

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)/Education

The Education Person is responsible for overseeing education and English classes for all members of the family. (You might need more than one person for these tasks, or you could divide this responsibility into two parts; adult education and children's education.) This includes registering children for school and keeping in contact with teachers regarding their progress. If the children's parent does not speak English, the Education Person may be the contact person for the school system. Schools are mandated by law to provide ESOL and special assistance for all children who do not speak English fluently; the role of the resettlement group is to make it easier for schools receiving refugee students. We ask cosponsors to provide informal and "school readiness" tutoring a couple of hours a day for children during the period between arrival and enrollment in schools.

Equally important is providing opportunities – within days of arrival – for adults in the family to learn and practice English. **Learning English is absolutely essential to the refugee(s)' achieving independence.** Even refugees who already speak English will discover that American English is different from that which is used in other parts of the world.

There are several options for ESOL classes for adults, all of which should be considered around employment prospects and schedules to encourage self-sufficiency:

- **Adult Education ESOL Courses**

ESOL classes are often available (day and/or evenings) through local public school systems throughout the state. Provided the adult refugee attends Adult Education in the town in which s/he resides, ESOL classes are free of charge. While most cities and large towns in the state have their own Adult Education programs, smaller towns may collaborate with other small towns to provide adult education offerings (e.g., Residents of Branford, Guilford, and Madison attend Adult Education in Branford).

- **Community College-Based ESOL Courses**

For refugees who have a good baseline in English proficiency and could use more challenging coursework, community colleges around Connecticut offer ESOL courses with financial aid (usually in the form of grants). This is only feasible if the refugee arrives in enough time to register and obtain financial aid for a given semester. Should the refugee enroll and receive financial aid, s/he **must** complete the semester or risk having to pay back their grant. This option should be considered very carefully, and in consultation with your case manager.

- **Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA)**

LVA runs English courses free of charge in many communities in Connecticut. Ideally, this could serve as a supplement to Adult Education courses, as LVA courses are offered less frequently.

- **Members of your Congregation or Community Group**

Survey your congregation or community group for members who may offer to supplement a refugee's formal ESOL coursework with activities designed to facilitate English practice (e.g., movies, watching the news, cooking), especially once one or more of the adults in the household starts working.