

Lutheran Social Services Refugee & Immigrant Center Community Orientation and Pre-Employment Services

Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota (LSS-SD) resettles about 500 refugees a year in Sioux Falls and Huron, a group joined by about 300 secondary migrants. The diverse group of refugees includes Karen and Karenni from Burma, Bhutanese, Somalis, Eritreans, Congolese, Darfuris, Afghanis, and Iraqis, including those Afghanis and Iraqis coming on Special Immigrant Visas.

LSS-SD's basic services include:

- Case management services. These include assistance with: cash assistance eligibility and ongoing verification, information and referrals, removal of barriers to employment, needed education, medical issues and referrals, housing, transportation, and other barriers to self-sufficiency as identified.
- Employment services. All adults are eligible for initial employment orientation, pre-employment training, pre-screening, job skills review and planning, employment placement, and follow-up services.
- Family self-sufficiency planning. These services allow the client, case manager, and employment specialist to carefully assess the client's short-term and long-term goals, current job skills, barriers to self-sufficiency and employment, educational needs, and medical needs.
- English language training (ELT) classes. ELT classes are currently provided four days a week, four times a day, involving four separate two-hour ELT levels from beginning illiterate through high intermediate English training. Classes are divided into two sections: one hour on oral instruction and one on literacy. ELT classes are also available two evenings a week. All newly arriving refugee adults are tested for English proficiency within two weeks of arrival and enrolled in a level appropriate to their individual needs.
- Computer classes. Basic computer instruction is provided to all adults enrolled in ELT classes.

LSS-SD provides 36 hours of community orientation classes monthly, which is available to all newcomers. Topics include U.S. laws, driver's license information, rental agreements, shopping, healthcare, education, family norms in the U.S., and employment (a major emphasis of the program). These services are provided by agency staff, as well as staff from local service providers, including law enforcement officials, the fire department, schools, the Community Health Center, and the Department of Social Services. For an outline of the community orientation and pre-employment training, see http://www.cal.org/co/domestic/toolkit/program_descriptions/LSS_Sioux_Falls-CO_&_Pre-Empl_Training_Outline.pdf.

As needed, LSS-SD staff prepare special classes for groups who have particular needs, which could be based on country of origin, language group, education level, etc.

Additional LSS-SD programs include intensive case management and employment services for particularly needy refugee, asylee, or secondary migrant cases; the Matching Grant Program; immigration assistance; a thriving volunteer program for basic transportation, community orientation, bill paying assistance, and practice with conversational English; community interpreter services available around the clock and utilized by over 650 organizations state-wide; and Individual Development Accounts.

Links:

- Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota: <http://www.lsssd.org/>
- Lutheran Social Services Refugee & Immigration Center: http://www.lsssd.org/family_services/refugee/index.html
- Community Health Center: <http://www.siouxfalls.org/FCH.aspx>
- Department of Social Services: <http://dss.sd.gov/>
- Individual Development Account: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/ind_dev_acc_prg.htm
- Matching Grant Program: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/match_grant_prg.htm
- Mennonite Voluntary Service: <http://www.mennonitemission.net/Serve/MVS/Unit/Pages/mvsSiouxFalls.aspx>