

How to Support Refugees & Immigrants:

A Guide for Congregations & Communities

Overview

We are in a pivotal moment for refugees and immigrants who have been waiting for their chance to resettle and rebuild their lives in the United States, as well as for those who have newly arrived, including children.

A flurry of harmful executive orders and directives has been proposed or implemented in the week since the new administration took office. These orders will greatly affect the work of Jewish Family Service, as the U.S. government has withdrawn its promised financial support for refugees who have already entered this country. Resettling newly arrived refugees—with funding from those federal dollars—constitutes our largest effort within our Refugee and Immigrant Services program, and JFS will do all we can to continue supporting them.

As we face this time of crisis, we will remain committed to our mission: Inspired by our history and values, JFS supports the needs of Jewish individuals and families, refugees and immigrants, and our broader community to achieve well-being, health, and stability.

Learn More About the Executive Orders & Directives

Refugee resettlement suspended

All refugee arrivals were suspended, closing the door on thousands of refugees who were scheduled to arrive in the U.S.

WHAT IT MEANS: By and large, refugees will not be admitted into the United States for the foreseeable future. Those who have been waiting years for admission—individuals and families who have navigated the process and done everything correctly—will remain in limbo. The suspension of the refugee resettlement program also means that all federal funding to resettle refugees—funding that JFS relies on to do this work—has been cut off.

As a direct result of the EO, travel was canceled for 27 refugee individuals—including children and families—who were scheduled to arrive in our region in February and be resettled by JFS. An additional 109 individuals, whom JFS is scheduled to resettle in the coming weeks and months, are stuck in a holding pattern while their processing is indefinitely suspended. JFS clients have been separated from their families because of the EO, forced to leave family members behind in dangerous situations.

Travel was also canceled for Afghan SIVs (Special Immigrant Visas)—Afghans who worked with the U.S. government during the war. JFS works with many Afghan SIVs, and we have—and will continue to—advocate for the people who provided necessary support to the United States when our country needed their help.



Stop Work Order

Effective immediately, national and local refugee agencies, including Jewish Family Service, have been ordered to stop providing critical services to refugees who came to the U.S. through the safe and legal pathway of the United States Refugee Admissions Program. This includes Afghans who helped U.S. troops and people who fled war and religious persecution from countries like Ukraine, Sudan, Syria, and Iran.

WHAT IT MEANS: The Stop Work Order directs Jewish Family Service to pause our refugee resettlement work, funded by federal dollars, with individuals and families who are already here and whom we help with housing, food, connection to medical care, enrollment in school, and more. However, given the lack of clarity with the “Stop Work” order, JFS is working with HIAS, our national refugee resettlement partner, as well as our state refugee coordinator and other agencies to ensure we have a clear understanding of the guidelines. As we understand more and gather further information, we will continue to assess how this impacts our work at JFS and how we can best continue to invest in and carry out our work with refugees and Afghan SIVs.

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memo

An Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a memo on Jan. 28 ordering a freeze on all federal grants that has the potential to impact support for refugees and immigrants, beyond resettlement services. The freeze, as proposed, would hurt millions of people from all backgrounds and communities across the country, stripping them of access to critical services. **As of Jan. 29, OMB rescinded the memo. The order was temporarily blocked from taking effect via an injunction, and lawsuits are being brought to permanently stop the federal funding freeze from taking effect.**

WHAT IT MEANS: As proposed in the memo, the funding freeze would have damaging consequences for JFS services for all refugees and immigrants, as well as for some of our other programs and services that receive federal funding to support our community.

Our Jewish Values

For 133 years, JFS has stood as a beacon of hope, with the help of our community, supporting refugees and immigrants seeking to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. This mission remains unwavering.

This is a critical moment for action. We understand from devastating firsthand experience the tragedy that occurs when citizens and nations turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to those who are fleeing persecution, war, and terror.

Our Jewish values, passed down from generation to generation, guide us to welcome the stranger. As the only Jewish refugee resettlement organization in Washington State, we are compelled to do this work.

This work has always been a collective effort, powered by the compassion and dedication of our Jewish community, our partners, as well as our broader community. The extraordinary generosity of the Jewish community helps to ensure JFS can continue our work, and we are extremely grateful.



What You Can Do

Here's what you can do to help support local refugees and immigrants and protect yourselves and our community:

- **Donate:** Support JFS so that we may continue our work with refugees and immigrants who are currently in the United States, including unaccompanied minors, helping them establish roots, find employment, access medical care, and enroll in school.
- **Purchase from our wish list:** Help newly arrived families with children feel comfortable and welcome by sending them books, toys, and necessary household items.
- **Support our community:** [Learn more here](#) about how to protect and support our community.
- **Advocate:** Contact and encourage your local, state, and national elected officials to fight to protect immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.
- **Spread the word:** Share this guide and help your friends, family, and community understand what refugees and immigrants are facing in the Puget Sound.
- **Stay up to date:** Keep abreast of the issues as they unfold and how they affect refugees and immigrants, as well as how JFS is responding. [Sign up for JFS E-News to stay informed.](#)
- **Strengthen safety and security:** Help protect your organization's premises through the "[Posted No Trespassing](#)" program which enables the police to immediately arrest or ticket anyone trespassing, loitering, or gaining unauthorized access to your building. Without filing for this protection, the police can only provide a warning on the first occurrence. JFS is registered with both Kent and Seattle Police Departments. [You can register here.](#)

The road ahead will be difficult, but our shared commitment to the well-being of refugees and immigrants, Jewish individuals and families, and all people will guide us.

