



Every Campus A Refuge

Program Coordinator Handbook: A
Guide for Leading the ECAR Initiative
to Host Refugees and/or Asylum
Seekers on Your Campus

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Note: Within the Every Campus A Refuge (ECAR) network, the University of San Francisco currently serves as the flagship campus for asylum seeker support, while Guilford College serves as the flagship campus for refugee support. Guidance in this handbook draws on the experiences of each campus, as well as other ECAR Chapters, in providing distinct programmatic approaches tailored to the populations they serve.

The Basics: What is a Program Coordinator and Why Do We Need One?

The ECAR Chapter Program Coordinator (PC) is the link between the hosted families, the refugee or asylum seeker support partner organization, the case manager, and the volunteers as well as other community organizations and campus stakeholders; the PC finds out what is needed, then reaches out to volunteers and others so that the task may be completed.

The PC can be trained by the partner refugee resettlement agency or the asylum seeker support agency (e.g. Church World Services Greensboro in the case of Guilford College and Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity in the case of the University of San Francisco) to provide volunteer training directly on campus. This increases the capacity of the partner organization and allows for frequent and nimble training and onboarding of volunteers. You can contact your partner refugee resettlement or asylum seeker support agency to see what training they require and get your Program Coordinator trained.

The position of Program Coordinator is especially important since it will allow for streamlined operations and a centralized line of communications, as well as allow your chapter to become a sustainable program – one that will not gradually dissipate as students graduate. The Program Coordinator will become a significant part of making your hosted guests' experience the best it can be.

Hours and Pay

This will vary widely and will depend on how your ECAR Chapter chooses to carry out its coordination of the effort on your campus. Below are the two examples from University of San Francisco (which hosts asylum seekers) and Guilford College (which hosts refugees).

University of San Francisco Example: As of Summer 2024, the position at the University of San Francisco was primarily structured to meet the graduate program's 100-hour internship requirement. While not hourly paid, a \$500 stipend was provided at the conclusion of the internship by the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity in recognition of the coordinator's contributions. The role centered on supporting hosted housing logistics, collaborating with staff and

volunteers, and helping asylum-seeking guests access local resources and build community connections. An Excel timesheet was provided by Interfaith and submitted weekly to track hours. Given the academic and service-based nature of the internship, compensation was limited; however, future versions of the position may explore hourly pay or additional support depending on funding and institutional capacity.

At Guilford College, the Program Coordinator is a full-time salaried position that is jointly funded by Guilford College's Center for Principled Problem Solving and Excellence in Teaching (CPPSET) and the ECAR nonprofit. The structure of the position at Guilford includes both campus-based and ECAR nonprofit duties. Compensation should be determined based on your institution's standards, cost of living, and current wage expectations.

At other ECAR chapters, this role has been filled by a Graduate Assistant (e.g. Oklahoma State University or Old Dominion University), a faculty member or staff member as part of their teaching or staff responsibilities (Russell Sage College or University of Tulsa), or a student club (e.g. Lafayette College). In these cases, compensation is built in as a Graduate Student stipend or fellowship, course release or service-learning duties, or there is no financial compensation in the case of student clubs.

Logistics

There are a few necessary steps in creating a sustainable PC position.

For example, create an email account where you can receive emails as a Program Coordinator. For example, at Guilford College it is everycampusarefuge@guilford.edu. An email address like this – which can be accessed by both the Program Coordinator and Faculty or Staff Director – allows the contact information to be stored in one place, as well as giving access to Google Docs, Slides, Sheets, and Drive. Using a platform where you can easily store and share these necessary files is important.

Save all information – guest names, addresses, account passwords – in an easy-to-access but secure offline space. An office space is particularly helpful for this.

Create social media accounts for your specific chapter of ECAR. Be sure to always specify that you are a Chapter. In other words, your account should always be “Every Campus A Refuge at [the name of your institution].” We find that our Facebook and Instagram accounts are an excellent way to reach new volunteers and donors. We can share these accounts on our website and the national organization’s social media. You can utilize Canva for designing social media posts easily as well.

Volunteers

Volunteer Recruitment

There are several ways you can get the word out on your campus about volunteering with your ECAR Chapter. Creating a Google Doc (or other editable document) that you share widely on campus and where students can sign up with their interests can be helpful. Below is an example of a Google Document that we use.

ECAR Volunteer Training

Please sign up below if you’re interested in hearing about future volunteer training for ECAR at [name of your institution]!

Next trainings are: Thursday, x/x/xx at 1–3 pm and Wednesday, x/x/xx at 2:30–4:30
(I typically link each date to the published Google Calendar event – note that not all volunteer trainings need to have a Zoom option)

Name

Email

Zoom or In-Person?

Which Training? (if known)

Example Name

Name@domain.edu

Zoom

Thursday x/x

Here are some of our recommended methods of getting the word out:

- Advertise training on social media: Consider following your school's various social media accounts so they can repost (or retweet, or share) your information about upcoming training.
- Email current volunteers and partners to ask them to share the information about the training. Encourage people to invite friends as well.
- Post about your training on school calendars or bulletin boards (digital or physical). For example, Guilford College has a program called "The Guilford Daily," which includes announcements shared with the broader campus community. At the University of San Francisco, announcements can be shared through graduate program newsletters such as the MIMS or MAIS newsletters, or directly through departmental staff who circulate weekly updates to students.

Examples:

1. How can you support refugees and/or people seeking asylum in your community? Volunteer with Every Campus A Refuge at [name of your institution] and make a difference in the lives of those seeking protection in [name of your town]. Come to our first volunteer training session of the year: [date] and [location]. Sign up here: [Link]
Questions or can't attend the training, but want to volunteer? Email us at [your designated email address]
2. Do you have a class that requires community service or volunteer hours? Or do you just want to be an awesome human being? Get trained to be a volunteer with Every Campus A Refuge [at your institution] and support refugees and/or asylum seekers resettling in [name of your town]! [date] and [location]. Sign up using the Google Form: [link]
Questions or can't make it, but still want to help? Email us at [email]
3. There are over 122 million forcibly displaced people worldwide in need of shelter, food, and other basic necessities. For the past two years, USF has been providing free housing to people seeking asylum in San Francisco to help ease their transition. Be part of the ECAR movement—get trained to volunteer with

asylum seekers USF is hosting, and make a difference in our community.

Sign up for training here: [link]

(Trainings: [date] and [location])

- Reach out to campus offices and national service organizations that commonly exist across institutions to coordinate recruitment efforts. These may include the Bonner Foundation, Amnesty International, AmeriCorps, Rotaract, and student government associations. Tabling at community involvement fairs, student org expos, or civic engagement weeks is especially effective at the beginning of the academic year, when many students—particularly first-years—are seeking meaningful ways to get involved. ECAR offers a unique opportunity to engage in community-based, justice-oriented work.
- If recruiting later in the year, consider setting up an interest table outside dining halls or at events hosted by multicultural centers, social justice clubs, or local chapters of organizations such as the ACLU, Faith in Action Bay Area, or the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity.
- Reach out to departments such as Sociology, Education, Political Science, Social Work, and Ethnic Studies to recruit volunteers and connect with professors in relevant disciplines who may be interested in offering volunteer opportunities as part of their coursework or extra credit. ECAR chapters have often partnered with faculty in Community and Justice Studies, but partnerships aren't limited to the humanities:
 - Math majors have helped with tutoring
 - Student athletes with moving
 - Education students with English Language Learning

If classes, clubs, or teams need community service hours or nonprofit engagement, ECAR is a great fit. *(The football, volleyball, and women's soccer teams have all helped out with moves before.)*

- If you're hosting children, connect with your Education program. Students interested in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)/ESL (English as a Second Language) can become tutoring volunteers.

- Designate ECAR as a Federal Work-Study (FWS) Site: If your campus offers Federal Work-Study, consider making ECAR at your institution a qualifying community service site. This allows students—such as undergraduates, second- and third-year law students, or others with FWS awards—to gain purpose-driven experience while supporting refugee or asylum-seeker programs. At campuses like the University of San Francisco, FWS jobs provide priority hiring, reserved positions, and wages paid directly to students.
- Support Program Capacity Through Work-Study Students: Work-study students can significantly contribute to developing ECAR programs at your institution. For example, at Guilford College, students may commit up to 6 hours per week to support campus efforts. To be eligible for FWS, students must complete the FAFSA annually. Visit your [campus's Student Employment website](#) to explore how to designate ECAR as a site and post available positions.

New Volunteers

Once you've gathered volunteer interest (and have it saved in one place), send an email out to your interested volunteers with a training date. You can ask faculty members or administrators about times when fewer classes take place, or send out a [Doodle poll](#), [When2Meet](#), or a quick survey to find the best training time. You may need to host a few training sessions, especially during the initial phases of your program.

Training sessions can be held both on campus and via Zoom. If participants are joining via Zoom, be sure they keep their cameras on or remain engaged by asking and answering questions.

Important Note: The training should be an adaptation of your partner organization's refugee resettlement or asylum seeker volunteer training. You should participate in a training session hosted by the partner organization and meet with their volunteer coordinator (or equivalent) to understand their specific approach and content. Additionally, ECAR offers supplementary training for hosting refugees. Please contact Rhiannon Kelly, ECAR Outreach Specialist at rhiannon@everycampusarefuge.org for more information.

Partner-Based Volunteer Training and Local Collaborations

In addition to offering campus-based training sessions, ECAR chapters can deepen volunteer preparation by collaborating with community organizations that support newcomers—particularly those in their first five years of arrival. These partnerships provide opportunities for training on topics such as working with English Language Learners (ELL), practicing cultural humility, and applying trauma-informed approaches—enhancing volunteer capacity while strengthening community ties.

For example, Guilford College has partnered with the New Arrivals Institute to offer specialized training sessions for ECAR volunteers. Other chapters have collaborated with regional resettlement agencies to provide volunteers with practical tools and a deeper understanding of newcomer experiences.

National and regional organizations such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Catholic Charities, and Welcome.US offer adaptable training resources and community education programs. In the Bay Area, groups like Refugee & Immigrant Transitions (RIT), the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, and Faith in Action Bay Area host workshops that help volunteers engage with cultural sensitivity and confidence.

We recommend reaching out to similar organizations in your region to co-create meaningful training opportunities and build mutually beneficial partnerships that strengthen both your chapter and its volunteers.

After Training

Immediately after training, send volunteers key documents such as culturally specific information, dates for ESL/ESOL support training, tips for cross-cultural communication, and any other relevant resources based on the questions or discussions that came up during the session.

Once trained, move volunteers to a document or database designated for trained volunteers. Add them to your contacts in your institution's ECAR program's email account and use tags like "Active Volunteers," "Driver Volunteers," "ESL Volunteers," or other helpful categories. Google Groups or similar platforms can help you organize contacts efficiently.

Tracking volunteer participation/hours and training dates is crucial for program sustainability and for implementation reporting to the ECAR nonprofit. Consider reviewing the list annually – graduating students or relocating community members may no longer be available for day-to-day tasks but may still want to receive program updates and donate to or support the ECAR program on your campus in other ways. Use labels like “Inactive Volunteer – Alumni” if they’ve requested to stay connected.

Background Checks

As part of our commitment to ensuring the safety of hosted refugees and asylum seekers, all volunteers should complete a background check. Check with your college or partner organization to determine the appropriate process. If neither the school nor the partner agency can provide background checks, your city or local government may offer this service.

For community volunteers, a full background check is typically requested through the institution’s Human Resources department or designated partner agency. For student volunteers, a basic background check may be arranged through local city offices or campus public safety departments. Costs and procedures vary by location. Be sure to check with your campus or municipality for the most accurate and up-to-date information.

Volunteer Information

Be sure to store volunteer applications in one organized location. Google Forms can be used to collect applications and keep them in an easily accessible format. Printed versions are also fine, but we recommend digitizing them to ensure easy sharing and updating. Consider creating a folder or drive for this purpose.

Curricular and Co-Curricular Component

One of the most powerful aspects of ECAR is its educational capacity. It engages participating students in immersive international learning experiences right there on their campus – a study abroad at home. Here are some examples of these curricular and co-curricular opportunities you might be able to provide or advocate for on your campus:

The ECAR Minor

An example is the Guilford College [Forced Migration and Resettlement Studies](#) which formalizes the educational components of the initiative and engages students in disciplinary, interdisciplinary and place-based experiences that facilitate:

- 1) learning about forced displacement and (im)migration
- 2) centralizing the voices, agency and perspectives of (im)migrants and forcibly displaced individuals
- 3) participation in the place-based educational processes of resettlement and community building
- 4) emphasis on the nature and significance of organizing and advocacy.

In short, the minor engages students in learning about the issues of forced displacement, the individuals who experience it, and the methods by which some of its various problems can be addressed.

The various elements of the minor are designed to educate the students on the what/why of forced displacement, (im)migration and refugeeism (the courses they take and the guest lectures they attend); centralize the agency, perspective and individuality of those who experience refugeeism, forced displacement and (im)migration (the courses focused on primary narratives, the ECAR guests they volunteer with, and the conversation partners); how we can collectively address the problems of forced displacement and refugeeism and the resettlement of (im)migrants (courses on organizing, civic engagement and community building as well as training provided by community partner organizations); doing the work of principled problem solving (hosting refugees, assisting them in resettlement, advocacy work and the programmatic ECAR projects). You can find a folder of syllabi for these and other courses here: [Google Drive Folder](#)

Courses required for Guilford's ECAR Minor:

The minor requires a minimum of 16 credit hours:

- I. Required: PPS 150/151: Every Campus A Refuge I
- II. Required: PPS 250/251: Every Campus A Refuge II
- III. One course focused on understanding the causes for forced displacement and (im)migration
- IV. One course focused on the voice, agency and perspectives of (im)migrants and displaced individuals.
- V. One course focused on building community, advocacy, and organizing.

In PPS 150/151: Every Campus A Refuge I students will:

- a) Receive free training from our community partner organizations and agencies (CWS Greensboro) and New Arrivals Institute.
- b) Engage in 10-15 hours of conversational interactions with displaced individuals through [NaTakallam](#)
- c) Learn about various topics related to refugeeism, forced displacement, im(migration), and resettlement through readings, guest lectures, site visits, documentaries as well as weekly discussion meetings and written reflections.

In PPS 250/251: Every Campus A Refuge II students will:

- a) Select/generate an inter/disciplinary advocacy, problem solving or other type of ECAR engagement project to be completed by the end of the semester and which they can present at the Guilford Undergraduate Symposium or elsewhere and on which future students can build.
- b) Volunteer for 40 hours for the semester with the ECAR families or other CWS clients. This includes participation in the various aspects of hosting the family and implementation of resettlement tasks.
- c) Learn about various topics related to refugeeism, forced displacement, im(migration), and resettlement through readings, guest lectures, site visits, documentaries as well as weekly discussion meetings and written reflections.

Past ECAR Minor Projects

- Booklet with information for pregnant people & mothers; in multiple languages and included pictures.
- ECAR Camp – week-long summer program for children who have been hosted through ECAR
- Narratives – Stories told about the history & practices of each chapter
- Fundraisers (including silent auction)
- Documentary
- ESL Toolkit
- Movie night for children
- Know-Your-Rights Campaign

Other Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities

In addition to a minor, certificate, or course, there are many ways in which students can engage in curricular and co-curricular activities with ECAR on your campus in independent study projects and/or internships. Below are some examples of what ECAR campuses have offered for students:

- Book Club: “American Refuge” by Dr. Diya Abdo
 - ESOL Team: Create ESOL tutor kits, assist with [“I Belong” book](#) development, tutor current guests, etc.
 - Outreach Team: Recruit new volunteers/spread awareness through tabling, events, etc., donation drives, collections and sorting donations, social media management, newsletters, volunteer engagement activities, and fundraising events/activities.
 - Intercultural experiences for students, guests, and community members such as the [Intercultural Cafe at Russell Sage](#).
-

Tracking Impact on Student Volunteers

Be sure to track the impact of participating in ECAR on student volunteers. This will help you make the case for the continuation of ECAR on your campus as you document the benefits to students’ education, learning, and career discernment. In

order to track your students' experiences and learning, feel free to use (and adapt if needed) these [pre and post surveys](#).

Hosting Guests On Campus

Preparing for Arrival

The [arrival needs list](#) is a document crucial to preparing for your new guests. Most likely, there will be a specific list that your partner agency will provide. While asylum seekers may not arrive through a formal resettlement agency like federally resettled refugees, your partner support organization may still provide a basic list of recommended items. This list usually covers urgent essentials, but there are often additional items that can be helpful – such as umbrellas, rugs, scarves, or wallets – which you can add based on the specific cultural or personal needs of your guests.

In addition to meeting material needs, it's important to prepare the space with care and cultural sensitivity. Thoughtful touches – such as welcome signs in the guest's language, familiar snacks or teas, and small items like scarves, prayer mats, or even decorative elements – can help foster a sense of belonging. If you're unsure what would feel welcoming, consider asking your partner organization or cultural liaisons for suggestions. As you get to know your guests, you may find opportunities to personalize the space further. A simple welcome packet with a campus map, Wi-Fi access, local transportation details, and nearby grocery or pharmacy options can also be incredibly helpful. These gestures signal that guests are seen, valued, and supported from the moment they arrive.

For example, with Afghan guests, we've found that rugs are appreciated due to cultural customs of eating and gathering on the floor. Some of these needs may only become apparent after arrival, and that's okay – you can continue using the outreach strategies outlined below as new needs arise.

Outreach

Social media is by far the most helpful tool for gathering donations. In addition to a written needs list, Amazon Wishlists can be helpful for non-local supporters. We include the link in our editable needs list document, where people can sign up to donate specific items. When ordering from Amazon, we ask donors to write their name and the quantity donated directly on the shared list. Sign-Up Genius has also helped coordinate donations for home setup.

Platforms we've used:

- Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and email campaigns
- Campus-wide virtual announcements
- Staff/faculty email lists
- Campus-wide newsletters and email systems
- Digital screens and bulletin boards across campus buildings

Purchasing & Submitting Reimbursements

While most items are ideally donated, the Program Coordinator may need to make a trip to the store just before arrival. Create a list of anything still outstanding and pick those up.

Setting Up Home

Setting up the house is one of the most hectic yet energizing parts of the Program Coordinator role. You'll need to plan ahead and stay flexible. It's helpful to keep your laptop or phone with you on site to:

- Test the WiFi
- Update the needs list
- Post on social media
- Coordinate with volunteers
- Track incoming donations

Coordinate with facilities or public safety to get house keys made for all adult guests. Ensure at least two team members also have keys, along with campus personnel responsible for emergency access (like security).

For WiFi, contact your institution's IT department or the designated campus liaison for internet setup in residential spaces. Set up and test the connection in advance, and create an easy-to-remember password for guests. If possible, provide a desktop computer – we've found that it's very helpful and is an item that you can procure through donations.

TVs and other tech (like Roku devices for free streaming) aren't essential but can make the space feel homier.

Finally, gather and log each guest's:

- Full name
- Country of origin
- Date of birth
- Preferred language

Your partner organization should provide this information. You'll also need to coordinate with facilities or administration to create a lease agreement. ([A sample lease](#) from Guilford College is available in the shared folder.)

Other documents to have in the house:

- A [list of medications in the First Aid Kit](#) and their uses, available in multiple languages relevant to your guests (e.g., English, Spanish, Arabic, Swahili, or French). Review which translations are needed based on guest profiles and prioritize completing them before arrival.
- Local bus routes and schedules (one copy per adult/teen)
- State Driver's Permit/License handbook and study materials

Provide information on local food access, including a grocery store guide and details on available food assistance programs. For refugees, many public benefits—such as WIC (Women, Infants, and Children), SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), and Medicaid—are typically available upon arrival as part of federal resettlement support. Some states also offer additional support programs for eligible families. Be sure to include application guidance specific to your state or locality, and, if possible, connect guests with a benefits navigator or caseworker.

For *asylum seekers*, eligibility for these programs is more limited. Most are not eligible for public benefits until they receive work authorization or a change in legal status. However, exceptions may apply if the household includes U.S.-born children. Because of this, prioritize support services that do *not* require proof of immigration status, such as:

- Local food pantries and community food banks
- Faith-based meal programs and shelters
- Culturally specific mutual aid networks and community fridges
- Culturally familiar markets that accept cash or debit

You may also include general information on public benefit programs such as WIC (Women, Infants, and Children), SNAP (food assistance), or Medicaid for future reference. Clearly note in any materials that eligibility depends on immigration status, and guests should consult your partner organization or a legal service provider before applying. This ensures informed decision-making and protects against potential risks.

Donations for New Arrivals

All donations should be dropped off at a designated campus location – not the house where your hosted refugee or asylum seeking guests are staying. The house address should only be shared with trained volunteers or those who truly need it (e.g., for furniture delivery).

Small donations can be dropped off at your designated campus ECAR office or a staff member's office supporting the program. If needed, volunteers can arrange to meet donors at a central campus location – such as a parking lot, campus ministry office, or student center – for convenience. Coordinate directly with the Program Coordinator for any perishable items to ensure proper storage and timely delivery.

You'll also need to fully stock the pantry and fridge based on the size and background of the household. Your partner organization may have a basic grocery list, and we usually include it in the needs list.

To streamline the donation process, consider creating a clear system for sorting and storing incoming items. Label donation bins by category (e.g., pantry staples, toiletries, cleaning supplies) and post an updated copy of the needs list nearby. Assign a volunteer or team member to regularly check and organize donations to

avoid duplication and ensure time-sensitive items are handled properly. Keeping the process organized not only helps with efficiency but also communicates care and professionalism to donors.

Faculty and staff frequently sign up to donate food items, and some local stores may donate directly or offer gift cards.

Keep a record of all donations using a Google Sheet or Excel spreadsheet – this is helpful for tracking program support and future fundraising.

Welcoming New Arrival – Day of Arrival/First Week

Arrival Day Logistics & Welcome

The welcome moment is one of the first and most meaningful ways we show our guests that they are valued and supported. Unlike refugee resettlement cases, where arrivals may happen at the airport, asylum seekers often arrive through informal travel routes, may already be in the area, or may be transferred from shelters, churches, or detention alternatives. Because of this, the “arrival” may take place at a bus station, train stop, or simply when guests are brought to the house by a partner organization.

Here are ways to prepare for and honor that first welcome moment:

- Coordinate closely with your partner organization to confirm when and how the guests will arrive. If they are bringing guests directly, ask whether additional support is needed for transportation or carrying belongings.
- Create welcome signs with volunteers ahead of time – include messages in the guest’s preferred language(s) and display them visibly at the home.
- Ensure the house is clean, stocked, and calm – this might be your guest’s first moment of privacy and safety in a long time.
- Provide a warm, culturally familiar meal upon arrival. Since asylum seekers often arrive after long, unpredictable journeys – sometimes without recent access to consistent food – this gesture can be both comforting and

restorative. Ask your partner organization or culturally connected volunteers for recommendations on appropriate meals or ingredients, and consider whether a home-cooked dish, takeout, or grocery gift card is most practical based on the situation. This meal can also be included in the public needs list, and it's common for faculty, staff, or local supporters to sponsor or prepare it. If guests arrive late or unexpectedly, have shelf-stable snacks, tea, or heat-and-serve meals available as a backup.

- Offer comfort items, especially if children are arriving, such as blankets, stuffed animals, snacks, or art supplies.
- Limit photography to volunteers and signage only to preserve the guests' privacy and security – especially if they are in legal proceedings or recovering from trauma.

While there may be no airport moment for asylum seekers, this initial encounter still sets the tone for a welcoming, trauma-informed, and respectful transition into the campus and broader community.

House Walk-Through

On the day of arrival, the Program Coordinator and case manager from the partner organization will walk through the house with a translator to explain:

- How to use utilities: oven, microwave, dishwasher (if applicable), washer/dryer, and HVAC unit
- Where food, dishes, cleaning supplies, toiletries, etc. are located
- How to use electronics (e.g., TV, computer – can also be done the following day)

Provide the ECAR Campus Welcome Letter from your Program Coordinator or Director in English and, ideally, in the guest's primary language to help them feel informed and at ease. (A sample letter is available in the shared folder.)

Guests should also sign the lease agreement during check-in. Be sure to scan and save a digital copy securely, provide a printed copy to the guest, and share a copy with the partner organization case manager. At the University of San Francisco, this process included bilingual materials and clear documentation practices to ensure a smooth and respectful welcome.

Setting Up Phone

The partner agency case manager will usually provide a phone on the day of or the day after arrival. They may assist with setup, but volunteers should help ensure the following steps are covered:

- Connect to WiFi
- Add PC contact number (preferably through WhatsApp or another app you can silence outside working hours)
- Assist the guest in adding contacts for friends and family – take time to ensure they learn how to do this independently
- Teach international dialing basics (e.g., Rwanda = +250, U.S. numbers begin with +1)

At the University of San Francisco, graduate student volunteers served as the primary support for phone setup and digital orientation. For example, in one summer, USF hosted 9 newcomers, and each graduate student was paired with 3 individuals to provide accompaniment and support. These volunteers played a key role in helping guests navigate digital tools from the start.

First Week

The following tasks should be completed during the first week, in coordination with the guest's partner agency case manager and/or an ECAR campus volunteer:

- If hosting asylum seekers, support with the asylum application and work authorization timeline – Asylum seekers can apply for work authorization ([an Employment Authorization Document, or EAD](#)) 150 days after filing their asylum application. Coordinate with the partner agency case manager to ensure the application has been submitted and provide general guidance about the process and expected timeline. This is an important step toward gaining access to employment and other forms of stability.
- Bus passes & orientation – Teach routes to key locations like the support organization office, grocery store, clinic, etc.
- “New Resident” postal form – Request online or pick up from the post office, then leave it in the guest's mailbox.
- Create an email address and teach them how to use it
- Provide an accordion folder or binder for organizing documents

- Guide access to food assistance – Asylum seekers are not eligible for federal public benefits like food stamps (EBT) until their status changes. However, you can help connect them with local food banks, pantries, churches, or mutual aid groups. You may also reach out to your school or community partners to collect grocery store gift cards or coordinate meal donations.
- Grocery store orientation – If possible, provide a gift card while they wait for food stamps
 - We often show guests Walmart or local markets

Other campus-related tasks (depending on guest and case manager availability):

- Campus tour – Be sure to include key locations such as the cafeteria (and how to use meal passes or dining dollars), gym or fitness center, library, student resource spaces (such as art studios or lounges), and any campus-based donation centers or food pantries (note: access may require permission or coordination with student staff).
- Apply for an affiliate campus ID – This provides access to campus spaces for guests

Ongoing Support on Campus

Supporting guests after arrival is key. You'll stay in close communication with their case manager (at the partner agency) or a designated point of contact, such as a legal representative, community-based advocate, or graduate student volunteer (as was done during the summer hosted housing program at the University of San Francisco).

Weekly check-ins (in person or using an interpreter or Tarjimly) are especially important during the transition period. Try to check in a few times each week. Building trust takes time – many guests are hesitant to ask for help, even when they need it. Asking specific questions like “Do you need more clothes?” and demonstrating follow-through can help build comfort.

Common Ongoing Support Tasks:

- Provide bikes, helmets, locks, and safety tips (some schools have a lost & found bike donation program)

- ESL/ESOL tutoring – Set up a tutoring schedule for adults and children. This can double as a great opportunity for student volunteers needing service hours.
 - Help with filling out forms for medical or dental appointments. The goal is to empower guests to complete these independently in the future.
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Moving Off-Campus

Helping guests secure safe, affordable housing can be a challenge. If your partner refugee resettlement agency or asylum seeker support organization has a housing specialist, be sure to connect with them. ECAR's housing standards may be higher than those of some partner organizations, which are often working to support a large number of individuals and families.

Gathering information about available apartments and rental options nearby is something you should begin well before the time comes for your hosted guests to move off-campus (based on the timeline you established and set out in their lease). Building relationships with leasing offices and explaining the mission of ECAR and your guests' legal status can go a long way in supporting access to housing.

Depending on the timeline your ECAR chapter has established for how long guests can stay on campus (or earlier, if guests express interest in moving off-campus sooner), select a good time to talk with guests about their preferences and needs in housing. This should be after the initial transition period, when they've had space to feel grounded (2-3 months) but before their lease for on-campus housing ends. You'll also need to explain your city or state's rental policies – such as occupancy limits that might require a larger unit for a big family – and what they can expect during the rental process. To help identify appropriate options, ask where they work and how much they are earning monthly so you can guide them toward options they may qualify for.

Some websites we've used to search for housing in Greensboro:

- <https://www.zillow.com/>
- <https://www.apartments.com/>
- <https://www.epoc.homes/availability>

- <https://www.triadmls.com/>
- <https://www.phillipsmanagement.com/>

California/USF Area (Example – University of San Francisco):

- <https://sfbay.craigslist.org/> (use caution and verify listings)
- <https://www.rentsfnow.com/>
- <https://www.zumper.com>

Once you've had a conversation with guests, work on identifying housing that closely fits their needs and wants. Try to show at least three options. If guests decide not to pursue any of the listed options, they will receive a move-out date and be shown how to continue the housing search independently. The Program Coordinator and campus ECAR team may continue supporting them through this transition.

When a guest selects a housing option – whether through your support or on their own – our flagship ECAR chapter typically covers application fees, security deposit, and first month's rent, up to \$1,500. It is up to your campus ECAR chapter to do the same or not.

Once housing is selected, you'll need to:

- Review the lease and inspect the home/apartment to ensure it's safe and habitable.
- Use the partner organization's move-in checklist to verify basic functionality (heat/AC, fire alarms, plumbing, etc.).
- Ensure utilities (gas, electric, water) are active before move-in. Some services (like water) may require in-person setup and a deposit.
- Coordinate and support the move (student athletes are often great helpers!)
- Assist with school enrollment for children (if applicable).
- Help the family update their address on important accounts (banking, mail, medical, legal contacts).
- Submit a USPS address change form (\$1 online or free via paper form at the post office).
- Set up utility accounts and explain bill payment.
- Assist with WiFi setup (Spectrum offers low-cost options for low-income households).

- Help secure renter's insurance (often the campus ECAR chapter pays for the first year) and show them how to manage their account online.

After the move, continue to check in regularly. We recommend checking in at least monthly during the first year after a guest moves off-campus, and as needed after that.

One Year After Arrival

After one year in the United States, refugees must apply for [Lawful Permanent Resident \(LPR\) Status \(Green Card\)](#). This is an important piece to discuss with the resettlement office to find out whose responsibility it is to follow up on applying for LPR at the one-year mark. After five years of LPR status, refugees may apply for naturalization.

Asylum seekers do not follow the same immigration pathway as resettled refugees. Instead of applying for Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) status at the one-year mark, their immigration journey depends on the progress of their asylum application.

Coordinate with your partner organization or legal support services to check the status of the case and identify whether any next steps – such as receiving work authorization, attending interviews, or updating contact information with USCIS – need support.

For guests with other forms of legal entry (e.g., humanitarian parole or Special Immigrant Visas), be aware of the specific timelines and benefits attached to their status and adjust your support accordingly.

Fundraising

The arrival of a new family is an ideal time to promote your ECAR chapter on campus and across social media. There's often excitement and momentum around welcoming new guests. Be sure to protect your guests' privacy – never share identifying details – but you can emphasize the impact of donations. For example:

“A \$50 donation provides groceries for a week for one of our guests.”

That said, the bulk of fundraising is best suited for quieter times in your schedule as Program Coordinator. The lead-up to and first few weeks after a new arrival are typically very busy.

Financial contributions can be accepted by the Program Coordinator or Director (in the form of cash, gift cards, etc., which should always be documented) or online through your school's advancement/fundraising platform. Check in with your campus Advancement or Development Office to ensure that your campus ECAR chapter has a specific designation for campus donations.

Thank You Notes

As the Program Coordinator, you will also be responsible for writing thank-you notes. It helps to create a Google Sheets or Excel spreadsheet to keep track of who donates and when. For recurring donors, you don't need to send thank you notes every month – every six months is usually sufficient. You can use your spreadsheet to track the last time each donor received a note.

Use any stationery you have, or consider printing custom ECAR [at your institution] stationery for this purpose.

Make the notes personal when possible. A common structure might include:

- A warm thank you
- A line about a recent milestone (e.g., a new arrival, a move off-campus, the number of families or total guests supported, number of children, etc.)
- A note about what donor support has made possible
- A closing thank you

Sign the letter "Sincerely, [Your Name], ECAR [at your institution] Program Coordinator." If you're a student, you might include your class year (e.g., "'19") – especially if the donor is affiliated with your school. Add a personal note if you know the donor.

Mail the thank you notes via your campus mail center or drop them in an outgoing mailbox. Check with your team about postage coverage – the College/University or a specific department may be able to fund it.

Mobilizing Community Resources

One of the most valuable practices you can establish as a new ECAR chapter is outreach to local organizations, businesses, and programs. Because your university/college and ECAR itself are nonprofits or 501(c)(3), many businesses are open to making in-kind and monetary donations for many reasons, including tax benefits. There is a sample donation request letter in your shared folder. Please connect with ECAR if you would like to discuss accepting donations on your campus's behalf to be used by your campus.

We've had success securing donations from:

- Walmart
- CVS
- Safeway
- Sam's Club

Visit the customer service desk with your letter (including Tax ID), and ask if the store can donate a gift card or items in support of refugee and/or asylum-seeking guests. Try this at multiple locations in your area for the best results.

You can also use the [ECAR map tool](#) to find other refugee and/or asylum seeker support organizations nearby. (Note: the map is always being updated, so supplement with local research and community outreach. And if you see a refugee/asylum seeker supporting organization missing on the map, please [fill out the form](#) so we can add it!) Your partner organization or case managers may also be able to recommend connections.

Expand your outreach to include:

- Local businesses and restaurants
- Nonprofits and mutual aid groups
- Student clubs and campus orgs
- Athletic teams
- Faith-based organizations
- Volunteer groups and service providers

Many of these partners may offer volunteers, in-kind donations, or ongoing support.

Self-Care for Program Coordinators

Boundaries

As a Program Coordinator, your day-to-day workload will vary depending on guest needs, volunteer capacity, and your other commitments. To protect your well-being, set clear boundaries with guests, donors, and volunteers.

Let guests know when you are available, and offer a specific communication channel for work hours. For example, Guilford's Program Coordinator uses a Business WhatsApp account that can be silenced after hours. You can also set up auto-replies with guidance on who to contact in different situations (e.g., partner agency case managers or designated point of contact for asylum seekers for general questions, ECAR campus coordinators for housing-related needs, campus security for lockouts, and 911 for emergencies).

With donors, set boundaries around drop-off and pickup times. And remember – you don't have to accept every donation. If an item is not needed, feel free to refer the donor to another local organization.

With volunteers, establish expectations about communication. You might ask volunteers to email after hours unless it's urgent. There may be exceptions, like first-time volunteers reaching out while tutoring or transporting guests. Talk with your campus supervisor about whether your role includes being on call during evenings/weekends, or whether a rotating coverage schedule can help distribute that responsibility.

Communication

Strong communication with your team – whether that includes a director, volunteers, other staff, or case managers – can make your role more sustainable.

Set aside time at the beginning and end of each week to review tasks and responsibilities. Use collaborative tools like:

- Google Docs
- Shared calendars
- Trello boards
- Group chats or Slack channels

Meet weekly with your supervisor or director to prioritize work, assess progress, and troubleshoot challenges. These meetings are also an opportunity to reflect on wins, talk through needs, and ask for support.

Your Mental Health

Caring for others – especially those who have experienced trauma and displacement – can be deeply meaningful, but also emotionally demanding. Make time for your self-care as a key part of your role.

Whether that's therapy, quiet time, walks, journaling, or simply spending time with friends, intentional rest supports your long-term ability to serve effectively. Burnout is common in advocacy and service work – preventing it takes proactive steps and strong support systems.

Speak honestly with your supervisor about how you're doing and what you need. Your health matters, and maintaining it is part of doing the job well.

Accessing Mental Health Support

Caring for others—especially those who have experienced trauma and displacement—can be emotionally demanding. It's important to access tools and support that help you manage stress, maintain boundaries, and sustain your well-being over time.

The following resources offer guidance on trauma-informed care, burnout prevention, and self-care practices for those working in advocacy and humanitarian roles. We encourage you to explore them and speak with your supervisor if you need referrals to campus-based or community wellness services.

Your mental health matters. Supporting yourself is part of supporting others.

Recommended Mental Health Resources

- [1- Reducing Burnout and Vicarious Trauma Among Refugee Service Providers](#)
- [2- Mental Health First Aid \(variety of resources\)](#)
- [3- Mental Health Toolkit for Refugees and Refugee Claimants](#)
- [4- Self-care and a Healthy Workplace in the Settlement and Integration Sector](#)
- [5- Core Components and Skills for Trauma-Informed Practice 2024](#)