



COMMUNITY SERVICES IN THE UNITED STATES

When you arrive to the United States, there are a variety of community services that may be available to you. The types and amount of community services vary greatly from place to place. Your Resettlement Agency can help in identifying and accessing community services for which you may be eligible, but you will also want to learn about and become familiar with your new community in order to access the services independently.

BENEFITS OF ACCESSING COMMUNITY SERVICES

Understanding your community, and the services available to you will contribute to your self-sufficiency and integration. For example, some services may provide assistance if you are struggling financially or have special needs. Certain community services may help you find a job and learn English. Other community services provide opportunities to engage in leisure activities with your family. Being active in your community is a good way to meet people and ease the stress of adjusting to a new country and culture. Finally, familiarity with community services, particularly emergency services and police, ensures your safety and security.

TYPES OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

There are many different types of community services; some are available for free or at a low cost. Community services may be provided by the government, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, or private businesses. Communities vary greatly in the services provided to their residents. Here are more details about some community services you may find in the United States.

COMMUNITY SERVICES IN THE UNITED STATES



Emergency Services and Police

All communities have police, fire departments, and emergency medical services, which serve and protect residents. If you encounter the police, you should listen to them and not be afraid of them. If you cannot communicate with the police, ask for an interpreter. To receive help in an emergency, dial 911 on the telephone. If you do not speak English, you can say “No English. Help” or “No English. Emergency.”

Government Assistance

The government provides different community services, some of which can only be accessed by eligible individuals or families. These programs vary and may provide food, financial assistance, and/or medical assistance. Government programs are usually administered by government social service agencies and have strict limits and guidelines for participation.

Libraries

Public libraries have books and other materials, such as CDs and DVDs, available for residents to borrow for free. Libraries often offer additional programs, such as activities for children and English classes for adults. They may also have computers available for public use.

Parks

Parks are open to the public for outdoor activities, such as walking, running, playing games, or sitting and relaxing. Some parks have picnic areas, playgrounds, and sports fields. Parks have regulations about what you can and cannot do. For example, littering is not allowed and most parks are closed after dark.

Post Offices

You can mail a letter or package, or buy stamps at a post office. United States Post Offices are run by the federal government.

Recreation or Community Centers

Recreation or community centers are places people can gather to participate in different activities in a safe environment. Examples of activities include playing sports or games, taking classes, or participating in social gatherings around a common interest. Recreation centers are open to both adults and children, and activities can be accessed for free or for a fee.

Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange

8719 Colesville Road, 3rd Floor • Silver Spring, MD 20910

For more information, visit the CORE Resettlement Navigator website at corenav.org.



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TYPES OF GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Some government assistance is provided by the federal government and other assistance is provided by state and local governments. For that reason, not all of the programs listed below will be available in every community. Eligibility for assistance programs vary by location and may require certain activities as well as updating information such as changes in employment or income. Your Resettlement Agency will help you access some of the programs available to you, but you will also want to learn how to access these programs yourself.

Cash assistance programs

For people who are having difficulty finding a job, two programs provide temporary financial assistance: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) for parents with children, and Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) for single and married refugees without children.

Matching Grant program

Many resettlement agencies offer this program instead of cash assistance for refugees who want to work, but need some financial help at first. Refugees enrolled in this program promise to get a job as quickly as possible. In exchange, they receive financial assistance, job counseling, and job placement services for their first 4 to 6 months in the United States.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

This federal program provides financial assistance to low-income people to buy food. A person in this program is given a card that can be used to buy a certain amount of food each month. Refugees may apply for food assistance at a local government office. The amount of assistance is based on family size and income. If there are changes to your family size or income after you start receiving SNAP assistance, you need to notify the correct government official in your location.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

This is a federal cash assistance program for people who are blind, disabled, or over the age of 65 and have little or no income.

Child care assistance programs

Some communities provide free or low-cost child care for low-income families so parents can work or look for work.

