

ISC's Refugee Support Services Activity Report For the month of November 2025

1) This November, our Refugee Support Services (RSS) Team provided needed services to ORR-eligible refugees of various national origins, including:

A) Case Management and Barrier Removal services were provided to a total of 6 needy refugees: 3 from the Democratic Republic of Congo and 3 from Venezuela. Case Management services provided this month consisted mainly of medical appointments, PennDOT driver's licensing requirements, employment/job upgrading, public transportation, and housing landlord/tenant responsibilities.

B) Immigration Assistance and Naturalization services were provided to a total of 23 needy refugees: 7 from Afghanistan, 2 from Bhutan, 4 from Burma, 1 from Colombia, 1 from Democratic Republic of Congo, 1 from Eritrea, 2 from Guatemala, 1 from Nepal, 1 from Sierra Leone, 2 from Sudan, and 1 from Venezuela. Most of those clients were assisted in applying for the following immigration benefits: USCIS Form I-485: Application for Permanent Residence, USCIS Form N-400: Application for Naturalization, and USCIS Form I-912: Application for Fee Waiver.

C) Culturally and linguistically appropriate Employment services were provided to a total of 5 needy refugees: 4 from Afghanistan and 1 from Sudan. Those customized Employment Services have resulted in 1 job placement in a permanent full-time position.

2) This November, our Ukrainian Refugee Support Services (URSS) Team provided needed services to ORR-eligible Ukrainian clients, including:

A) Case Management and Barrier Removal services were provided to a total of 25 needy Ukrainian refugees, consisting mainly of: medical appointments, housing landlord/tenant responsibilities, PennDOT driver's licensing requirements, employment/job upgrading, public assistance/other government benefits, schooling/adult education and foreign credentials evaluation, immigration laws and processes, elderly and children protective services, consumer's education, and starting/developing small business.

B) Immigration Assistance were provided to a total of 32 needy Ukrainian clients. Most of those clients were assisted in applying for the following immigration benefits: USCIS Form I-131: Application for Re-Parole, USCIS Form I-94: Arrival Record, USCIS Form I-821: Application for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), USCIS Form I-765: Application for Work Permit, and USCIS Form I-912: Application for Fee Waiver.

C) Culturally and linguistically appropriate Employment services were provided to a total of 7 needy Ukrainian clients. Those customized Employment Services have resulted in 1 job placement in a permanent full-time position.

3) Outreach, Linkage, Networking, Coordination, and Collaboration Events

This November, our ISC Team engaged in a series of impactful activities focused on community outreach, employment linkage, community networking, and agency collaboration, including:

A) On 11/04/25, ISC team coordinated a Harrisburg Police Community Service meeting with Officer Donald Conn at ISC, to discuss community safety protocols for ISC staff and refugees as well as exploring opportunities to enhance protection and support for our LEP refugee clients.

B) On 11/12/25, ISC staff participated in the virtual “Client Success Meeting” with Mrs. Aliyah Nazeem, Communications Director of World Educational Services (WES), to enhance agency coordination and streamline client support through the WES Gateway Program.

C) On 11/12/25, ISC team met with Colonel R. Scott Buran, President of the Carlisle War, Peace, and Justice Project to discuss on potential collaborative community events to generate more support for the Uniting For Ukraine (U4U) Program.

D) On 11/18/25, ISC staff participated in the webinar “TPS in flux: Updates and Strategies” organized by Immigration Legal Resource Center (ILRC) to enhance their skills in serving a more diverse client population effectively.

E) On 11/19/25, ISC staff assisted Christine Danielewicz in successfully enrolling needy LEP refugees in the evening ESL classes offered by the Grace Bible Fellowship Church.

F) On 11/24/25, ISC Senior staff participated in the PIC’s “Working with State Legislators” orientation session, to enhance their understanding of state government system as well as their networking skills.

G) On 11/25/25, ISC staff coordinated an orientation session for Attorney Laura Shemick, a former government official of the PA Department of Labor and Industry, to explain to ISC’s staff and volunteers the regulations and procedures of our state unemployment compensation system.

H) On 11/28/25, following the tragic shooting incident in Washington, DC on 11/26/25 involving an Afghan refugee, the ISC staff disseminated an update and positive Action Plan for our staff and volunteers to help reassure our local Afghan refugee population.

4) Mrs. Christine Filipovich, our Volunteer Coordinator for the Harrisburg Capital Region, shared the following contributions from her wonderful group.

The below report summarizes the volunteer activities of the Harrisburg/Mechanicsburg group of the ISC. Each volunteer who contributed in November 2025 is listed with the hours they spend aiding ISC clients.

Janet Bargh - 1.5 hrs.

Drove Mrs. Sarwan to and from ESL class - 11/19

Joanne Castner - 3.5 hrs.

Delivered food to Aung family - 11/11, 11/21, 11/25

Drove members of the Aung family to clothing bank - 11/15

Becky Cotich - 0.75 hrs.

Drove Muska Sarwan and Sheba Sadat home from HACC - 11/17

Pat Donnelly - 2.5 hrs.

Drove Muska and Sheba to and from HACC - 11/19

Christine Filipovich - 22 hrs.

Facilitated communication and coordination related to client needs, donations, volunteer activities, and ESL classes - 11/1-11/30

Arranged, picked up, and delivered donated goods to Noori family - 11/1

Delivered produce to Rasooli and Paghmani families - 11/2

Drove Laiqa Sarwan home from ESL class - 11/12

Delivered jackets to Mahaseba Sarchar - 11/17

Delivered donated curtains to Arab family - 11/30

Keevin Graham - 14 hrs.

Helped Zahra Bayat with car repairs and transportation - 11/16, 11/18, 11/19, 11/20, 11/21, 11/26

Valbona Hada - 1 hr.

Helped Manaseba with ESL programming - 11/3, 11/9

Barbara Hamm - 5 hrs.

Communicated with Bharath, Saeedi, and Arab family about needs and assisted as needed - 11/1, 11/2, 11/4, 11/5

Delivered clothes and sewing machine to Adiba Sadat - 11/3

Picked up goods for Adiba Sadat - 11/26

Marleen Karns - 4.5 hrs.

Drove Rukhsana Salim to and from ESL class - 11/5, 11/19

Emily Krebs - 3 hrs.

Drove Pashton Saeedi to various places - 11/22

Robert Little - 1 hr.

Transported coats to ISC with Ricky - 11/20

Olivia Long - 2 hrs.

Logging volunteer hours and constructing volunteer report - 11/2, 11/4, 11/29

Cheryl Martin - 3 hrs.

Practiced English with Shahnaz Khetabi - 11/3, 11/ 24

Julie Metzger - 1 hr.

Drove Muska and Sheba to HACC - 11/17

JJ Patterson - 24 hrs.

Drove Rukhsana Salim to appointments - 11/4, 11/6, 11/26

Drove Rukhsana Salim to ESL class - 11/7, 11/14, 11/21

Susan Rimby and John Katz - 20 hrs.

Assisted Amena Omid with driving lessons and research on used cars - 11/1, 11/2, 11/8, 11/22, 11/29

Drove Ruskhana to appointment and assisted with driving lessons for Rukshana and Sosson - 11/3, 11/5, 11/10, 11/17, 11/19, 11/24

Driving lessons for Orlando Velasquez - 11/11, 11/18

Ben Stokes - 2 hrs.

Delivered furniture with Linda - 11/5

Barbara Sunderlin - 17 hrs.

Drove Muska Sarwan to and from ESL class - 11/5, 11/12

Drove Mahasiba Sarshar to and from appointment - 11/6, 11/25

Distributed donations to Sarwan - 11/7

Drove Mahasiba Sarshar to and from ISC - 11/12

Drove Mahasiba Sarshar to and from job interview - 11/21

Drove Muska Sarwan to and from HACC - 11/24

Michael Varano - 2 hrs.

Drove Mrs. Popal to Project Share - 11/20

The total combined number of hours of volunteer support was 129.75 hours

5) Kudos to the following wonderful Golden Hearts

This month, seven generous donors contributed 1,536 items, including clothing, household supplies, and food items for refugees in need. In addition, we received 17 cartons of vegetables from Mr. Chris Quarterson, which were kindly distributed to our Afghan & Ukrainian refugee families. Due to storage space and manpower shortage, we had to stop accepting drop-off donations at the end of November. We are truly sorry, but from now on, we can only accept donations on “as needed basis”, at the request of the refugee families themselves.

In November, generous donations were received from the following compassionate partners-in-mission to support our refugee mission: on 11/03/25: \$100 from Ms. Georgia Earp; on 11/06/25: \$1,000 from Dr./Mrs. Stuart & Jane Warren; on 11/06/25: 5 Karns Gift Cards (for a total of \$200) from Mr./Mrs. Scott & Marleen Karns; on 11/11/25: \$25 from Mr. Andrew Herring; on 11/12/25: \$100 from Mrs. Allison Spooner; on 11/12/25: \$100 from Mr. David Minnich; on 11/13/25: \$250 from Colonel/Mrs. Robert & Ann Buran; on 11/14/25: \$5,000 from Mrs. Ann Marie Judson; on 11/24/25: \$50 from Mrs. Christy Hoover.

On behalf of the fortunate refugee beneficiaries and the ISC, we would like to express our most sincere gratitude to all the above-mentioned Golden Hearts.

6) This month of November 2025, we would like to share the volunteer experience of Mrs. Barbara Sunderlin, one of our Unsung Heroes.

It started with a simple request from my neighbor- would I be willing to transport an Afghan woman to an appointment as my neighbor was no longer available to help? Absolutely I would, especially since I had recently retired and had some free time on my hands. Little did I realize how much enjoyment I would receive from such a small request. Saying yes put me on a path to engaging with some very wonderful individuals and families.

I've been given a renewed gratitude for all that I have, material and otherwise. Throughout my life, a lesson from my parents etched into my brain and my soul, is that it is only right to help others when you can. And there is no doubt that the refugee and immigration community needs our help. Even the smallest task, request, or effort can have meaningful impact on their lives.

It is amazing to me to witness how much ISC is able to accomplish, particularly in this era of funding cuts. The determination and strength of its leadership, staff, and volunteers is awe inspiring.

7) This month of November 2025, we would like to share the beneficial impact of our assistance effort on some of our refugee families.

A) Tetiana's Journey to Stability in the U.S.

In the context of a rapidly changing and uncertain immigration environment, ISC continues to advocate vigorously on behalf of our Ukrainian clients by delivering comprehensive employment support and legal guidance. Many Ukrainian parolees face prolonged processing delays, uncertainty about their lawful status, and barriers to stable employment. ISC works to bridge these gaps by helping clients navigate USCIS requirements, maintain work authorization, improve language skills, and secure meaningful employment that aligns with their long-term goals.

Tetiana L. is one of ISC's clients who benefit significantly from ISC's services. Her cooperation, determination, and persistence led to exceptional outcomes, particularly notable given that she arrived in the United States in her late 50s, without English skills and faced the challenges of adapting to a completely new country.

Tetiana first came to ISC in 2024 seeking assistance in finding employment. With guidance from the ISC's Ukrainian Team, Tetiana applied for multiple positions with several employers while also actively participating in ISC's Vocational English Tutoring Program to strengthen her English communication skills and workplace readiness. As her confidence and language proficiency improved, she successfully passed an interview with Phoenix Contact and was hired as a Machine Operator — a major milestone toward financial stability.

Tetiana applied for re-parole, but her application remained pending at USCIS for an extended period, exceeding normal processing times, due to a temporary pause in USCIS operations. During this period, she received a formal warning from her employer

stating that her employment would be terminated unless she could present valid documentation, specifically an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Faced with the possibility of losing her only source of income, Tetiana turned to ISC for urgent support.

The ISC's Ukrainian Team immediately initiated legal advocacy on her behalf by submitting a request to expedite her re-parole and EAD application, compiling supporting documentation, conducting repeated follow-ups with USCIS, and formally communicating with her employer to request continued employment while her case was under review. The Ukrainian Team remained steadfast in their advocacy, maintaining regular communication with both USCIS and Tetiana throughout the entire process.

After many months of persistent and coordinated effort, Tetiana's re-parole was approved, and her EAD was issued. This outcome allowed her to retain her employment, maintain financial stability, and continue supporting her family. Tetiana's case illustrates ISC's holistic approach — combining English Language instruction, employability development, and legal advocacy — to help Ukrainian clients overcome obstacles, achieve stability, and move toward self-sufficiency in their new homeland.

B) Update on the Aung family in Lancaster

The Aung family from Myanmar arrived in the Lancaster area in December 2024. Within a month of their arrival, their resettlement agency in Harrisburg lost all government funding to support the refugees they sponsored, and the Aung family ended up totally alone in a new country. Thankfully, the ISC learned of their plight and agreed to help them with the services needed to achieve early self-sufficiency.

The family consists of the father, Nay Lin "Tommy" Aung, his wife Khin Khin, and their two sons, Liam Minthet and Kaung "JJ" Htut, both in their twenties.

Since January 2025, thanks to the devoted support of Mrs. Joanne Castner and a Burmese businessman, our ISC volunteers in Lancaster, the family has diligently worked to establish themselves in their new community. The young sons, both of whom had college degrees, immediately began GED classes because their degrees did not transfer to the US. They also found work and managed to balance these commitments. Liam works several jobs simultaneously - UPS delivery, managing a Burmese restaurant on the weekends, delivering food for Door Dash - but will begin a full-time job next month in the food services department of Penn Medicine-Lancaster General Hospital (PM-LGH). His brother, JJ, has been recently promoted to team leader in his work at the Marriott Hotel in downtown Lancaster and is now also working full time as a patient care assistant at PM-LGH.

Their father, Tommy, now has a full-time job working in the food services area of PM-LGH, while the mother Khin Khin, who was a botanist before arriving in the US, is taking ESL classes at a local church, and has developed a number of good friends since arriving.

Liam's dream has always been to become an airline pilot and is actively looking into ways he can accomplish his goal. JJ eventually wants to become a nurse, and he describes his job at the hospital as being "his dream job" because it is a step along the way. This family, despite the hardships they have encountered, has remained optimistic and willing to work hard to accomplish what they need to do in order to thrive here in the US.

Mrs. Joanne, one of our most dedicated volunteers in Lancaster, who has been walking alongside the Aung family in their arduous community integration journey is sharing with us the following anecdote:

"I would like to share these pictures with you--this past Friday I offered to take the Aung family hiking in the woods near my home--it's been so beautiful, and they live in the city, so they don't get to be out among the trees. They were SO excited!!! And it was the dad's birthday--they said it was a wonderful way to celebrate. I am so enjoying their friendship and am most grateful you introduced us!"

Praying for you, your staff, and the many people you seek to help...I know these days it is hard, but what you are doing, even though it often doesn't seem to be enough, makes a huge difference in our world. You are helping to weave a web of kindness and love around our broken, but wonderful world!"



Finally, we would like to end this monthly report by sharing with you these humble thoughts:

America has long been a beacon for the world's displaced and persecuted refugees. Woven into its national fabric, this principle reflects America's deepest values and enduring moral leadership. As part of this legacy, through its national Refugee Assistance Program (USRAP), the United States has welcomed over three million refugees since the implementation of the Refugee Act of 1980.

The United States has helped resettle refugee families from every region of the world, reflecting this nation's enduring commitment to offer safety and opportunity to those fleeing persecution. In their native countries, refugees often face life-threatening situations, including war, persecution, torture, and even genocide. They are Afghan women persecuted by the Taliban, Burmese nationals targeted for speaking out against the military government, religious minorities in Syria seeking the freedom to practice their faith, Sudanese children fleeing paramilitary violence, or Ukrainian asylees running away from their war-torn country.

For generations, the United States has long been a Promised Land for displaced persons, offering them the chance to rebuild their shattered lives and pursue their American Dream. Research, including from the U.S. Government, shows that refugees contribute over tens of billions of dollars to the U.S. economy a year and are more likely than U.S-born citizens to start a business. Refugees power the American workforce, enrich its culture, and strengthen its communities. Welcoming refugees is not just a matter of compassion; it is a commitment to America's prosperity and leadership.

But the American legacy of welcome is currently at risk. This year, the lowest refugee admissions ceiling is set at 7,500 people by President Trump, as opposed to the 100,000-admissions ceiling set by every President in each year of their administration. This marks an unprecedented retreat from America's longstanding commitment to refugee protection.

There has never been a worse time for the United States to abandon its commitment to refugees. With conflict and displacement continuing unabated, the number of refugees in the world today is more than double what it was a decade ago. Generations are trapped in limbo, many victims are languishing in displacement camps with limited access to work, education, or sponsorship opportunity. Refugees often face the threat of further persecution, violence, severe deprivations, or return to maltreatment while awaiting resettlement. Less than one percent of refugees is ever given the chance to be resettled in a safe new country and start over. Resettlement represents the world's promise to protect the most vulnerable; it is a promise that should be upheld, not abandoned.

America is a nation that does not shrink from its humanitarian obligations but rises to meet them. Supporting the U.S. Refugee Assistance Program sends a clear message: America's promise as the land of freedom and opportunity has not faded. By recommitting to a strong humanitarian refugee program, we honor our nation's promise.