Refugee Resettlement
City of Amarillo, Texas
Potter/Randall Counties

Prepared for:
Texas Senate Health and Human Services Committee Hearing
Austin, Texas
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Presenter:
Mayor Paul Harpole
City of Amarillo, Texas
Amarillo Refugee Resettlement Overview

Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2016

• On September 29, 2015 President Obama declared that the admission of up to 85,000 refugees to the United States during Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 is justified by humanitarian concerns or is otherwise in the national interest.
2014 Refugee Resettlement
Top 3 States

Source: Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2014
Refugee Arrivals by State

2012: California 5,173, New York 3,528, Texas
2013: California 5,923, New York 3,965, Texas

Source: Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2014
Amarillo Refugee Resettlement Overview

• Amarillo has received, welcomed and supported refugees since the 1970s
• From 2007 to present, Amarillo has received and resettled 4,614 refugees
• Additional refugees arriving to Amarillo are received through the Refugee Resettlement Health Program as other immigration statuses
• S.B. 1928 took effect in September 2015, ensuring that local government input is included in any refugee placement report
Texas Refugee Program Arrivals by Fiscal Year

Texas received 12,800 arrivals in FY2014
  • 24% increase from FY2013

Texas resettled:
  • 11% of all Refugees nationwide
  • 18% of all Special Immigrant Visa holders

Arrivals originated from 58 countries

SOURCE: Texas Department of State Health Services
Refugee Health 2014
Amarillo Refugee Resettlement

Public-Private Partnerships Between Federal and Volunteer Agencies “VOLAGs”

- Refugee Services of Texas (RST) served by (2) VOLAGs
  - Church World Service and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
- Catholic Charities of the Texas Panhandle (CCTXP) served by (1) VOLAG
  - U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Local Entities are charged with:

- Resettlement Services
- Job Readiness Training and Placement
- English Training
- Social Adjustment Services
- Refugee Cash Assistance
2015 Amarillo Refugees by Nationality

Source: Amarillo Public Health Department, 2016
# Refugee Resettlement in Texas Cities 2007-2015 (per 100,000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amarillo</th>
<th>Abilene</th>
<th>Ft. Worth</th>
<th>Austin</th>
<th>San Antonio</th>
<th>Houston</th>
<th>Dallas</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>203</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>88</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
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<td>78</td>
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<td>97</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
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<td>357</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>141</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>266</strong></td>
<td><strong>195</strong></td>
<td><strong>145</strong></td>
<td><strong>73</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
<td><strong>94</strong></td>
<td><strong>117</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Texas Department of State Health Services, 2016*
Average Refugee Resettlement in Texas Cities 2007-2015, per 100,000

- Amarillo: 266
- Abilene: 195
- Ft. Worth: 145
- Austin: 73
- San Antonio: 48
- Houston: 94
- Dallas: 117
Challenges Amarillo Faces:

• Since 2007, Amarillo has averaged 266 refugees/per 100,000 compared to Houston at 94 refugees/per 100,000 (nearly 3 times greater)
• Disproportionate assimilation: On average, Amarillo receives more refugees per capita than all other major Texas cities
• Houston or Austin afford more: Houston median HH value $125,400 and Austin median HH value $227,800 compared to Amarillo median HH value $114,800
• Arrival numbers are determined by VOLAGS and local entities-no input from City of Amarillo
• Unfunded or insufficient funding support for the City of Amarillo and other community services
• Language/Dialects: 1975-maybe 2-3 languages compared to 2015-35+ languages and multiple dialects (Example: Burma/Formerly Myanmar)
Amarillo Refugee Resettlement

City Agencies Impacted and Major Issues:
- Amarillo Public Health Department: Refugee Clinic, Health Screening, Immunizations, and Green Card Paperwork
  - Grant Funded $471,088 (Texas HH)
- Amarillo Women, Infant, Children (W.I.C.) Department: Health Care, Treatment, and Dietary Needs for Women, Infants, Children
  - Major Issues: May take up to 3-4 times longer to provide services compared to non-refugee families
  - Must provide interpreter
  - Dietary and cultural conflicts such as men refusing to speak with women
  - Estimated Cost: $19,110/monthly. W.I.C. must “spread over” costs from state funded non-refugee clients to cover refugee expenses
City Agencies Impacted and Major Issues (cont’d):

- Amarillo Police Department: Patrol, Investigations, and Victim Assistance
  - Major Issues: Refugee-related investigations & victim assistance time doubles/triples compared to non-refugee related cases because of cultural & language barriers
  - Agencies are not providing officers with training
  - No advance notification of new refugee arrivals
  - Calls involving refugees require two (2) officers per call, 60% of the time
  - Estimated Police Department cost: $18,088 monthly
Amarillo Refugee Resettlement

City Agencies Impacted and Major Issues (cont’d):

• Amarillo Emergency Communications Center (AECC): Multi-Agency Dispatch Center For Public Safety Communications
  ➢ Major Issues: Language barriers slow down response times considerably
  ➢ Difficult to accurately assess the situation for first responders
  ➢ Languages range from Somali, Lao, Karen, Farsi to multiple Burmese dialects
  ➢ Unfunded service involving language service requires additional dispatch time
  ➢ Average 911 calls are 2 minutes, average translated calls require 11 minutes
Amarillo Refugee Resettlement

City Agencies Impacted and Major Issues (cont’d):

- Amarillo Independent School District (AISD):
  - Major Issues: Takes approximately five (5) years for students to learn English
  - Unrealistic federal requirements to reach grade level
  - AISD unfunded, with the exception of some bilingual and lunch programs
  - AISD absorbs additional tutoring, English speaking programs, and multiple teaching strategy costs/time
  - Estimate 75 languages spoken in AISD schools
  - Estimated cost: Received federal refugee school impact grant past three (3) years $160,000-$200,000 annually, ending in 2015
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City Agencies Impacted and Major Issues (cont’d):

- Northwest Texas Hospital: Emergency Room, Inpatient, and Clinic Utilization
  - Major Issues: Increased clinic & ER utilization
  - Language barriers & lack of previous access to proper healthcare & nutrition
  - Over 35 languages spoken, multiple dialects
  - Higher appointment “no-show” rate & cultural barriers. Example: Many cultures do not trust telephone translators versus interpreters & female patients are not allowed to converse with male interpreters
  - Estimated Cost: $4.2 million unfunded annually for ER, inpatient, & clinic utilization
  - $160,000 for translator services (2013)
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Conclusions and City Requests:

• More Funding:
  ➢ Interpreters/Certified Translators
  ➢ Multi-Lingual Call Takers/Dispatchers
  ➢ Cultural Training, Public Safety (911 Center, Police, and Fire Safety Refugee/Cross Trained/Nighttime)
  ➢ Healthcare
  ➢ Hospital & Schools

• Resettle refugees to other areas in Texas or elsewhere in USA
• Direct contracts to other Texas or USA communities
• Request agencies be “open” about intake process with local City/County officials & expected impact on community
Amarillo Refugee Resettlement

With the passage of S.B. 1928, Amarillo is hopeful that:

• Agencies will provide timely notification & information to all local entities regarding arrival, challenges & physical placement settlement
• Agencies will meet/discuss/interact with City and County officials on a regular basis
• The local government will be the entity charged with holding regular meetings and maintaining records
• Agencies will provide cultural training to “bridge” cultural differences, male/female communication, how legal system works & support public safety preparedness/investigations