



Snohomish County
Dave Somers
County Executive

Contact:

Kelsey Nyland
Communications Director, Office of Recovery & Resilience
Kelsey.Nyland@snoco.org
425-407-3071

Snohomish County Welcomes More Than 2,600 Afghan and Ukrainian Refugees

Snohomish County, Wash., February 14, 2023 – Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers announced that since October 2021, when the United States saw a significant influx of refugees from conflict zones, the County in partnership with local nonprofits have provided resettlement services and support to over 2,600 individuals from Afghanistan and Ukraine.

“For decades, Snohomish County has been a welcoming home for families fleeing conflict zones and repression,” said Executive Somers. “As a nation founded by immigrants and refugees and as a caring community, we will continue to do all we can to help these new neighbors access needed services and supports in our county. I am grateful to our partners for their leadership in providing compassionate and timely resettlement services.”

“The refugees fleeing war and chaos deserve our compassion and support as they work to build a new life here in the United States. These resources will help refugees integrate into our communities and create stability during a time of great uncertainty for these families,” said Vice Chair Nate Nehring ([District 1](#)).

As the possibility of Afghan refugees arriving in the Snohomish County became more likely in August of 2021, Executive Somers tasked his staff with finding an innovative approach to assisting them. With a significant military presence, numerous resident veterans who had served in Afghanistan, and a longstanding Afghan-American community, Snohomish County was a natural destination for those who had served the U.S. in Afghanistan. The assistance program was designed and implemented between August and October 2021, offering a means to quickly re-settle Afghans and ensuring their service to the U.S. was honored. The program was expanded to include Ukrainian arrivals when Russia invaded in February 2022 and has become a model for resettlement efforts.

Snohomish County Human Services contracts with Volunteers of America Western Washington (VOAWW) and Refugee & Immigrant Services Northwest to provide resettlement services to Afghan and Ukrainian refugees. Services include transportation, finding temporary and long-term housing, rent assistance, employment assistance, school enrollment, and other assistance as needed. Arriving families are offered support at the Snohomish County Welcome Center, an innovative model that brings together community partners ranging from health care to employment providers. The work is funded by the County’s federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation and the State of Washington.

A breakdown of supportive services is as follows:

- At least 425 families have secured long-term housing;
- More than 1,000 individuals have received support to achieve employment goals, including referrals for assistance obtaining updated Visa status and help finding their first job in the community;
- More than 2,100 individuals have received clothing and household goods; and
- In total, more than 9,000 referrals have been made to critical services such as medical/dental, employment, English literacy and comprehension, legal services, connection to public benefits, and child care and early learning services.

“It has been an honor for Refugee & Immigrant Services Northwest to be a resettlement partner with Snohomish County and Volunteers of America Western Washington. This has been a new and rewarding experience for RISNW to provide initial resettlement support to new arrivals from Afghanistan and Ukraine. The families we serve are happy to have continuing education at the colleges, their children are in school, and are looking forward to becoming first time home buyers. Our success is attributed to the support of Snohomish County which enabled us to successfully help our newest residents make their home in Snohomish County,” said Van Dinh-Kuno, Executive Director, Refugee & Immigrant Services Northwest (RISNW).

“Nobody expected that a little over a year ago, Volunteers of America Western Washington and Refugee & Immigrant Services Northwest would welcome thousands of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees into our Snohomish County community. We not only welcomed them, they have become our neighbors, coworkers, and friends. We have been – and continue to be – blessed and privileged to be able to provide basic needs and housing as well as employment support, help with documentation, health care, school for children, and a place to belong,” said Brian Smith, Interim CEO, VOAWW.

The Snohomish County Human Services Department helps all persons meet their basic needs and develop their potential by providing timely, effective human services and building community. Find more information on the department’s work at <https://snohomishcountywa.gov/191/Human-Services>.

###