

Mentoring Refugees – Can you assist?

April 2022

Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia (CRSA) are looking for volunteers to take part in their Group Mentorship Program for refugees in Melbourne.

They have mobilised 80 local mentor groups across the country to help support newly arrived Afghan evacuees and other refugees living in our communities. The 800 or so volunteers now involved in this program are doing amazing work and significantly improving the experience of newly arrived refugees but they need more people to come on board. They now have more refugees wanting to be part of the program than we have mentor groups in a number of key locations. Furthermore, with all that is happening in Ukraine, Afghanistan and other parts of the world, the demand for community-led welcome and support in Australia is only likely to grow in the future.

Mentor groups help families with across a range of issues including becoming orientated in their local communities, finding suitable housing, learning English, learning to drive, finding employment, succeeding in education, and just being their for social and emotional support.

Participating in the program involves getting together a group of five or more adults who live in your town/city, undertaking six hours of training on how to provide practical support to newly arrived refugees (two online workshops), submitting clear police and working with children checks and then being matched up with a newly arrived refugee household who your group will then provide practical support to over a six to 12 month period. Groups are asked to raise a small amount of money which they hold and control, to provide a budget for their work.

CRSA are frequently told by mentor group members how rewarding it is to be able to welcome and support refugee families in this 'hands-on' way, and to get to know other likeminded people within their community.

Mentor groups tell us about the kinds of support they're providing, from helping with education opportunities, to taking young children and their parents to the beach for the first time.

How to get involved

- Read more about the Group Mentorship Program on the CRSA website <https://refugeesponsorship.org.au/what-we-do/group-mentorship-program/>
- Contact Nicole (nicole.watkins@refugeesponsorship.org.au) for a copy of the Group Mentorship Program application form

The next round of training for volunteer mentors will be in May

Refugees who benefit from this program

The 'mentees' in the program are from diverse backgrounds - they are young people, older people, parents, children, athletes, health professionals, social activists, former politicians, teachers and entrepreneurs. They all have unique talents, backgrounds and experiences that will ultimately enrich the Australian community. Many of them are recent evacuees from Afghanistan but refugees from other countries are also involved in the program (eg Iraq, Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo).

Participating refugee households are made up of nuclear family units, sibling groups, extended families and single adults.