

Refugee resettlement in New Zealand



volunteer info sheet



Overview

New Zealand currently welcomes around 1,000 quota refugees each year. When former refugees arrive in New Zealand, they spend six weeks at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre. The Centre is run by Immigration New Zealand and offers former refugees an introduction to life here. After this they are resettled in one of seven locations around the country: Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington, Nelson, Dunedin, and Invercargill.

At this point, New Zealand Red Cross becomes the primary provider of community refugee resettlement programmes. We support former refugees during the first twelve months of their resettlement journey and provide employment support, which is available for several years after arrival.

Refugee support volunteers

Refugee support volunteers are essential to the work that we do. Moving to a new country can be difficult enough for anyone, but for people arriving as refugees it may pose an even greater challenge. Many former refugees arrive with few belongings and will be resettling without the support of family and friends. Some aspects of 'kiwi' life are also likely to be completely new for former refugees and their families.

Our volunteers may be the first friends a family makes on arrival and they play a key role within the family's new support network. They are invaluable because they provide support for day-to-day tasks that may be challenging for new arrivals. We often hear of volunteers who have become like 'family' to those they are helping to resettle.

Who can be a volunteer?

Anyone with a passion for helping people and an interest in welcoming new kiwis can be a volunteer. No previous experience in this area is required as our comprehensive training equips volunteers with the skills they will need.

Training

Refugee support volunteers receive comprehensive training from Red Cross staff, along with mentoring and support during their time as a volunteer. Training courses are held throughout the year and cover a range of topics, including:

- An introduction to the refugee experience
- The role of the refugee support volunteer
- Teams and teamwork
- Refugee health, well-being and education
- Key support services
- Culture

The training provides volunteers with the information they need to confidently and successfully support the new family.

How does it work?

Volunteers work in teams to support families or individuals for up to six months. Teams are made up depending on the availability of volunteers, and we try to match those with complementary skills. Volunteers welcome former refugees to New Zealand, provide practical, hands-on support, and often foster strong friendships with members of the families or individuals they support, as well as with others in their volunteer team.

Volunteer tasks may include:

- Setting up the household prior to the family or individual's arrival
- Helping families enrol their children in school
- Helping the family or individual register with the local doctor/medical centre
- Connecting families and individuals with their community
- Other similar responsibilities

Volunteers generally find the first two to four weeks of their placement are the busiest, with initial appointments and settling in tasks taking up most of their time. After the first six weeks, less time is required as the family becomes more settled. By this stage volunteers typically spend time with their family or individual on a weekly basis.



Process

1. Apply
2. Complete training
3. Begin placement
4. Do it again

Contact details

For more information about volunteering in your region, please contact:

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