado

Learn more from Dr. Robyn Hess (University of Northern Colorado) about the importance of strengths-based approaches in working with refugees, the impacts of displacement and trauma on children, and the unique factors that affect outreach to refugees in rural communities.

- [**Supporting Young Children Experiencing Separation and Trauma: Resources for Adults Who Care for Them**](#)

Source: Zero to Three

Young children and their families can be tremendously affected by trauma, with significant implications for well-being well into the future. This page offers resources for families and caregivers working with very young children who have experienced trauma as well as connection to specialized mental health professionals who understand the needs of very young children.

- [**Welcoming Refugee Children into Early Childhood Classrooms**](#)

Source: National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

This NAEYC article provides early childhood educators with strategies to support

refugee children and their families in their classrooms, including creating play experiences that do not require English, familiarizing families with classrooms, and connecting with related community cultural groups.

- **[Young Learner Resources](#)**

Source: Teaching Refugees with Limited Formal Schooling

The Toolkit is a collection of resources that supports the practical implementation of the ideas for supporting young learners and their families. Resources include links to teaching guides and materials and to parent resources, some of which have been translated into other languages. There are also downloadable PDF documents with samples of practice.