

## Philadelphia's Plan to Resettle Afghan Parolees

### Background Material for the Philanthropy Network Presentation

September 20, 2021

#### *Overview*

The withdrawal of US forces in Afghanistan, and the subsequent takeover by the Taliban, have created a deadly situation for Afghan nationals who assisted the US effort. These Afghan allies, and members of their families, are at serious risk of reprisal from the Taliban for their perceived collusion with the United States. Afghans evacuated by the US are expected to have one of three types of legal standing or lawful entry: Special Immigrant Visa (SIV), humanitarian parole, and Priority 2 refugee status. More detail follows:

- **Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders** have the right to enter and remain permanently in the US, as recompense for having served the US government in Afghanistan, or having served US military in a particular capacity, for at least 1 year. NSC is currently serving 20 Afghan SIV's, while HIAS PA is currently serving 15.
- **Humanitarian parolees** have been "granted permission to enter the US for humanitarian or public interest reasons." Humanitarian parole has been extended to SIV applicants who have not yet been approved. If successful in their applications, this group will have met the same criteria as SIV holders. Importantly, the Department of Homeland Security "may revoke" parolee status "at any time," and a parolee "does not qualify as a refugee."<sup>1</sup> Humanitarian parole is not a legal status, but rather provides for lawful entry. Humanitarian parole for Afghans will last for up to 2 years.<sup>2</sup>
- **Priority 2 refugee status** has been issued to Afghans who served the US effort but do not qualify for SIV's. This group includes Afghan allies who served less than 1 year, or worked for US-related NGO's.

#### *Philadelphia's Commitment*

There are currently 49,000 Afghans housed on eight military bases across the United States. Once processed, those people will be resettled by resettlement agencies in various cities. Philadelphia's two refugee resettlement agencies, **Nationalities Service Center and HIAS PA, are standing ready to serve 300 parolees and family members** (200 for NSC, 100 for HIAS PA). The state of Pennsylvania is currently accepting 995 evacuees; by comparison, California is accepting 5,300, Texas is accepting 4,500, Missouri is accepting 1,200, and Nevada is accepting 1,600.<sup>3</sup> **Given the scale of this humanitarian crisis, we would like to accept more parolees if resources permit.**<sup>4</sup>

#### *At a Glance*

**Total parolees expected in Philadelphia:** 300 (more if resources permit)

**Breakdown of children versus adults:** Unknown at this time. Afghan families resettled in Philadelphia in the past have had an average of 5.8 members, but the evacuated population is likely different.

**Number of unaccompanied refugee minors (URM) expected:** Unknown. Any URM's arriving in Philadelphia would be under the care of Bethany Christian Services. However, HIAS PA provides the legal services for

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<sup>1</sup> [Refugee - Immigration StatUS Requirements | DSHS \(wa.gov\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> "Parole and Beyond for Afghan Nationals," Penn State Law, 30 Aug. 2021.

<sup>3</sup> These allocations account for only the first 37,000 arrivals, of an expected 50-75k arrivals in total. Source: [37,000 Afghans to start new lives across U.S. - Axios](#)

<sup>4</sup> Philadelphia stands ready to resettle an additional 300 Afghan SIV holders through traditional federal and state funding sources.

these children. As of two weeks ago, five children had already arrived at the shelter that HIAS PA serves. We have heard no news from our legal services funder regarding funding for these increased needs. As these children, prior to the current situation, have all been Central American, all of our youth staff are bi-lingual in Spanish and English and we received funding for indigenous language interpretation as needed. However, we have no capacity within our youth team to provide Dari, Farsi, Urdu or Pashto language assistance. We do have these languages in our agency but these staff are engaged in other work. Nationwide, the Office of Refugee Resettlement has reported 150 URM arrivals from Afghanistan.

**Plans with the Philadelphia School District:** The Philadelphia Immigrant Education Collaborative, led by HIAS PA, will hold a meeting focused on serving this incoming population on October 6.

**Areas selected for resettlement:** The City of Philadelphia and its immediate exurbs.

**Housing needs:** We are collectively looking at a range of housing options, including extended stay hotels and AirBnBs, with a focus on getting people into stable, long-term housing as soon as possible. Neither agency is looking for housing volunteers.

**Employment needs:** - While SIVs speak English, many of their spouses do not. In addition, others not in this category may or may not speak English. Finally, work authorization for all those except SIVs will not come automatically, but we have been advised that they will be expedited. This renders the need for our agencies to figure out some way to support these families until they are legally able to work. Those who don't speak English will need English language instruction before they can get work (with some exceptions - extremely physically demanding work is often available for non English speakers, but due to the nature of the work only healthy and strong individuals can do this). HIAS PA and NSC both provide English language instruction to adults and children but neither has an extraordinarily large capacity for this. We have relationships with other providers across the city but they will need to scale up significantly to accommodate this group.

**Legal needs:** Non-SIVs will need legal assistance almost as soon as they arrive in order to apply for asylum or, if necessary, any other status for which they may be eligible. In addition, SIVs, anxious to bring over family members that were not qualified for SIV status are desperately contacting both agencies in order to gain legal assistance in filing family based petitions or humanitarian parole applications for those who were left behind. There are filing fees involved in these latter two processes and an enormous amount of resources is necessary to bring an asylum claim although admittedly these cases should be easier than most because of the clear and very public situation in Afghanistan. HIAS PA has worked with the AILA Puit and train 600 pro bono lawyers in the last two weeks but does not have the capacity to mentor more than about 50. We have begun assigning cases to these and we have also been fundraising to get fees paid as well as advocating with Congress to get USCIS to waive the fees.

**Sources of cultural expertise:** Both agencies employ Afghan SIV's (5 at NSC, 1 at HIAS PA). We are also exploring options with Al Bustan, and working with the Islamic Council of North America. In addition, we plan to deploy funds raised to engage and support local Afghan-owned businesses in the provision of food and other necessary goods. We are also planning a community convening in early October for new and existing Afghan community members to share their concerns, ideas, and feedback.

**Health needs:** The Philadelphia Refugee Health Collaborative (PRHC), led by Nationalities Service Center, will hold a meeting focused on serving Afghan evacuees on September 22. Several PRHC partners have capacity to serve uninsured parolees, including providing primary care for families. We are also exploring partnership with the PA Association of Community Health Centers to support enrollment of parolees in Pennie health insurance through the PA State Health Insurance Exchange.

**Mental health:** It is critically important to care for the mental health of impacted community members, including children and adults. We recognize the importance of taking a holistic view of health and wellness. In partnership with DBHIDS and other stakeholders, we are exploring the best way to train and deploy Afghan community members as peer counselors to raise awareness about stress and mental health, providing mental health screening and leading community support groups under the supervision of a clinician.

**Key community partners:** Philadelphia Furniture Bank, The Wardrobe, Cradles to Crayons, Mitzvah Food Pantry, JFCS, SHARE, Philabundance, Al Bustan, and the Islamic Council of North America

**Government partners:** Office of Immigrant Affairs, State Refugee Program, State Department - PRM, Health and Human Services – ORR

**National partners (VOLAGs):** US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, HIAS

**NSC community support as of 9/17/2021:**

- Total Afghans resettled since Taliban takeover: 20 SIVs
- Spontaneous volunteer applicants: more than 1,000
- Funds raised for direct client care, legal, and infrastructure: \$601,000
- Number of donors: more than 1,360
- Estimated value of direct in-kind donations: \$150,000

**HIAS PA community support as of 9/17/2021:**

- Total Afghans resettled since Taliban takeover: 15
- Spontaneous volunteer applicants: : 301 signed up for social service volunteering and 700 for legal services
- Funds raised for direct client care and other service costs: \$350,000
- Number of donors: more than 1,400
- Estimated value of direct in-kind donations: \$100,000

**Timeframe for needed funding:** We expect people to start arriving within the next several weeks, and to continue arriving through the end of the calendar year. We anticipate that money raised at the local level will be disbursed quickly, and we anticipate needing additional funding as of October 15.

***Funding Issues***

In contrast to refugees and SIV holders, parolees do not already have legal status. This has two effects. First, they will not automatically have work authorization, and will not have access to food benefits or Medicaid upon arrival. This means that NSC and HIAS PA will be responsible for a larger range of costs to support parolees—including food, rent, transportation, and cash—for an unknown period of time, in comparison to the usual refugee population. Second, since they do not have permanent status, many parolees will need to apply for asylum (or family-based immigration, or SIV's). Families who do so will incur legal costs of at least \$1,800 for asylum interviews.

For these reasons, NSC and HIAS PA anticipate needing to provide comprehensive support, to include asylum interview costs, to 300 parolees, for 6 to 12 months, until they receive permanent legal standing, work authorization, and access to benefits.

Below is a weighted average cost comparison for parolees and SIV holders or refugees, based on (roughly similar) cost estimates from NSC and HIAS PA for 6 months of support<sup>5</sup>:

Per client	SIV holder or refugee	Parolee
Operational cost	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00
Direct-to-client cost	\$2,040.00	\$3,840.00
<b>Total cost</b>	<b>\$5,540.00</b>	<b>\$7,340.00</b>
Gov't funding available	\$4,300.00	\$2,275.00
<b>Funding shortfall</b>	<b>-\$1,240.00</b>	<b>-\$5,065.00</b>

The average SIV or refugee costs \$5,540 to support over 6 months, with \$4,300 covered by government funding (i.e., a shortfall of \$1,240). **By contrast, we estimate that supporting one parolee for 6 months will cost \$7,340, with only \$2,275 of that covered by government funding (leaving a gap of \$5,065 per individual).**

***Expected Shortfall***

We anticipate a shortfall of \$5,065 per parolee for an initial 6-month service period. For 300 parolees, the anticipated shortfall comes to **a total of \$1,519,500 for an initial 6-month service period, for total expenditures of \$2.2m.** To date, HIAS PA and NSC have raised a combined \$951,000 in individual, foundation, and donor-advised fund grants toward this effort. **The estimated combined amount needed is \$568,500.**

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<sup>5</sup> Please see Addendum: Planning Scenarios, next page, for the basis of cost estimates.

Addendum: Planning Scenarios

In serving Afghan evacuees, we anticipate serving a variety of cases, which may impact their needs and funding needed to support. Though our staffing costs are fixed, client costs may vary based on needs and case composition. Some hypothetical examples are included below.

**Scenario 1:** Single individual who arrived with parolee status for two years; likely intends to apply for asylum through an immigration attorney. Originally from Kandahar province, he worked as a public servant for the Afghan government. He speaks Pashto. He is awaiting reunification with wife and children who remain in Afghanistan. He will be housed with other singles in shared housing.

Rent	\$400.00 per month	Housed with other roommates
Utilities	\$75.00 per month	
General Cash	\$150.00 per month	
Transportation	\$100.00 per month	
Food	\$200.00 per month	Supplemented by in-kind food and gift cards
General Med	\$15.00 per month	For health care through the Pennie exchange
Asylee Interview	\$1,800.00	

**Estimated: 15% of total parolees**

**Estimated Monthly Cost (total): \$1,240**

**Estimated Monthly Cost (per person): \$1,240**

**Anticipated Costs for six months of service (total): \$7,440**

**Anticipated Costs for six months of service (per person): \$7,440**

**Scenario 2:** Family of five (two parents and three children) who arrived with parolee status for two years; likely intends to apply for asylum through an immigration attorney. Originally from Kunduz Province in Northern Afghanistan, the father worked at the local airport. He speaks Dari. The family will live in temporary housing before transitioning to a long-term, single-family apartment in NE Philadelphia. Youngest child has significant health issues that need to be addressed at CHOP. Mom takes medication for an ongoing health condition.

Rent	\$1200.00 per month	
Utilities	\$300.00 per month	
General Cash	\$300.00 per month	
Transportation	\$150.00 per month	
Food	\$500.00 per month	Supplemented by in-kind food and gift cards
General Med	\$150.00 per month	For health care through the Pennie exchange, medications and copays
Asylee Interview	\$1,800.00	

**Estimated: 60% of total parolees**

**Estimated Monthly Cost (total): \$2,600**

**Estimated Monthly Cost (per person): \$520**

**Anticipated Costs for six months of service (total): \$15,600**

**Anticipated Costs for six months of service (per person): \$3,120**

**Scenario 3:** Family of seven (two parents and five children) who arrived with Parolee SQ/SI Status meaning that they will likely be granted SIV status. Originally from Kabul, the father worked as a procurement officer for the US government; he speaks Farsi, Pashto and English. Will live in temporary housing with a US family member before transitioning to a long-term, single-family apartment in NE Philadelphia.

Rent	\$1200.00 per month	
Utilities	\$300.00 per month	
General Cash	\$300.00 per month	
Transportation	\$150.00 per month	
Food	\$500.00 per month	Supplemented by in-kind food and gift cards
General Med	\$150.00 per month	For health care through the Pennie exchange

**Estimated: 25% of total parolees**

**Estimated Monthly Cost (total): \$2,600**

**Estimated Monthly Cost (per person): \$371.24**

**Anticipated Costs for six months of service (total): \$15,600**

**Anticipated Costs for six months of service (per person): \$2,228.57**