



Hello from MO-ORA

Hello! This is the first quarterly newsletter from the Missouri Office of Refugee Administration (MO-ORA). Our vision is a Missouri that values and champions refugees. So we wanted to send out a newsletter that could serve as an on-ramp for those wanting to learn more about refugees and immigrants in Missouri as well as support a more welcoming community.

Whether you're working at one of Missouri's resettlement agencies, a local stakeholder or someone interested in refugees, immigration and what Missouri is up to on that front, stick around and stay tuned. We'll be sending updates and insights to your inbox once each quarter to make sure you stay in the loop on news, resources and upcoming (virtual) events or even service opportunities.

This newsletter will be ever evolving, and we'd like your input to aid us in that evolution. So if you have a moment, please [fill out this survey](#) to let us know what you'd like to see more of, less of, etc. and we'll do our best to deliver. Feel free to forward this to anyone you think might be interested, and enjoy!

A Note from the State Refugee Coordinator

The Missouri Office of Refugee Administration or MO-ORA administers several Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) programs across the state of Missouri. We subcontract a variety of programs servicing refugee adults, youth and seniors in four regions of the state. Currently, our subcontractors are located in Kansas City, Columbia, St. Louis and Springfield. In our latest fiscal year ending September 30, 2020 the state has welcomed 306 individual refugees, a sharp drop from 2019 when agencies around the state resettled 732.

Refugees are by definition, those who are unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.

MO-ORA is happy to provide this quarterly update to everyone concerned with the plight of refugees and see Missouri as a safe and welcoming home to our newest Americans.

Paul Costigan
State Refugee Coordinator

Get to know Missouri's local resettlement agencies!

Refugee and Immigration Services	Jewish Vocational Service	Della Lamb	International Institute of St. Louis	International Institute – Southwest Missouri Branch
916 Bernadette Dr, Columbia, MO	4600 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO	500 Woodland Ave. Kansas City, MO	3401 Arsenal St., St. Louis, MO	1114 E Commercial St, Springfield, MO

You can learn about our other state and federal partners on our [website](#).

LRA Spotlights

Local resettlement agencies (LRAs) have been busy adapting to the unique challenges that come with operating during a pandemic. But they've found a way to make it work, adjusting programs and services to fit an

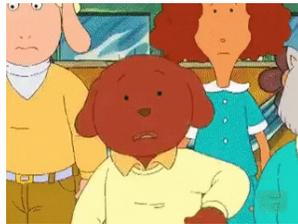
increasingly virtual world.

For instance, IISTL found ways to keep the Youth Mentoring program engaging and running smoothly. On Thursday, November 12, the IISTL Youth Mentoring program, in conjunction with IISTL Workforce Solutions Department, hosted a Job Readiness Workshop. From Katherine Schoeberle, the Teen Programs Coordinator: Olivia Call with the Workforce Solution Department gave a presentation to the mentors and mentees about working in the United States, common first jobs for youth, and skills, attitudes, and expectations for youth that will make them more employable in a tough pandemic job market and beyond. The participants were able to ask questions and receive resources to practice skills on their own or with a mentor. In addition, Olivia gave students questions to ask themselves and their families to evaluate their own job readiness for themselves. The event was recorded so that it can be watched later by those who were unable to attend.



And at our recent Services to Older Refugees program meeting, program coordinators at JVS and RIS discussed the different ways they have adapted due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Exchanging in-person meetings for an abundance of phone calls and learning how to share information and documentation from a distance were just some of the challenges agencies described. But with these challenges came innovation, such as introducing older refugees to new platforms like Zoom to continue English Language tutoring, sharing relevant resources and information via WhatsApp, coordinating with other local service providers, and distributing needs assessment surveys to figure out how to best reach these senior refugees during this time.

The Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic



Here we are, several months in, and we're definitely missing the Before Times. As we're all dealing with the unpleasant strain of living during a global pandemic, Sesame Street has stepped up to address some of the challenges families may be facing right now. [Sesame Street in Communities](#) has created a video series, "[Little Children, Big Challenges](#)" that talks about how kids and adults can stay strong and bounce back during tough times. Each video focuses on a different kind of difficult circumstance as well as how to navigate it.

Refugees have been uniquely impacted by the pandemic. From UNHCR, [COVID-19 and Refugees](#) provides maps, statistics, and facts on how the pandemic has impeded efforts to protect the displaced and affected their access to basic rights.

Still, there is a light at the end of the tunnel as effective vaccines are already being rolled out. And [immigrants have led the way in their development!](#) Immigrants have also been [critical to our nation's COVID response](#), constituting 16.4% of health care workers nationwide.

At this point, there is an abundance of pandemic-related resources floating around. So we've tried to help by curating a sizable list on our website [here](#). Here's to checking the CDC website a lot less frequently in 2021...

Tackling Bias at Home

As the national movement confronting racism and anti-blackness continues, here are some tools and resources to help continue important conversations and create lasting change.

- Check out the Anti-Defamation League's [tools and strategies for tackling bias](#). They cover a range of topics including guidelines for [achieving bias-free communication](#) and creating [safe and inclusive learning environments](#). Designed for K-12 educators, administrators, students and family members, and anyone trying to cultivate a bias-free environment, their site also includes activities and discussion guides.
- [Letters for Black Lives](#) is a set of crowdsourced, multilingual, and culturally aware resources aimed at creating a space for open and honest conversations about racial justice and anti-Blackness in immigrant families and communities. Visit their [site](#) for resources on talking to immigrant family members about the Black Lives Matter movement in multiple languages.
- Talking about Race and Racism, a Switchboard TA Blog Series in collaboration with Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), addresses ways to start a discourse about race with refugee clients and the community.

- [Preparing for Conversations and Refugee Clients](#)
- [Tips for Participating in Introductory Conversations](#)
- [Tips for Conversations with Refugee Youth](#)

Resources

- **To read:** Ed Lowther's piece for [BBC News](#) offers seven charts summarizing the effects of the current administration's policies on the U.S. immigration system.
- **To watch:** *Immigration Nation*, a six-episode docuseries on Netflix that provides a rare view of the internal workings of immigration enforcement.
- **To listen:** [Coming To America: Our Best Student Podcasts About Immigration](#). Last year, NPR received nearly 6,000 entries for its Student Podcast Challenge. Here is a collection of some of the many stories shared that capture the immigrant students' experiences adapting to life in U.S. and their journeys getting here.
- **To see:** The WE Project: Portraits of Missouri's Marginalized Communities. The WE Project is a multimedia series of photographs that shines a restorative light on people belonging to marginalized communities in Missouri. You can check out the virtual gallery [here](#).
- **For kids:** Check out these children's books that aim to teach young people about refugees and inspire them to be part of a welcoming community.
 - [Counting Kindness: Ten Ways to Welcome Refugee Children](#) by Hollis Kurman, Penguin Random House
 - [When Stars Are Scattered](#) by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed, Penguin Random House



Happy Holidays!

Thank you for reading the first of many quarterly newsletters. Feel free to share this newsletter with friends, and tell them to subscribe using the button below. Should you wish to unsubscribe, you can do so at the bottom of this email.

We hope you and your loved ones have a warm, safe and healthy holiday season, and we'll see you in the new year.



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