

Office of Refugee & Immigrant Assistance

Economic Services Administration | Community Services Division

Guide for Private Sponsors: Pierce County

Overview

Who is this guide for?

This guide is intended for private sponsor groups who will be welcoming refugees through the Welcome Corps program. As you plan for welcoming refugees, this guide will provide you with useful information about benefits and services that refugees are eligible for in Pierce County.

What information will this guide cover?

This guide includes the following topics:

- Basic needs assistance programs
- Health and wellness
- Assistance getting a job
- Assistance learning English
- Additional support and resources

Where can I find more information?

You can find more information about benefits and services available for refugees in WA state on the [DSHS Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance website](#).

ORIA also has an [interactive resource tool](#) which allows you to search by county or program type to find services for refugees in Washington state.

Who should I contact with questions?

Please contact the Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance at oria.info@dshs.wa.gov.

Basic Needs Assistance Programs

What basic needs assistance are refugees eligible for?

Refugees arriving to Washington are usually eligible for temporary cash assistance and food assistance. Single or married adults without dependents are eligible to receive up to 12 months of cash assistance through the [Refugee Cash Assistance](#) program. Families with children under the age of 18 generally qualify for [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families](#) program, also known as TANF. Most refugees qualify for [Washington Basic Food Program](#).



How can refugees apply for basic needs assistance?

You can help the refugee(s) you are sponsoring submit their application for food and cash assistance. There are three ways to apply:

1. **Online:** At any hour, visit [Washington Connection](#) to submit an application. Note: A follow-up conversation with an eligibility specialist is still needed via phone or in-person but starting an application online will speed up the process.
2. **Over the phone:** Between the interview hours of 8:00 am to 2:00 pm, Monday – Friday, call (877) 501-2233 to speak with an eligibility specialist. Interpretation and translation services are available.
3. **In person:** Between the interview hours of 8:00 am to 2:00 pm, Monday – Friday, visit a DSHS [Community Service Office](#) near you. Interpretation and translation services are available.

Health and Wellness

How can refugees access health insurance?

Apple Health is the name for Medicaid in Washington. Apple health is free or low-cost health insurance coverage for those who qualify. Refugees are potentially eligible for Apple Health. For people less than 65 years of age, to apply for Apple Health coverage you must use [Washington Healthplanfinder](#). For people ages 65 years and older, to apply for Apple Health coverage you must use [Washington Connection](#).

Free health insurance enrollment assistance is available through SeaMar Community Health Clinics. They can be contacted by phone: [1-855-289-4503](tel:1-855-289-4503), or email: seamaripa@seamarchc.org.

How can refugees receive the Domestic Medical Screening?

Medical screening is available through the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department. Note, this is a busy time and appointments may be booked out beyond 90 days post-arrival. Private sponsor groups should plan for helping refugee clients with transportation to and from the visit.

The appointment request should be submitted within the first week after the refugee arrives in Washington. To make an appointment please see the attached Refugee Arrival Notification form and brochure. For any questions, please contact Xuan Man or Daisy Reyes with [Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department](#) at 253-255-7171 or 253-377-5338.

How can refugees be connected to primary care?

The private sponsor group should assist clients in establishing primary care with a clinic that accepts their insurance and which is located close to home. A searchable list of federally qualified health centers is also available here: <https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/> Note that there may be a wait time for new patient appointments in some locations.

How can refugees access behavioral health services?

A list of Health and Wellness Providers contracted with DSHS Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance is [available here](#).

What if the refugee I am sponsoring has a significant medical condition?

If refugees have more complex medical conditions, please reach out directly to Washington State Department of Health Refugee and Immigrant Health Program at refugeehealthprogram@doh.wa.gov to discuss potential support options for health assessment and care.

What health training resources are available for our private sponsor group?

Community Sponsorship Hub has helpful training resources available to PSGs. In addition, you may consider listening to trainings below from Switchboard as your group prepares to welcome newcomers:

- Psychological First Aid: <https://switchboardta.org/resource/psychological-first-aid-pfa-to-support-clients-affected-by-the-crisis-in-afghanistan/>
- Trauma Informed Care: <https://switchboardta.org/resource/trauma-informed-care-movement-towards-practice-2/>

Washington State Department of Health has a summary of key health items for private sponsorship groups and other groups supporting new arrivals in Washington are outlined in this document: <https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-07/420%20382%20NewcomerHealthOverview.pdf?uid=64b5db869fa59>

Assistance in Getting a Job

What resources are available to help refugees get a job?

There are programs available in Washington state to help newly arrived refugees find jobs. Once someone is enrolled in cash assistance, they should be referred to a service provider for the [Limited English Proficiency Pathway](#) program. If the refugee(s) you are sponsoring does not receive a referral, or you have questions about their referral, reach out to their DSHS WorkFirst case manager. You can request a specific LEP Pathway service provider in a location convenient for the refugees. [View a list of LEP Pathway service providers here](#).

Another program available to refugees in Washington is the [Career Ladder for Educated and/or Vocationally Experienced Refugees](#) program, better known as CLEVER. CLEVER assists highly educated and/or skilled refugees with re-entering their career field in the United States. To enroll refugees in CLEVER, contact one of the service providers [listed here](#).

Assistance in Learning English

What resources are available to help refugees learn English?

There are programs available in Washington state to help newly arrived refugees learn English. Once someone is enrolled in cash assistance, they should be referred to a service provider for the [Limited English Proficiency Pathway](#) program. If the refugee(s) you are sponsoring does not receive a referral, or you have questions about their referral, reach out to their DSHS WorkFirst case manager. You can request a specific LEP Pathway service provider in a location convenient for the refugees. [View a list of LEP Pathway service providers here.](#)

Additional Support and Resources for Successful Resettlement

What other services are available for refugees in WA?

Legal Services: Refugees who have been in the U.S. for one year can apply to become lawful permanent residents and get a green card. There are service providers available in Washington to help with this application process. Find a [list of providers here](#).

Housing: Refugees can apply for one-time stabilization funding to assist with housing-related costs. Contact a service provider [listed here](#) to apply.

Other services, including programs for refugee youth and older refugees are available in Washington state. To view more information, visit [ORIA's webpage for Whole Family Services](#).