



Community Health Committee

August 22, 2024

**Briefing on the *Afghan Evacuees'*
Resettlement: Insights and Lessons for Future
Humanitarian Populations report**

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility



Examining Afghan Evacuees' Resettlement

Insights and Lessons for Future Humanitarian Populations



Diana Guelespe, Hamutal Bernstein, Jessica Darrow, Soumita Bose, Shruti Nayak, Fanny Terrones and Danielle Kwon

Purpose & Approach

- Purpose:
 - How are Afghans faring 1.5 years after their arrival across three sites, Chicago, San Antonio, and northern Virginia?
 - How can the resettlement infrastructure and broader community better prepare to welcome future migration flows?
- Community-engaged approach:
 - Community advisory board, community partners and local Afghan field interviewers
 - Qualitative interviews
 - 36 Afghan evacuees
 - 51 community stakeholders



Characteristics of Study Participants-San Antonio

- 12 Afghan evacuees
- Arrived Aug. 1-Dec. 31, 2021
- Pashto-speakers from rural areas of Afghanistan
- Married with children
- Low levels of formal education
- Secondary migration

Characteristics of Afghan Evacuees by location

		Chicago	N.Virginia	San Antonio
Men		6	6	6
Women		6	6	6
Marital status	Single	2	2	1
	Married	10	10	11
	Married w/children	9	10	8
Immigration status	Humanitarian Parole	12	6	12
	SIV	0	6	0
Native language	Dari	12	11	3
	Pashto	0	1	9
Educational level	College degree	4	6	4
	Some college	1	3	0
	High School	4	1	2
	Primary	2	1	0
	No formal education	1	1	6

Source: Urban Institute Afghan evacuee interviews June through August 2023

Notes: Self-reported data from interview participants.

Findings

Afghan Evacuee Interviews

- Humanitarian parole negatively impacts ability to secure stable employment.
- Most feel stressed, depressed, and in a state of poor mental health.
- Most women want opportunities to learn or improve their English, get a driver's license, and exchange knowledge or skills with other Afghan women.

*Someone came and told us, “You can come and study.” However, the location was quite far and personally, I am unable to drive. Unfortunately, this is a significant need for us. But there were no driving classes available where we study. All the women there expressed that **our primary need is to learn how to drive before anything else.***

—Afghan woman, San Antonio

Community Stakeholder Interviews

- **Afghan Community Leaders**

- Main challenge: Lack of government funding and limited infrastructure
- Established Afghans voluntarily provided crucial navigation and cultural brokering.

- **Legal Service Providers**

- Main challenges: Receiving timely information on US government policies & unreliable USCIS interpreters
- Additional challenges with lodging and transportation costs for interviews in Houston.

Community Stakeholder Interviews, cont'd.

- Other direct service providers
 - Main challenges: Insufficient/restricted funding and limited staff capacity
 - Key resources:
 - Partnerships between resettlement agencies and organizations
 - Networks connecting stakeholders
 - Government funding resources.
 - City-convened collaborative brought together food bank, resettlement agencies, other stakeholders to pool resources and learn from each other.

Best Practices – Highlights for San Antonio

- Empowering evacuees and other Afghans as connectors
- Government-convened collaboratives, connecting organizations, expediting processes
- Bridging cultural and information gap between the community and newcomers
- Fostering social connections with members of the broader community and other Afghans
- Welcoming activities viewed as “essential”
- Concentration in Medical Center neighborhood made for easy access to essentials

Supporting Afghans and Future Populations

- Ongoing needs of Afghan evacuees
 - Access to mental health services
 - Increasing accessibility of education and employment services
 - Long-term legal services and resources
- Lessons for future populations
 - Engaging culturally aligned community leaders and stakeholders before arrival and throughout the resettlement process
 - Providing ongoing training and orientations for community stakeholders and new arrivals
 - Hiring trained staff who speak the arrivals' native language
 - Increasing communication and collaboration across community stakeholder groups

Contact Information

Diana Guelespe, Senior Research Associate

Urban Institute

dguelespe@urban.org



Experiences Supporting Afghan Evacuees in San Antonio

Nadia Mavrakis, Culturingua CEO
Presentation to City of San Antonio
Community Health Committee

August 22, 2024

Programs Supporting Afghans in San Antonio

- Community & Economic Development
 - Communities of Welcome
 - Pathways to Prosperity: CALT & Community Land Trust
- Career & Financial Opportunity
 - Sewing for Success
 - Animal Husbandry
 - Culinary Food Handling
- Youth Development
 - Peer Support / Mentorship (Mental Health)

Communities of Welcome

- Program connected Afghan evacuees with longstanding members of community
- Improved navigational, social, and psychological integration among Afghan evacuees



Pathways to Prosperity Coalition

- Community Ambassador Leadership Training (CALT)
 - Trains leaders in refugee and immigrant communities on accessing services
- Community Land Trust
 - Affordable, attainable homeownership opportunities in Greater Medical Center attainable build equity



Culturingua

Career and Financial Opportunity

- Sewing for Success
 - Sewing skills, provides sewing machines and fabric, and incorporates ESL for sewing vocabulary
- Animal Husbandry
 - Raise animals and regulations around buying and selling animals
- Culinary Food Handling
 - First program accredited by Texas Department of Health and Human Services to provide Food Handling certification in Pashto and Dari



Youth Development

- MindWell Peer Support & Counseling Program
 - Peer support group and individual counseling for immigrant youth aged 12-19 attending NISD campus
 - Supported with Metro Health



THANK YOU!

Jennifer Mata, PhD

E: Jennifer.Mata@SanAntonio.gov

