

Introduction

Changes in political leadership in the United States can prompt questions and concerns from applicants and clients. Cultural Orientation (CO) providers play a vital role in providing trusted information to newcomers. This resource provides guidance on how to prepare for conversations about the recent election results in a supportive yet neutral manner.

This information could be especially helpful in conversations on the following CO topics:

- Rights and Responsibilities
- U.S. Laws
- Community Services

Preparing for Post-Election Questions

Consider questions that might come up during your CO session and determine how you and your office want to answer those questions. It is important that all staff in your office use the same talking points to provide consistent answers. Some potential questions include:

How long after the election until the new president takes office?

Under U.S. law, a newly elected president takes office at 12:00 PM EST on January 20.

Will changes in political leadership change or affect my status in the United States?

Those who arrive with refugee status enter the United States with legal status, are eligible to work in the United States, and are required to adjust to lawful permanent residency one year after arrival in the United States. This has been consistent across presidential administrations.

Will refugees be impacted by possible mass deportations in the United States?

The conversation related to mass deportations in the United States has largely focused on undocumented immigrants. When refugees arrive through the USRAP, they enter the United States with legal status. One year after being admitted to the United States, refugees are required to apply to adjust their status to lawful permanent resident. Five years after arrival in the United States, refugees are eligible to apply for American citizenship.

Those admitted to the United States as refugees should safeguard all immigration or employment related documentation, including copies of Form I-94, entry documents, and employment authorization documents.

Will my rights in the United States change due to the results of the presidential election?

Refugees arriving through the USRAP enter the United States with legal status and are eligible to work. They are also subject to legal protections in the United States. One year after being admitted to the United States, refugees are required to apply to adjust their status to lawful permanent resident. Five years after arrival in the United States, refugees are eligible to apply for American citizenship.

Preparing for Post-Election Questions (cont.)

Will refugees be able to travel after January 20, once the president is sworn into office?

The USRAP, including the Welcome Corps, continues to operate, accept referrals, process cases, and welcome refugees into the United States as usual.

The U.S. President has the authority to adjust the refugee admission ceiling, suspend travel within the resettlement program, make changes in regional allocations, and/or temporarily pause the entry of nationals from certain countries. Updated information can be found on www.state.gov as it becomes available. RSC and/or IOM staff will contact applicants as usual with any updates to travel.

Should I reconsider international travel?

Until adjusting to lawful permanent status, all refugees admitted to the United States must obtain a Refugee Travel Document from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to travel outside of the United States.

Once a refugee has been in the United States for one year and adjusted their status to lawful permanent resident, they may travel internationally without requiring prior approval, so long as they do not leave the United States for more than one year.

Refugees who plan to travel to certain countries for which the Department of State has issued a Level 4 Travel Advisory (Do Not Travel) should review the advisory before travel. For a list of countries with Level 4 Travel Advisories visit:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html>

Someone told me a way to guarantee that I will travel to the United States. Should I trust/pay/follow their instructions?

RSC and/or IOM staff will contact applicants as usual with any updates to travel.

If someone claims they can help expedite refugee processing or travel to the United States in return for money or favors, they are likely lying. Please report it to the RSC Fraud mailbox. All USRAP partners take fraud and the exploitation of our applicants seriously. Multiple overlapping safeguards ensure that no single person can guarantee success for an applicant in the USRAP.

Scammers make money by pretending they will be able to help when they do not have the power to do so. If they obtain fake documents for applicants, contact persons inside the USRAP on their behalf, or otherwise involve applicants in their schemes, it could possibly lead to a denial of the case. If the United States government learns someone is associated with a scammer, the case may be suspended while the relationship is investigated.

Will I and others in my case be able to arrive in the United States before January 20?

The USRAP, including the Welcome Corps, continues to operate, accept referrals, process cases, and welcome refugees into the United States as usual. As always, USRAP cannot guarantee arrival in the United States by a certain date.

Practice-In-Action

Madi is facilitating a CO session with seven newcomers from various backgrounds. After watching a Settle In video on Resettlement Services, one participant says, *"I heard from a friend that my family members overseas who are getting ready for travel may not be able to come to the U.S. anymore."* How could Madi respond?

- 1 Pause and evaluate the environment. Consider how much detail and discussion you will spend on this topic, and how to ensure everyone feels comfortable. (*"Let's take five minutes to discuss these concerns and then we will re-focus on our topic of Resettlement Services, is that okay with everyone?"*)
- 2 Validate feelings that participants are having. (*"I understand the uncertainty that you are feeling and your concern for your family is valid. It is very normal to feel this way during times of change."*)
- 3 Focus on what is inside of the participants' control. (*"We cannot predict how a new presidential administration will change the resettlement process or your family's ability to travel to the U.S. Our office will communicate major changes as needed. You are still responsible to complete necessary documents, attend appointments, and stay connected with our office."*)
- 4 Encourage participants to seek out information from trusted resources, such as governmental websites, immigration legal representatives, Settle In Facebook and 2-way messaging, and non-profit organizations supporting refugees.

Resources for Extended Learning

The following websites include helpful information for newcomers or anyone working in resettlement to access.

- [Settle In](#) (available in 10 languages)
 - [Settle In mobile app](#) (available on [Google Play store](#) and [iOS app store](#))
 - [Settle In U.S. Facebook](#) (2-way messaging in Dari, Pashto, Spanish, & English)
 - [Settle In for Ukrainians Facebook](#) (2-way messaging in Ukrainian, Russian, & English)
 - [U.S. Refugee Resettlement Process](#)
 - [U.S. Laws topic](#)
 - [Rights and Responsibilities](#)
 - [First Amendment Rights](#)
 - [Community Services](#)
- [USCIS](#) – The main USCIS webpage includes major announcements and news.
 - [Welcome to the U.S.: A New Guide for Immigrants](#) (available in 14 languages)
 - [USCIS Humanitarian Page](#) – Includes announcements specific to Humanitarian programs.
- [U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Page](#)
- Managing difficult conversations
 - [Using Trauma-Informed Practices to De-escalate Difficult Conversations](#)
 - [Psychological First Aid in Conjunction with National Elections](#)