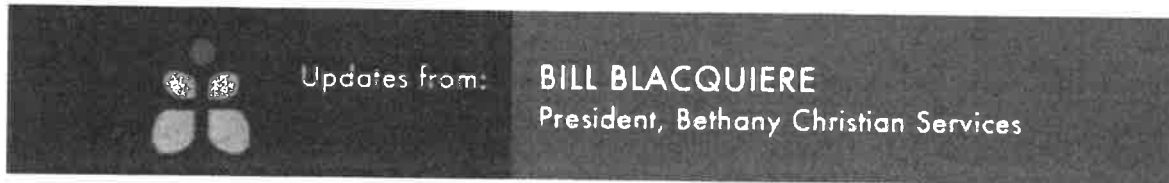


From: Bill Blacquiere <bblacquiere@bethany.org>
Sent: Monday, November 23, 2015 5:05 PM
To: Debra L. Hoekwater
Subject: Bethany Christian Services and the Syrian Resettlement Process



November 23, 2015

Hi Debra,

Good afternoon. We've already reached out briefly to our Michigan team, but with the numerous calls and emails coming in from concerned staff, donors, and families across the U.S. wanting to help our refugee families, we are sharing a more comprehensive update to our larger Bethany family.

You've all heard the news of the attacks in Paris. You may have also heard that 31 governors have announced they are temporarily suspending acceptance of Syrian refugees into their states. While we understand and will support our government officials' decisions, we anticipate this is a temporary response to a devastating situation. In Michigan, Governor Snyder has since clarified he was not asking the Syrian refugees who have either recently arrived in Michigan or who are expected soon to be stopped or vetted again. He is supportive of Bethany's refugee work and wants to see it continue.

Although Bethany is not involved in the admissions process for refugees entering the U.S., we do want to clarify the vetting process. We also want to remind everyone that the refugees are fleeing the same violence that happened in Paris, Kenya, and throughout the Middle East. Resettlement in the U.S. is a life-saving opportunity for a very small number of refugees around the world - less than one half of one percent come to the U.S.

The vetting process averages two years and includes the following steps.

Step 1 - Refugee Status: In most cases, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) determines if the individual is qualified as a refugee under international law. A refugee is someone who has fled his/her country and cannot return because he/she has a well-founded fear of persecution based on religion, race, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social

group.

Step 2 - Referral to the United States: A refugee that meets one of the above criteria may be referred by the UNHCR to the U.S. government.

Step 3 - Resettlement Support Center: The RSC, contracted by the U.S. Department of State, compiles the refugee's background information for the security clearance process and to present to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for an in-person interview.

Step 4-6 - Security Clearance Process: In addition to the State Department's security checks, which include checking fingerprints against various U.S. government databases, enhanced interagency security checks have been applied to all refugee applicants since 2010.

Step 7 - In-Person Interview: The in-person interview is conducted by the DHS' U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) in the country of asylum.

Step 8 - Final Processing: If the USCIS officer concludes the individual qualifies as a refugee, the officer will submit the application to the State Department for final processing.

Step 9 - Medical Screening: All refugee applicants approved for resettlement in the U.S. must submit to medical screening by the International Organization for Migration or a physician designated by the U.S. Embassy.

Step 10 - Sponsor Agency: Every refugee is assigned to a voluntary agency in the U.S., such as the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI). USCRI places the refugees with local partner agencies, such as the Church World Service through which Bethany works in Michigan.

Step 11 - Cultural Orientation: Refugees are offered a cultural orientation while waiting for final processing to prepare them for their journey.

Step 12 - Second Interagency Security Check: Prior to departure to the U.S., a second interagency security check is conducted to examine whether any new information should be reviewed since the refugee started the process.

Step 13 - Admission to the United States: Upon arrival at one of five U.S. airports designated as ports of entry for refugee admissions, a Customs and Border Protection officer will review documentation and conduct additional security checks to ensure the arriving refugee is the same person who was screened and approved.

In partnership with local churches and community agencies, Bethany Christian Services welcomes refugee and immigrant families and helps them adjust to a new life in the United States. There are many ways our staff, donors, and families can help our refugees. Please refer all inquiries to our website at

www.bethany.org/refugee to discover the many opportunities to assist our refugee families and children in their resettlement to our country.

"He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10:18-19 NIV).

If you have any questions about our refugee services, please contact Kristine Van Noord at 616.965.8063 or kkvannoord@bethany.org.

Bill

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Read more from president and CEO, Bill Blacquiere's [Every Child blog](#) on Christian Post.



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