**Refugee Resettlement Information for Omaha Police Department**

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**Refugee Resettlement 101**

* Refugee resettlement is the most strictly vetted route of immigration to the United States. It is an 18-24 month process at minimum, but can take years longer. Refugees are screened by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, FBI, Department of Homeland Security, State Department, and National Counterterrorism Center; fingerprints and sometimes iris scans (Syria) are taken. They must have current medical clearance as well.
* Upon arrival in the U.S., refugee resettlement is a 90 day federal program. After 90 days a refugee’s resettlement case is closed and they are on their own in the U.S.
* Refugees are fully legal upon arrival. Refugees are generally not candidates for deportation, instead they receive the same punishment as a U.S. citizen for breaking the law.
* Refugees are expected to follow all U.S. laws.
* Refugees go through orientations before and after arrival in the U.S., but it is not possible to learn every law of the U.S. in this short amount of time. They learn as they go. As such, there are many laws refugees may be unaware of and most do not fully understand our justice system despite best efforts to acclimate.

**General cultural differences that impact law enforcement:**

* Generally the people persecuting refugees back home wore uniforms: officers, soldiers, government officials, etc. Refugees are accustomed to fearing people in uniform rather than turning to them for safety and protection.
* Uniforms meant absolute power in a refugee’s prior experience; no checks and balances; officers were not held accountable for abuses inflicted upon residents.
* Officers often expect bribes in refugee home countries.
* There is a common misconception in the resettled refugee community that any involvement with the police gives you a negative record, even if you are the victim.
* Refugees are often concerned that police interaction could affect immigration status (adjustment from refugee to citizenship status is dependent upon a clean record).
* Refugees are often not aware they can report a crime anonymously. Loyalty to their community often makes them hesitant to report problems in their apartment complexes.
* Hard to call 911 due to language barriers.
* It is more difficult to remember English when nervous.
* May be illiterate (unable to read/write) in both their native language and English.
* May say yes even if they do not fully understand; there is a strong deference to authority in refugee cultures; fear of disagreeing because disagreeing often meant retaliation of some kind upon the family or clan.
* May sign documents without understanding what the document says or what it means to sign.
* May not realize they are supposed to “protect the integrity” of crime scenes.
* Removing shoes indoors is a sign of respect; obviously officers cannot remove shoes when entering a home, but be aware this is perceived as very disrespectful so it is helpful to acknowledge this and apologize if you wish to set a productive tone.
* May not know their home address or birth date without looking at ID; **many refugees have never had an address or assigned birth date prior to resettlement in the U.S.** Many refugees are assigned 01/01 birthdays if their country of origin did not keep record.
* Body language varies culture to culture. Examples: 1) direct eye contact is very “American” – it is considered very disrespectful to look an authority figure (like an officer) in the eye in most refugee cultures; 2) Crossing your arms shows respect in Burma, not disinterest or arrogance).
* Certain male/female interaction may be culturally inappropriate and cause people to seem unwilling to cooperate.

**Common Laws Unfamiliar to Refugees:**

* Hunting and Fishing
* Truancy
* Child supervision guidelines; what age is appropriate for which responsibilities; car seats, etc.
* Domestic violence
* Trespassing
* Loitering
* Staying in car when pulled over (in most home countries, people are expected to exit the vehicle when pulled over)
* Jaywalking
* Littering
* Noise violations
* Statutory rape / age of consent
* Minor in possession / Contributing to the delinquency of a minor

**Refugee Hotspots in Omaha:**

**Apartment complexes**

34th and Lake (Yale Park) – Various ethnic groups of Burma; mostly Karen and Karenni

32nd and Burt ST – Somali and Somali-Bantu (Somali language, some Mai Mai)

44th and Burt ST (Glenwood) – Bhutanese (Nepali language); Various ethnic groups of Burma; mostly Karen and Karenni languages

52nd and NW Radial - Bhutanese (Nepali language); Various ethnic groups of Burma; mostly Karen and Karenni languages

66th and Grand Ave - Various ethnic groups of Burma (diverse languages)

65th and Boyd - Burma and Congolese (diverse languages, mostly Kiswahili)

48th and Boyd – Various ethnic groups of Burma (diverse languages) and Congolese (diverse languages, mostly Kiswahili)

48th from Nicholas to Seward - Various ethnic groups of Burma (diverse languages), Bhutanese (Nepali language), and Somali (Somali language)

Southside Terrace OHA, 27th and T – South Sudanese (Dinka and Nuer languages), Somali and Bantu (Somali and Mai Mai languages)