

IMMIGRATION, LOCAL, POLITICS

# Refugee Dream Center is working overtime to cover rush of new cases

A local nonprofit that helps immigrants and refugees is experiencing a surge in need for its services ahead of President-elect Trump's inauguration on Jan. 20.



by Paul C. Kelly Campos  
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A class of immigrants and refugees learning English via zoom at the Calvary Baptist Church in South Providence on Jan. 8 2025. / Una clase de inmigrantes y refugiados aprendiendo inglés vía Zoom en la Iglesia Bautista del Calvario en el sur de Providence el 8 de enero de 2025. Credit: Paul C. Kelly Campos/The Public's Radio

Noorulhaq Sadeqi is a 38-year-old man from Afghanistan. He's a refugee who's been living in the U.S. for three years. Before that, Sadeqi served in the U.S.-supported Afghan airforce as a pilot and translator. But following the Taliban's takeover in 2021 he was forced to flee.

“This is really, really strange and tragic story of all my life, because it's 190 degrees out of all my plans,” Sadeqi said.

Sadeqi has legal status to be in the U.S., and he says he feels safe now. But he's still separated from his wife and two children. They are currently living in Pakistan and he's concerned about their safety.

“I'm really really worried about my family [because] the Pakistani government are not good with Afghan refugees over there. Just last week, they came to the apartment I rented for my family,” Sadeqi said. “Luckily my family has a valid visa. They are just looking to make [or] find some simple reason to make problems for Afghan refugees there.”

Sadeqi is trying to bring his family to the U.S., but he says he isn't sure how or when that'll happen. It could be more difficult after President-elect Donald Trump gets sworn in to office on Jan. 20. Trump made a toughened stance on immigration a cornerstone of his election campaign. Sadeqi says he wants the government to make life easier for refugees and other immigrants, because their circumstances are hard enough already.

“They lost their family, their own countries [and] they came here. We have to try our best to make life easy in this country,” Sadeqi said. “They are coming here to make their life better. Instead of making some excuse, making problem or finding some way to deport them, we have to try all our best to make some good solution. They're human like us.”





Meg Redner and Michael McCabe, working at the front desk of the Refugee Dream Center in South Providence on Jan. 8 2025. / Meg Redner y Micheal McCabe, trabajando en la recepción del Refugee Dream Center en South Providence el 8 de enero de 2025. Credit: Paul C. Kelly Campos/The Public's Radio

I met up with Sadeqi at the Refugee Dream Center in Providence. The organization helps refugees find housing, connect with jobs and social services and acclimate to life in the U.S.

Since the election, the staff at the Refugee Dream Center has been busy. Executive Director Teddi Jallow says they've been working overtime

“Sometimes we resettle two families a week, meaning we need two apartments. We need to do all that within a week, because they’re trying to resettle almost everybody before the 20th, which is very difficult for agencies like us that are resettling refugees,” Jallow said.

In addition to the extra caseloads and people coming in off the street, the Center could be up against another challenge. Jallow says she relies on funding from the federal government to help pay for the Refugee Dream Center’s programs. And she’s worried that could be cut or go away entirely under the next presidential administration. She’s reaching out to other financial contributors in advance.

“We are talking to funders about the possibility of losing funds. And then we are also talking to partners telling them what we expect,” Jallow said.

Jallow says she’s hopeful the Rhode Island community will step up to support places like the Refugee Dream Center. She’s also hosting community conversations to help reassure refugees. “Everybody is anxious,” she said. But Rhode Island is a safe place, she says, and Jallow expects communities to come together and support each other over the next four years.

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