

Dear Landlord:

Thank you for considering renting one of your apartments to a refugee family. Allow me to describe the US Government Welcome Corps program, including the overseas security screening process and background check that all refugees pass through before they are invited to come to the United States, and the support that our organization provides to refugees once they have arrived in the US.

Refugees – people forced to flee their home countries due to persecution -- are selected and screened by the US federal government overseas. They are interviewed face-to-face, numerous times over the course of many months, by personnel from the US Department of State and Department of Homeland Security. They are fingerprinted and their identification documents (birth certificates, passports, etc.) are examined by FBI forensics experts. Fingerprints and personal information are reviewed by the CIA and the FBI. Information is shared with the intelligence branches of the US Military. In addition, the information is compared to international terrorist watch lists and criminal databases. The entire process takes at least 18 months, while refugees wait in refugee camps or other areas in Sub-Saharan Africa. The US government background check / vetting process for refugees is the most rigorous in the world. Only refugee families who have passed through this security vetting process may be invited to come to the US.

After undergoing a health screening, approved refugees are then assigned to the Welcome Corps Program who, in turn, place them with a Private Sponsor Group for resettlement. IRIS, established in 1982, is one of the Private Sponsorship Organizations (PSO) tasked with oversight of Private Sponsor Groups. As a PSO, IRIS recruits, supports, and oversees private sponsor groups as they prepare for, receive, and guide refugee newcomers arriving through the Welcome Corps Program. PSOs coach Private Sponsor Groups in carrying out core private sponsorship services, including making connections with local community organizations and services. They also support Private Sponsor Groups in navigating the sponsorship process, including group dynamics and supporting refugees from diverse experiences and backgrounds.

As an organization, IRIS has resettled more than 7,000 refugees over our 40 years of service, and we have worked with hundreds of landlords to secure housing for newcomers. Finding a safe and clean apartment, with a responsive landlord, in a friendly neighborhood is a hugely important part of welcoming new Americans. We thank you for playing a role in this great American tradition of welcoming refugees.

Sincerely yours,



Chris George, Executive Director