



## **Perspective/Opinion**

# **Walking Together.... Reimagining Our Path to Community**

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Ever since I began to do refugee resettlement work it was clear it couldn't be done without many partners every step of the way. We must walk together as one community – learning how we can do it collaboratively, and compassionately.

In collaboration with refugee resettlement agencies, local health departments, and private health care providers, Wisconsin's [Refugee Health Program](#):

- Assures refugees receive a comprehensive health assessment upon U.S. arrival.
- Coordinates refugee health screening services with federal and state refugee resettlement partners.
- Supplies refugee screening providers with information on specific health concerns of various refugee populations.
- Advocates for culturally competent care and the use of appropriately qualified medical interpreters for quality assurance.
- Coordinates refugee health concerns with other programs within the Division of Public Health.

An individual identified as a refugee, asylee, Cuban/Haitian entrant, victim of trafficking, or Amerasian is eligible for refugee health screening upon arrival to Wisconsin.

It is vital that we come together not just in Milwaukee but across the state to access the resources of shared learning and wisdom for those working in and with immigrant and refugee populations. We must all work toward providing services that are accurate, fair and easy to access. Walking together (though we may have known this all along) is not only important, but is vital to the times; our steep learning curve is forcing us to work together closely, listening and learning from each other to effectively share information and best practices with each other. We all play important parts as we reimagine how to be a more welcoming community.

**Our experience with COVID-19 has made it clear**

All our roles have impact:

- Funders/Scientists/Researchers
- Public health professionals at all levels
- Clinicians, community-based organizations, clinics, and pharmacies
- Organizations and individuals that have relationships with impacted community members that get the message out and work with misinformation circulating in community
- The refugee community health workers who make the important connections with members of the community

### **All are important**

Now, we welcome again new communities of displaced persons. Many groups are involved and can impact these people, including:

- Federal/State/Local officials
- Philanthropists and national agency volunteers
- Emergency management and healthcare systems
- Local resettlement agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local resettlement networks
- Local volunteers

We all have to do the work we know best, learn what we can and walk together.  
And may it impact your life and work in the world.

#### ***For further reading:***

Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Refugee Health Program for medical screenings, refugee resettlement statistics, and cultural information can be found at

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/international/index.htm>

#### ***For further action:***

Opportunities to volunteer with refugees: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/refugee/help>

Give monetary donations to your favorite refugee-serving organizations so they can continue the great work they are doing

- [International Institute of Wisconsin \(Milwaukee\)](#)
- [Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan \(Milwaukee\)](#)
- [World Relief Fox Valley \(Oshkosh and Appleton\)](#)
- [Jewish Social Services \(Madison\)](#)
- [Ethiopian Community Development Council \(Wausau\)](#)
- [Catholic Charities of Green Bay](#)

***For further self-education:***

Afghan arrival resources and ways to get involved locally:

Catholic Charities Milwaukee's page on supporting Afghan refugees at Fort McCoy:

<https://www.ccmke.org/Catholic-Charities/Support-for-Afghan-Refugees>

***For your patients:***

- Catholic Charities Milwaukee's Refugee and Immigrant Video Resource Library. [Click here](#) to visit our YouTube channel and subscribe for more education and legal videos.
- [Click here](#) to find resources on flu shot instructions, parent teacher conferences, communicating with school in English and your language, back to school safety, health care options, importance of sleep for kids, time changes, COVID vaccine in Milwaukee, and back to school safety during COVID. Information in the following languages Arabic, Burmese, English, Karen, Rohingya, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Pashto, Dari, Hmong, Laotian, and Malay.

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