

General Information on Refugees and Health Care

This one page information sheet is meant as general background information on the health care that refugees, coming to Idaho, receive in their resettlement process. In addition, it is helpful for volunteers to be aware of diverse cultural perspectives and to support refugees with the challenges they are facing within the health care system.

When refugees come to the United States it's important to consider two main areas of emphasis relating to health care access:

- 1) Physical Health
- 2) Mental Health.

1) Physical Health

Upon being resettled in Idaho families will receive Medicaid coverage for 8 months. Within 30 days of arriving in Boise each family will be seen at the Family Medicine Health Center located on the Saint Alphonsus campus off of Emerald for a physical health screening. At the screening clinic they will receive their initial immunizations and lab work. After this initial screening each resettlement agency will assign each refugee to a Healthy Connection physician to provide longitudinal care and to determine appropriate referrals for specialists.

Saint Alphonsus Federal Way clinic and the Family Medicine Health Center are two of the clinics in the Valley that provide the majority of health care specifically for refugee families.

As volunteers it is important to know:

- Sometimes you will take a family member to their appointment. You can also help them with remembering upcoming appointment dates and times.
- Some refugees are not familiar with Western Medicine. You can help by being informed about a person's medications and assisting them with accessing pharmacies in the community.

2) Mental Health

In addition to the physical health screening families will also be screened for mental health at the Family Medicine Health Center. At the completion of the mental health screening providers will determine recommendations for treatment that will be communicated to the primary care physician.

As a volunteer it is important to know:

- Many refugees suffer from the impact of physical and emotional trauma that has occurred due to conflict in their country of origin or while residing in refugee camps.
- Symptoms relating to trauma can be manifested in different ways and can potentially impact an individual's ability to cope with daily stressors.
- In most refugee communities mental health carries a negative stigma. Families may not address or feel comfortable with accessing mental health services due to the fear of being ostracized within their communities.