

# Refugee Youth & Housing

*Stable, adequate housing is a foundation for participation in education, the job market, and the community at large.*



## WHY THIS MATTERS

Finding stable, affordable, quality housing is a major challenge for refugee youth and families as they enter extremely pressed rental housing markets in many resettlement communities.

## KEY POINTS

### Challenges:

- ❑ **Public policy** in settlement communities does not always address the importance of stable housing, and often lacks the support necessary for helping refugees find adequate housing.
- ❑ **Affordability** is a significant barrier to adequate housing, and the housing allowance provided to refugees is often insufficient. Consequently, many refugees spend a burdensome amount of their income on housing, putting them in a position of both housing insecurity and financial insecurity.
- ❑ While **employment** is a significant positive predictor of housing outcomes, few housing programs address employment considerations.
- ❑ The lack of **available** housing, particularly in urban centres where housing costs tend to be higher, impacts the ability of resettlement services to effectively meet the needs of refugees.

## WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- ❑ Refugees who make use of resettlement services tend to secure permanent housing faster than those who do not.
- ❑ All refugees need housing that is within close proximity to education, social services, employment, healthcare, and religious and resettlement organizations.
- ❑ Embedding these services within housing sites makes them more accessible to residents and promotes their use.
- ❑ On-site supports can include settlement workers that help refugees to secure housing, legal assistance, employment services, language classes, workshops on fire and safety codes, and counselling services.
- ❑ Providing childcare within these housing programs also supports childhood development while encouraging community involvement for parents and youth.
- ❑ Public policy should ensure funding for accommodation in the initial resettlement stage that adequately covers the cost of living.
- ❑ Social housing projects are one way in which refugees can access affordable housing.

*Housing support provided to refugees should be ongoing and anchored to other types of services such as education and language learning, job training, and access to community networks.*

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

❑ Many refugees are unemployed or underemployed, have limited access to credit in their new communities, and do not have friends or family in positions to help them with housing costs.

❑ Refugees facing housing precarity tend to focus their attention on finding a place to live and are consequently unable to successfully proceed to other resettlement tasks and participate in their communities.

❑ Due to the differences between the laws in their home community and those in their settlement community, refugees are often unaware of landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities.

❑ Refugees are unlikely to report housing discrimination by landlords or service providers due to fear of eviction or other repercussions, a lack of familiarity with the language of their settlement country, and insufficient information on where or how to report housing discrimination.

❑ Where there is a lack of social and subsidized housing projects, refugee-serving organizations can work with private landlords, housing and landlord associations, and real estate developers to help coordinate access to affordable housing. For example, rent vouchers towards private market rent could be provided to those on the wait list for social housing.

❑ Resettlement organizations help refugees explore different types of accommodation and regions where housing is available along with their associated costs, explain the rights of housing tenants, and provide legal advice and advocacy.

❑ Some governments and organizations produce print and web-based materials explaining housing rights and regulations to newcomers and provide services, through local help centres, such as legal advocacy, assistance signing leases, support finding accommodation, and referrals to other services.

❑ Providing these services in languages common to the refugee population of the region greatly improves access to this information. Also, providing information in a format with both text and pictures has also been shown to increase comprehension of these written materials.

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*Housing should be affordable, provide opportunities for forming social connections with other community members, and be located in areas which are suitable for families in the long term.*