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ND to resettle evacuees from Afghanistan in the coming months

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services today announced that it has been notified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that North Dakota will receive 49 legal and fully vetted Afghan evacuees starting later this month through the Afghan Placement and Assistance (APA) program. The federally funded APA program is a part of Operation Allies Welcome and does not impact resources available to North Dakotans in need of safety net services.

These 49 individuals are part of the 37,000 humanitarian evacuees who will be resettled to 200 communities in the U.S. through the APA program. The majority of the 49 evacuees will resettle in Fargo.

Before arriving in the country, these individuals must complete a U.S. Department of Homeland Security rigorous vetting process that includes Federal Bureau of Investigation fingerprint-based background checks and other security screenings. They will also receive health and medical screenings, a COVID-19 vaccination and authorization to work.

Earlier this month, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, the state's refugee resettlement agency, submitted a proposal to the U.S. State Department to resettle 49 Afghan evacuees. The proposal was based on the availability of services provided by community organizations that welcome new Americans and teach English as a second language. The LIRS proposal was approved on Sept. 15.

"Like so many North Dakotans with immigrant roots, refugees bring ingenuity and resilience that make our communities and the economy stronger," said DHS Executive Director Chris Jones. "Resettlement provides a life-saving solution for some of the most vulnerable people in the world and it also creates positive benefits for North Dakota."

Resettlement efforts place heavy emphasis on connecting people with their family. North Dakota has resettled 115 Afghan refugees over the past 20 years. Past Afghan refugees have become doctors and business owners, and have held a variety of careers that contribute to North Dakota's economic well-being.

Brittany Sachdeva, vice president of operations for Sanford Health in Fargo, said refugees play a critical role in their workforce.

“With a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, Sanford Health’s journey as an organization includes continually building on the diverse talents, experiences and beliefs of our employees, as well as the patients and communities we serve,” she said. “As one of the largest employers in the state, we understand the positive impact those new to our country can have in helping solve our collective workforce challenges. We look forward to welcoming them to North Dakota and encourage them to join our Sanford family.”

Initial resettlement efforts following the U.S. military exit from Afghanistan did not include North Dakota. However, the state will collaborate on the large national effort to support vulnerable Afghans, including those who worked alongside the U.S. in Afghanistan for the past two decades, as they safely resettle in the U.S.

To learn more about North Dakota refugee resettlement and support services, refer to this [informational sheet](#).

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