

Policy Brief: New Arrivals Institute

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Scope of the Problem

North Carolina is among the top locations for resettlement initiatives in the United States (Refugee Information and Services Presentation). When families or individuals arrive, much of the assistance they are given in adjusting and preparation for the future is done through local organizations. Funding to support these organizations funnels from the federal level through states before arriving at them directly (Ibid.). Because the government does not provide sufficient help for immigrants and refugees, just a short orientation, it is imperative that the groups working at a local level provide longer-term support that is targeted to the needs of the community.

The New Arrivals Institute started as a way to meet the needs of refugees and immigrants who wanted to learn English but did not have resources targeted to their needs. ESOL (English as a Second Language) classes were already available in Greensboro, but were inaccessible to many people due to lack of childcare options while the classes took place. The New Arrivals Institute addressed this problem by providing spaces where children could be, which allowed families to “come together” in learning a new language (About Us) and freed parents who otherwise could not have attended. Since then, they have grown in scope according to community needs and gaps in existing assistance. They currently provide several services that vary from early childhood education to employment readiness programs and citizenship classes.

Current Policy

The New Arrivals Institute's services and programs can be largely sorted into three categories: education, health, and legal/career. They provide ESOL classes for all ages and general education for children. Summer programs aimed toward children also help them prepare for school in the United States or fill gaps in information that may not be covered in school. Classes also inform about other aspects of life, like personal wellness. "Health/nutrition education" is another facet of the services provided (Refugee Information and Services Presentation) – assistance in staying healthy through teaching about food and access to a community garden, as well as how to navigate nutritional aspects of the food system that are different in the United States. Finally, New Arrivals Institute assists in preparing for legal parts of the immigration process like citizenship tests in addition to vocational training for starting a career. For both of these they have individualized support in the form of case managers and educational opportunities tailored to individuals' needs. All together, they provide a network that aims to help ease the dramatic shifts in day-to-day life that arise from resettlement and help both individuals and families plan for their futures.

Best Practices

The best practice of New Arrival Institute is not at first glance the most important service offered, but is what allows the system to work: accommodating for children. Making childcare a core part of the Institute ensures the programs reach to people that could benefit from them, but who could not otherwise be able to attend. This helps mothers most of all, and so targets an underserved niche in the immigrant and refugee population (About Us). Vocational training is also incredibly helpful, as other programs that provide assistance may do so on the condition that

a person becomes employed within a relatively short period of time (Refugee Information and Services Presentation). The job search process is difficult for everyone, and doubly so when suddenly immersed in such a new environment, so providing “vocational skills training” and computer labs helps to level the playing field and get individuals and families the support they need. Without it, a harder time finding a job may jeopardize the ability of refugees and immigrants to continue receiving support from other organizations that also provide vital and valuable programs.

Bibliography

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