

# Good Neighbor Team Training

## What is a Good Neighbor Team?

A Good Neighbor Team of 3 – 10 people who walk alongside one refugee family (New Neighbors) to offer friendship, hospitality and community connection over the course of one year. These teams can be from a local church, neighborhood association, group of friends, family members, etc. who form a team together.

The vision of Good Neighbor Teams is for every New Neighbor to be met with friendship and community from the moment they arrive, which will empower New Neighbors to thrive in the Salem community.

The commitment to become a Good Neighbor Team requires consistency, patience, humility, and flexibility as you walk alongside families and provide hospitality. Salem For Refugees staff provide training and ongoing support for each Good Neighbor Team. Once a Good Neighbor Team is formed and all members have completed training, the team will be paired with a refugee family. The supports provided typically include:

**Preparing for Arrival:** Before a refugee family arrives in the U.S., their Good Neighbor Team works with Salem For Refugees staff to prepare for their airport arrival, house, or apartment, and welcome to the community.

- **Team building:** The most effective teams are unified by a shared purpose and also communicate well. In preparation for your new neighbor family, and throughout the entire Good Neighbor Team experience, we recommend engaging in team building. Working through a book together, for example, can be a meaningful way to strengthen your group. Consider reading together *When Helping Hurts* by Corbett & Fikkert, or *Seeking Refuge* by Bau,an, Soerens, Smeir.
- **Learning about the refugee family's home & culture:** Once you know the ethnicity and background of your partnered refugee family, your team can research to understand better their home culture – as well as the conflict they may have fled. The *Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange* offers excellent tools to begin learning.

**Resettlement & Adjustment:** During their first few months in the U.S., refugees have many appointments to schedule, orientations to attend, and things to learn. Sometimes Good Neighbor Teams will function as supplementary/secondary support to our Case Managers and Resource Teams in these tasks. For example, teams will assist with transportation to Cultural Orientations, help the family learn to use public transportation, and connect the family with other community organizations for needed resources.

**Friendship:** Members of the Good Neighbor Team commit to visiting their refugee family at least once a week. These visits often provide opportunities to help practice English, orient to American culture, and meet other practical needs, but the primary goal is to offer genuine and mutual friendship.

**Guide:** Good Neighbor Teams help families get to know Salem & the surrounding communities by visiting community sites including parks, stores, the library, restaurants, etc.

## Good Neighbor Team Activities

### In the first week:

- Purchase grocery items to stock the fridge for the first few days after arrival (a culturally specific list will be provided.)
- Meet the New Neighbor family at the airport as they arrive.
- Take the New Neighbor family to access the resources available for clothes, shoes, etc (Helping Hands, UGM, Hope Station, etc) within the first week following arrival.
- Help with the initial set up of their new home by moving furniture and making the space welcoming.

### Ongoing for up to a year:

- Transport the New Neighbor family to and from their Cultural Orientation modules at SFR Welcome Center for the first 2 months (begin with driving with a goal to train them to ride the bus independently).
- Meet with the New Neighbor family once a week for a meal, coffee, tea, or dessert (invite them to your home or visit them in their home).

- Introduce the New Neighbor family to American holidays.
- Give them a tour of Salem OR and take them to experience recreational resources near them (parks, library, restaurants, and other events in the city).
- Continually learn about the New Neighbor's culture and language.
- Introduce the New Neighbor family to others in the community.
- Sharing your experience as a Good Neighbor Team with the community, so others might be interested in joining a Good Neighbor Team!

## Time Commitment

We ask for a one-year commitment with weekly visits to the refugee family. Each Good Neighbor Team must commit to serve and walk with their assigned refugee family for a minimum of one year. While the initial, grant-funded Refugee Resettlement program only lasts three months, Salem For Refugees believes the need for community, empowerment, and support to reach self-sufficiency stretches beyond ninety days. Therefore, our programs, including Good Neighbor Teams, are designed to offer long-lasting support.

The mutually beneficial relationships that grow out of Good Neighbor Teams happen as a result of consistently spending time together and intentionally building community. Occasionally refugee families may move away or not be open to relationship building. On the other hand, we realize you cannot put a time limit on a friendship. Therefore, we ask for your flexibility and ultimately hope that the Good Neighbor Team develops friendships with the family that may last far beyond a year. Weekly time commitments for each team member may vary throughout the Good Neighbor Team experience depending on the number of team members and needs of the refugee family.

## Financial Partnership

The only financial commitment that we ask is that you come together as a team and provide food staples for when the family arrives. It's a good bonding experience for the team, and adds that extra level of commitment to our New Neighbors. We will provide you with a culturally-specific shopping list.

## Division of Responsibilities

Many teams will divide responsibilities among members ensuring everyone on the Team gets involved and shares the workload. Or they may collectively work together on particular tasks. One person will be designated as the Team Leader for communication with SFR and to oversee the designation of team responsibilities. The Team Leader will assure completion of tasks and support for the New Neighbor family. Having one person that all team members refer to and share information with helps avoid confusion and unnecessary doubling of efforts by the Team. It is helpful for team members to be on some form of communication thread via text or email, and to have occasional team meetings. Each group is working as a team to help the family in the best way possible.

It's important to remember that while Good Neighbor Teams provide primary relational support for families, SFR Case Managers and Resource Teams provide the primary support for logistical resettlement needs including finding a job, opening a bank account, navigating the healthcare system, enrolling in English classes, etc. You can refer your New Neighbor family to their SFR Case Manager for help in these areas. Your Team Leader can reach out to SFR staff with any questions through our GNT email thread.

## Ongoing Connection with Salem For Refugees

- The initial onboarding & training of your team will be done by the Salem For Refugees Volunteer Coordinator. After you have been placed with a family, your primary point of contact will be the Salem For Refugees Direct Services Manager and your family's Case Manager for their first 90 days in Salem. **After the first 90 days (when the Reception & Placement case has been closed), your primary point of contact will be \_\_\_\_\_.** We ask that teams keep the Volunteer Coordinator informed of any changes to your team throughout your one-year commitment.
- Join the Salem For Refugees' Email List for regular updates and announcements, and invitations to the monthly community meetings.

- Attend our monthly "Welcoming our New Neighbors Meeting" first Monday of every month from 12 – 1pm on Zoom to stay updated on what is happening with refugee resettlement in Salem, and to receive ongoing education and training.
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## Resettlement Timeline: First 90 Days

The following is a snapshot of what newly-arrived refugee families experience during their R&P period, which lasts 90 days. It should be noted that unforeseen events and situations can at times disrupt the linear layout of services delivery, making certain services delayed or secondarily prioritized. This should be a rough guide to the first 90 days with your refugee family.

### PRE-ARRIVAL

- Help with initial home setup as needed.
- Purchase initial grocery items for the family. A culturally appropriate pantry list will be provided by SFR.
- Welcome your new family at the airport!

### WEEKS ONE & TWO

#### What to Expect:

- Family is visited by SFR staff the day after arrival
- Apply for food stamps, cash assistance and Medicaid
  - Married refugees with no kids or single refugees without children: Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medicaid
  - Households with kids: Work First and Family Medicaid
- Family goes to Social Security to apply for Social Security Numbers
- SFR hosts an intake meeting with the family.
- SFR provides gift cards (\$50/person) to help with initial groceries and access to cash from Resettlement Welcome Money
- An allotment of welcome money is provided for the family of \$1,225 per person. These funds are primarily used to pay rent and other basic needs during the first three months after arrival.
- Adults age 18+ enroll in English classes or get set up with an English tutor

#### What Not to Expect:

- **Family is visited every day by their case manager.** It is true that SFR staff will interact with the family regularly by helping them get to/from appointments, but the case manager(s) will not be in the home having a conversation with the family each time s/he visits.
- **Family is receiving all benefits immediately.** Food stamps, Cash Assistance and Medicaid generally take anywhere from 2-4 weeks to receive
- **All adults are attending English classes.** It can take a while for test assessments to be completed and to find an English education option that will work for the family considering childcare issues, transportation, etc.

#### How to Advocate for Your Family:

- If the family has run out of groceries but has not communicated that to SFR: if they have money you can assist them with shopping. If they have no money please ask them to talk to the SFR case manager assigned to them about requesting money.
- If someone in the family is sick or appears in need of medical assistance, reach out to the SFR case manager assigned to them to see what the best way to handle the situation may be.
- Reassure the family that it's normal to feel overwhelmed! Resettlement is hard, but as they complete enrollments and start settling into a schedule, things will slow down a bit for them. There will always be challenges, but there will also be opportunities to learn.

### Spending Time with Your Family:

- Initially your contact with the family may be task oriented. Try building a relationship while taking them to orientations, shopping trips, ect.
- For the first couple of months when they are busy with multiple cultural orientations, check with the family's Case Manager to see when the family is available for a visit or outing.

## WEEKS THREE & FOUR

### What to Expect:

- Children are registered in school
- Children under 5, and pregnant mothers, are enrolled in WIC
- The Family should have had an appointment with their Primary Care Physician
- Family receives a second home visit from SFR staff
- Cultural Orientation classes have started, some topics of which include:
  - Refugee status, rights, and responsibilities in the US
  - Healthcare system
  - Importance of ELL/job search, and of attending school
  - Transportation
  - Clothing and other community resources
- Social Security cards have usually arrived by now and been delivered to the family
- Family has been scheduled for their refugee health screening through West Salem Clinic but may not have attended yet
- Plans for bus training (or showing how to walk) to English classes will have been made, and may have already occurred
- Take the New Neighbor family to NW Hub to receive a free bicycle donation.

### What Not to Expect:

- **All children are attending school.** Even though children may have been registered for school, they may not yet have gone to complete registration at their individual school(s). Sometimes this is due to school staff availability, school schedules (i.e., if it is winter break), or because schools are working with the transportation company to arrange bussing.
- **Families understand everything that is going on.** Families get a LOT of mail and phone calls from many different places once they have been registered for services. We do not expect them to know everything, nor do we expect them to remember all of the things we have previously discussed. That's why we always encourage asking questions!
- **Families can do everything on their own.** While we encourage self-sufficiency, families who have been in the US for one month generally still need some help with figuring out their new surroundings. Sometimes, they will need different concepts explained a few times in order to feel confident that they understand.

### How to Advocate for Your Family:

- Again, **encouragement**. The family may still feel uneasy about the resettlement process. Families are in the part of their resettlement where they are transitioning to more independence, and that can be scary for many reasons.
- More **reassurance**. It is normal for families to still feel overwhelmed. Explain to your family that as they settle into more of a routine they may feel better about the process.

**Spending Time with Your Family:**

- Social gatherings with the team and the family are appropriate as well as hosting meals with them. Continue to check with the family's Case Manager to see when the family is available for visits or outings.

## MONTH TWO

### What to Expect:

- Family should be receiving all benefits (food stamps, cash assistance, Medicaid)
- Adults will have applied for State ID
- Family has attended their health screening
- Direct Service Team has conducted Cultural Orientation through classes in the office with the family
- All adults are receiving English education regularly through classes or tutoring, and all children are attending school each day
  
- The family has been given a list of all important contacts that they may need (for example: school, primary care, employer, etc.)

### What Not to Expect:

- **SFR staff members are frequently visiting the family.** We always tell families that they will see us a lot the first month, and less in the second and third months, because they will be more involved with English/school and other appointments. It's not because we don't care about them – it's because we are serving many families at the same time and need to be available to everyone.
- **Families are always happy.** Families are usually beginning to see how soon they will be “on their own” and without their Case Manager, who has so far navigated their access to all important services. Families may also really start missing people back home, doubting whether they are capable of handling everything here, and worrying about the future. The fact that this is very normal should be reinforced.
- **SFR knows everything.** It is unlikely the family shares all their concerns with us. In fact, since you as volunteers get to build such wonderful relationships with families and meet them in ways we as staff cannot, you might find you learn more about their struggles and concerns than we do in our more limited roles.
- **Families always fully understand the resettlement process.** It is sometimes difficult for families to see that certain processes take time, and that resettlement agencies are limited in the services they can offer. This may lead families to express frustration and unhappiness with their resettlement experience.

### How to Advocate for Your Family:

- Encourage the family to share concerns with the SFR case manager assigned to them. Sometimes, they have the answers and just need to be asked the questions. When they don't have the answers, they can often find someone who does!

### Spending Time with Your Family

- You should be moving away from task oriented things and spending more relational time with your family.
- Begin showing your family around town and taking them to do fun outings as time allows in their schedule. The SFR Volunteer Coordinator will give your team a list of ideas of things to do with your family.
- Your family may be coming to you for advice but should be making their own decisions.
- Continue to check with the family's Case Manager to see when the family is available for visits or outings.

## MONTH THREE

### What to Expect:

- SFR should have completed Cultural Orientation assessments with adults age 18+.
- The family may have a general understanding of their budget and know how/when to pay their bills with support.
- Family should have a Bank Account.
- The Family will know when Cash Assistance, Medicaid and Food Stamps need to be reapplied for or when they need to make changes to their applications (ex. they need to report life changes in order to keep receiving food stamps.)

### What Not to Expect:

- **All the family's questions have been answered.** Each day, refugee families are learning new things, which leads to new questions. They will probably wonder about things now that they never considered when they first arrived.
- **The family feels completely satisfied with their resettlement experience.** As noted previously, SFR is often unable to give clients the level of support that they feel they need. Families frequently wish they had seen SFR staff more or had more time with SFR staff.

### How to Advocate for Your Family:

- **Talk about how far the family has come in such a short amount of time!** What are they able to do on their own now, that they could not do when you first met each other?

### Spending Time with Your Family:

- At this point, your main point of contact with the family will be meeting to have meals together and socializing.

## CASE CLOSURE AND BEYOND

### What to Expect:

- SFR staff meets with family on or shortly before day 90 to verify that all required services have been completed, and explain how the support model looks different after 90 days. You can expect to receive a summary email from the direct services team about the summary of that meeting.
- Any outstanding issues related to core services will be followed up on by the SFR Direct Service Team.
- Family receives a few important reminders:
  - SFR is always available to answer questions at the Welcome Center or over the phone.
  - First travel loan bill usually arrives 5–6 months after arrival.
  - Family is eligible to apply for Green Cards 12 months after arrival and SFR is available to assist with that process.
  - Immigration questions about Green Cards or other programs should be directed to their SFR case manager assigned to them.
- We thank the family for allowing us to join them on the first few steps of their new journey! It is a privilege we are grateful to have.
- We explain to the family that their Good Neighbor Team will continue to walk alongside them for the next 9 months, and that the SFR Welcome Center is also an ongoing resource where they can come to request support as needed.
- Your team will be notified when the R&P case is closing for your family, and the SFR Direct Services Manager & Volunteer Coordinator will check-in with you to debrief your experience so far, celebrate victories, and talk about support for the family moving forward.
- After one year, the Volunteer Coordinator will meet with your team to share stories, discuss lessons learned, and talk through a survey to help Salem For Refugees grow and adjust for the future.

#### What Not to Expect:

- **The family's struggles are now over!** Families will have challenges no matter how long they've been in the US, and it is important for them to continue to develop coping and problem-solving skills as they go. It's okay to struggle a bit. Your support is priceless, but so is the opportunity presented by the challenge!
- **All the family's questions have been answered.** New questions will come up, and it's okay if you don't have the answers. Many of the questions families have in the months following case closure are questions they never could have come up with in the first few days, due to there being no context for them at the time. Salem For Refugees is always a resource to attempt to answer those new questions now, but so are many other connections the family has made along the way. You can be helpful to the family as well, keeping in mind that finding ways to empower a family with knowledge is always preferable to simply doing something for the family, or attempting to fix everything for them.

**How to Advocate for Your Family:** Once a family's case is "closed" with SFR's R&P program, it can seem like there is a major drop-off in a family's circle of support. Families certainly feel this, and may express their uneasiness to their Case Manager and/or your team. Here are a few helpful ideas for addressing these concerns:

- **Have a conversation about how much the family has already learned** since arriving to the US, and have the family identify some of their own areas of growth.
- **Encourage the family to stay connected to their cultural community**, which is composed of at least in part of many individuals who've "been there before," and whose success and perseverance can be a model for this family.

#### Spending Time with Your Family:

- At this point, it is no longer necessary for your team to schedule your gatherings and activities with the family through the Case Manager. You can contact the family directly through the relationships you have established.
- Your family may see you as true friends. With regular contact, this is a natural progression.



## GOOD NEIGHBOR TEAM SUGGESTIONS

Hopefully, in reading through this document, you have begun to understand how important volunteers like you are in helping our newly-arrived refugee families feel welcome and supported! To ensure appropriate communication and services delivery during the R&P period, please follow the suggestions here:

- If your family shares concerns with you about SFR or their Case Manager, keep in mind that families are often frustrated when the reality of life in the US does not meet their expectations, and that many families also experience a certain degree of culture shock as they get used to a very new environment. There is also often the expectation that Case Managers – especially those who share the same background or ethnicity as the family – will be available at any time of any day to visit or do something for the family, which is not feasible. Remember that as they are processing with you, you have the ability to either diffuse or further ignite the situation (bucket of water vs. bucket of gas). We encourage you to help the family feel heard while also explaining the role and limitations of SFR. If you feel that it's a concern that SFR needs to know, encourage the family to share with SFR staff.
- Encourage your family to call their Case Manager if the family shares a need with you that you are not able to handle. Do not let the family rely on you to get a message to their Case Manager. Empowering them to be their own best advocates is a great skill to teach the family. As we always say to our families, if we don't know there's a problem, we can't find a solution.
- If your family asks you to do something that is outside of your Good Neighbor Team role during the R&P period (i.e. enroll their kids in school, help them find a new house, set up medical appointments), direct them to talk with their Case Manager. If you have questions about your role in a particular situation, feel free to ask that question in your GNT email thread for clarification.
- Remember not to give money directly to your family. SFR encourages donations (financial or material) – certainly significant ones (Ex. a large sum of money, or a piece of furniture) – to be directed towards SFR as an organization rather than individual families. This enables SFR to funnel those means towards the most pressing organizational/family needs which, in turn, help ensure equity in the support families receive. Additionally, experience over the past five years resettling New Neighbors has shown SFR that such donations can change the relational dynamic between families and those supporting them, leading to unhealthy dependency.