

Statewide Update Afghan Placement Assistance

March 24, 2022



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR & ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY

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Current Status

All Afghan Placement Assistance (APA) arrivals, who were temporarily on US military bases and destined for Michigan, arrived in our communities between Sept. 27, 2021, and Feb. 19, 2022.

"Michigan was in the top third tier of states responding to the need for placement, and we are proud of the hard work and collaboration that made this possible."

Poppy Sias-Hernandez
Office of Global Michigan Director



Michigan welcomed 1,734 Afghan newcomers in this phase of arrivals.

BREAKDOWN BY COUNTIES:

275

Ingham

290

Washtenaw

158

Kalamazoo

671

Wayne/
Oakland/
Macomb

340

Kent/Ottawa

Early in the efforts, the refugee resettlement agencies and Office of Global Michigan recognized this would not pan out in the traditional form and manner of refugee resettlement. To address this rapid influx of arrivals, Global Michigan formed a strategic inter-agency emergency response group to work intricately with seven state agencies and countless bureaus to secure funding, resources and local partnerships.

Michigan was in the top third tier of states responding to the need for placement, and there is much to celebrate and be proud of within our state. Our refugee resettlement agencies, the whole team within Office of Global Michigan, this wide network of allied state agency partners, and literally hundreds of community organizations, partners, and volunteers fulfilled a herculean effort.

Achievements

Here are some of the notable achievements and efforts from our partners across the state:

- The Michigan Community Service Commission **launched a website for volunteers and donations** – about 370 volunteers were approved and have been engaged through the state's efforts and many more volunteers through churches and partnerships with the resettlement agencies.
- While varying by region, roughly **65% of all arrivals statewide have been placed in permanent housing and 80% have identified housing.**
- **Enrolled 203 Afghan individuals in Global Michigan's Digital Learning program** and 55 have been recommended for enrollment in a training program to become qualified interpreters.
- In Southeast Michigan, agencies secured **over 150 jobs for Afghans** with a single employer in Plymouth.
- Lansing partners **embraced newcomers and made them feel home away from home** through collaboration with the Afghan Association of Michigan.
- In West Michigan, agencies **worked diligently on high-needs cases for children and partnered closely with the school district** to ensure young people's successful integration.
- Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County **welcomed 290 Afghan individuals** and has successfully placed all but two eight-person families in permanent housing.
- Team Rubicon, a Veteran's volunteer group, are **providing manpower and trucks to move families** into permanent homes.
- US Public Health Service Officers are **providing on the ground support and coordination** to assist resettlement agencies.
- Operation Allies Welcome **White House appointee visited Michigan to highlight the State's interagency operational approach** and the collaborative work being done across sectors and state agencies.

For comparison, resettlement agencies welcomed 1,059 refugees statewide in Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021 combined, and welcomed 1,734 Afghans in a five month period as part of Operation Allies Welcome.

The state and refugee resettlement agencies have leveraged funding and partnerships:

- Wayne State University partners are providing art and movement therapy for newcomers.
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), Community Action Agencies and local food banks have provided millions of dollars worth of culturally appropriate food.
- Michigan State Housing and Development Authority (MSHDA) committed funding and partner resources to ensure temporary housing solutions.
- The City of Detroit has identified and secured over 200 housing units for Afghan families.
- Arab American Chaldean Council and local health departments have been champions for healthcare and going above and beyond to ensure needs are met.



Next Steps

As we enter a new phase of operation and response, we will continue to provide the services and support our new neighbors need to thrive and feel welcome.

- Coordinate medical coverage and services.
- Work with cities, counties, property developers, realtors and more to identify and place in safe and affordable housing.
- Enroll Afghan youth in school with strong support from Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and school districts across the state.
- Enroll families in social services programs to support ongoing integration, skill building and pursuit of their own wishes for life in Michigan.



Continued Needs

- Medical homes and partnerships to help new Medicaid patients with mental health services, culturally sensitive counseling, therapeutic and psychiatric services, gender matching and representing central/south Asian countries, pediatric and school-aged specialists, OB/GYN, dental, ophthalmology and more.
- Connections, partners, and opportunities to establish permanent housing.
- Reliable transportation to and from appointments, religious services, and medical appointments.
- Pro bono attorney partners to work with Michigan Immigrant Rights Center, Office of Global Michigan and Michigan Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association to pursue asylum for Afghan newcomers.

If you feel you can contribute in a collaborative effort to address one of these specific needs, please reach out to LEO-RefugeeServices@michigan.gov.

From the beginning, we knew this wouldn't be a traditional refugee resettlement effort. Despite the challenges we faced, Michigan's network stepped up in a big way and adapted to respond with innovative methods.

These efforts will result in a new hope and brighter future for our new neighbors. We have learned lessons, and through adaptation seen refugee resettlement from a new perspective. Our partnerships, national conversations and revelations have improved services and operations for all newcomers seeking safety for a new home in Michigan.



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