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### Lincoln: A Hidden Refugee Hotspot in the United States

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# Lincoln: A Hidden Refugee Hotspot in the United States

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## Abstract

This case study examines refugee integration in Lincoln, Nebraska, one of the 63 identified cities who are promoting integration, improved economic mobility, and enhanced civic participation by immigrants and refugees. The United States settles more refugees than any other country and has created diasporas throughout the country. Lincoln is known for the largest Yazidi population outside of the Middle East. I use two major research strategies (1) a qualitative analysis of refugee resource centers and (2) secondary sources on refugee integration. Information and secondary sources have been collected from archives, newspapers, and published journals. This case study further examines the innovative work that Lincoln is doing to provide long term resources for refugees within the community. This project will further the research being completed in refugee integration to find the successful components and weak components of the United States refugee relocation systems.

## Background

Lincoln, Nebraska was ranked ninth as one of the top livable cities in the United States<sup>1</sup>. Since the 1980’s Lincoln has been home to thousands of refugees. Lincoln is one of the epicenters for refugee resettlement and while some refugees may not resettle in Lincoln initially, many migrate from other states to permanently resettle in Lincoln.

Lincoln is gifted with a thriving population that has continued to grow and expand throughout the past 20 years. Lincoln is home to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln which allows for significant educational partnerships and opportunities for the community.

Little research has been done on refugee populations within the United States. Aside from medical research and refugee populations, little to no academic journals have been completed on the Lincoln community itself. Lincoln continues to have a growing population of refugees and the need for research and data to help grow the resources available within the community.

## Methods

- Data was collected through informal interviews with resettlement agencies and community organizations that works with refugees.
  - Lutheran Family Services
  - Asian Community and Cultural Center
  - Catholic Social Services
  - Yazda
- Information was collected through secondary sources when interviews and e-mails were not possible
- Resettlement Agencies were identified by the United States government and Individual State governments
- Community organizations were identified through Lincoln community apps and through in person interviews with resettlement agencies
- Data was analyzed through reading of reports and transcriptions from interviews with organization and agencies.
- The data was used to help identify key areas of potential improvement and development within refugee resettlement in Lincoln, while also showcasing the opportunities Lincoln provides for refugees.

United States Refugee Resettlement		
Presidential Determination	United States Resettlement	
(FY 2016)	85,000	84,994
(FY 2017)	110,000	53,716
(FY 2018)	45,000	22,491
(FY 2019)	30,000	30,000
FY 2020 – Presidential Determination – 18,000		



## Solutions

### Areas of Success:

- First 5-year assistance programs – LFS and CSS both provide numerous resources for the first 90 days and for the 5 years after. Helping refugees get on their feet and gaining stability in their transition to Lincoln
- Resources for new refugees – There are multiple community organizations that help provide a niche for refugees who have arrived in Lincoln. Often these organizations provide supplemental resources to assist in resettlement.
- Job Assistance – Lincoln is located around factories and multiple areas for ample job opportunities. These employers are very open about welcoming refugees for employment.
- Education Programs – Lincoln Public Schools has been very open to assist with education needs of refugees – offering English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for students and parents.

### Future Areas of Development:

- Housing – Each agency addressed the need for housing and rental units available for families of refugees
- Transportation – While there is a bus system in place in Lincoln, it is logistically confusing and unreliable
- Language – While language classes are provided for new arrivals, English is essential to working and living in Lincoln and more language assistance is needed
- Community Involvement – Getting the Lincoln community involved with refugee resettlement.

## Conclusion

### Moving Forward

- Each agency addressed the need for housing within the community. Very few places are willing to rent to a family with no credit history.
  - Housing for refugees is needed in the community. Housing grants should be used to build housing for newly arrived refugees.
- Transportation is another major problem within Lincoln for refugees. While classes are provided for driving education, action needs to be taken with public transit to find more reliable bus commutes and schedules to help all people in Lincoln and not just refugees.
- Partnerships with the University and the Lincoln community can open programs such as family mentors and guides to help newly arrived refugees navigate Lincoln.
  - University students can help assist with English practice and education, alongside community projects to help resettlement agencies.
  - Lincoln community members and families could partner with newly arrived refugee families to help show them how to grocery shop, invite over for dinners, and have a family to help navigate Lincoln.
- Lincoln is a bright place for refugee resettlement and more connections need to be made to help the transition of refugees into the community.

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1. [https://journalstar.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/lincoln-among-top-livable-cities/article\\_173eaab0-93df-515e-9094-a3192924bd25.html](https://journalstar.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/lincoln-among-top-livable-cities/article_173eaab0-93df-515e-9094-a3192924bd25.html)  
2. <https://www.wrapsnet.org/archives/> (resettlement data)