

Sponsoring Asylum Seekers: A Midvale Proposal

Executive summary

And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

Matthew 8:20

The Immigration Action Team, in partnership with the Social Ministry Committee, proposes to the Congregational Council that our church live out the unique calling of our faith to welcome the stranger by supporting an asylum seeker for two years of their journey. In this program, Midvale would commit to providing for basic needs (housing, clothing, food, and personal care), community integration (assistance accessing services like food pantries, bus transit, and ESL programs), and secondary support for the asylum process (e.g. paying government submission fees for asylum paperwork prepared by their existing pro bono lawyer). The asylum seeker would commit to continuing with pro bono legal counsel, applying for work permits, and gaining employment in a timely manner.

This document has been prepared to assist the council in evaluating the proposal and includes:

- [Background](#) on the need
- An outline of [volunteer roles](#) and which are already filled/committed
- A "what when how" [program playbook](#)
- An estimated program [budget](#) with proposed [funding mechanisms](#)
- A [recommendation and next steps](#)

Thank you for joining us in this process. Together, we pray:

God of justice, we give thanks for this opportunity to gather here to learn about how we can strengthen our accompaniment of our migrant siblings who are asylum-seekers. Give us courage to continue on this journey of discernment and bring us together with others in our community with the needed gifts for this work.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen

Detailed analysis

I. Background on the need

Why asylum seekers?

Asylum seekers face a uniquely vulnerable path even among immigrants. When an asylum seeker enters the country and requests asylum, they are placed into detention (prison). The asylum seeker must demonstrate credible fear of persecution in their country of origin to apply for asylum. Once they apply, they remain in detention (prison) for an indefinite time period, often months and in some cases, years. The asylum seeker is released from detention only after an ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) officer agrees that they do not pose a danger to the community and that they are likely to attend all of their mandatory ICE check-in appointments and court dates once released. Unlike refugees, people requesting asylum in the United States are not permitted to work until 365 days after they file for asylum. In addition, asylum seekers are not eligible for any U.S. government assistance, including food stamps, Medicaid, etc. until they are granted asylum in immigration court. During the entire period from their initial

application for asylum, U.S. Customs and Immigration considers them in removal proceedings and until they get a favorable ruling in asylum court, they are at risk of being deported.

Why Midvale?

We believe that Midvale is uniquely positioned to do this ministry at a time of great need for our immigrant siblings. We are blessed with:

- **Congregational interest:** Prior to the programs closing due to outside factors such as the COVID pandemic and the changing availability of housing for homeless people in Madison, Midvale members faithfully gave decades of continuous volunteer dedication to supporting homeless neighbors under our own roof through the Road Home and in shelters through Porchlight.
- **Parallel experiences:** Midvale has provided direct housing to homeless families with the Road Home Second Chance Project (now Building Futures) house on Wakefield Street since 2013.
- **Personal connections:** We have had Midvale members who are asylum seekers and members who have personally taken immigrants into their homes.
- **Community networks:** Through prior advocacy and service connections, we can draw on the expertise of our larger community, including Dane County Sanctuary Coalition, Community Immigration Law Center (CILC), and UW Madison Law School's Immigrant Justice Clinic (UW-IJC).

Finally, our congregation is amazingly generous in welcoming the stranger and pitching in to help in myriad ways to act with Christlike love.

Why now?

The two pro bono immigration law clinics in Dane County, CILC and UW-IJC, frequently encounter clients in the Dodge Detention Center in Juneau, WI who are eligible for release but remain detained solely due to lack of housing and/or sponsorship by a U.S. citizen. When this happens, the lawyers face a mad scramble to arrange housing and sponsorship. The Dane Sanctuary Coalition is working on a more permanent solution to this situation, but that will take time. In the meantime, every few weeks, the lawyer's only option is to urgently email an informal network of individuals with a plea for short-notice help.

II. Volunteer roles

Roles are marked by time commitment:

- ♥ These are one-time roles taking a few hours and limited or no prep
- 👉 These roles have a moderate commitment but for a short time window (1-3 weeks)
- 💖 These roles have regular involvement over a longer time window (e.g., one hour per week)

Note: Based on volunteer preference, the mentor role could be broken up into four- or six-month "semesters" to reduce the individual time commitment.

Arrival prep roles		
Title	Role	Time commitment and volunteer
Arrival coordinator	Act as a communication touchpoint for the referring	👉 [Gayle Perlberg]

	organization (CILC or UW-IJC) and arrival phase volunteers.	
Short-term host	Provide housing for ~1 week while rental is secured	♥
Housing search volunteer	Identify an available, affordable apartment	♥ [Bill and Judy Kessler]
Paperwork organizer	Facilitate lease signing, insurance/utility/phone initiation	♥
Donations coordinator	Facilitate congregational donation drive for welcome items	♥ [Gayle Perlberg]
One-time ad hoc	Move donated items into apartment	♥
Orientation roles		
Title	Role	Time commitment
Orientation coordinator	Coordinate schedule for guest meetings with arrival phase volunteers.	♥
Bus buddy	Assist in getting a low income bus pass and doing a first ride on public transit	♥ [Mats Johansson]
Food pantry volunteer	Take guest on their first food pantry trip and assist in signing up	♥ [Danielle Lawson]
Healthcare advocate	Assist in enrollment in low-cost healthcare programs	♥
Education advocate	Provide info on free ESL class and, if needed, assist in school enrollment for children	♥
Mentor	Provide a welcome face and orient guest to commitment agreements and weekly stipend	♥ [Toni & Mark Swandby, Ngwa Augustine]
Pre-employment phase roles		
Title	Role	Time commitment
Mentor	Periodic check-ins with guest	♥ [Toni & Mark Swandby, Ngwa Augustine]
One-time ad hoc	Provide transportation to two ICE check ins	♥ [Gayle Perlberg]

Employment phase roles		
Title	Role	Time commitment
Mentor	Provide coaching during job search and early employment	♥️ [Toni & Mark Swandby, Ngwa Augustine]

III. Program playbook

This playbook outlines the phases of the program. The time commitment is more intense initially, as it takes up to a year after applying for asylum to get a work permit, but tapers as the individual gains their footing in the community.

Phases include:

- [Pre-launch](#) - Before signaling to CILC or UW-IJC that we are ready, the Immigration Action Team completes tasks that can be prepared ahead of time.
- [Arrival prep](#) - When CILC or UW-IJC encounter an asylum seeker who is a good match for our program, pre-identified arrival prep volunteers mobilize to prepare for the guest's arrival (usually a few weeks after matching).
- [Welcome and orientation](#) - When the guest arrives, specialty area volunteers welcome the guest and provide orientation to services during the first two weeks.
- [Pre-employment](#) - While pro bono counsel continues the asylum application process, specialty area volunteer roles end, the Midvale mentor provides periodic check-ins, and a Midvale weekly stipend covers basic needs for one year until a work permit application is allowed.
- [Employment](#) - When a work permit is granted, Midvale's financial support tapers and the mentor coaches the guest during their job start transition.
- [Case processing](#) - When the asylum case is decided (generally two years after arrival), the guest either prepares for deportation or connects to the Office of Refugee Resettlement for transition support as the Midvale program concludes.

0. Pre-launch

Before signaling to CILC or UW-IJC that we are ready, the Immigration Action Team completes preparation tasks.

Prepare program details		
Type	Description	Notes
IAT, Council	Determine guest needs	Council considers guest match criteria (e.g., individual vs family, work permit eligible vs not, English speaker vs not). IAT communicates this to CILC and UW-IJC.
IAT	Complete legal check-in	IAT leadership arranges a meeting with a lawyer to understand any legal implications of the program.
IAT	Prepare guest agreement	IAT coordinates with the Social Ministry Committee to draw up the agreement outlining guest responsibilities and expectations.

IAT	Define mentor role and stipend payments	Define any volunteer guidelines for the mentor. Work with MCLC bookkeeper to arrange mechanism for providing weekly stipends.
Engage congregation		
Type	Description	Notes
IAT	Educate congregation	Through adult forum, the Community, and the Moments, IAT educates the congregation on the program and the asylum process.
IAT	Identify high-commitment volunteers	See volunteer roles list below . IAT identifies volunteers willing to commit to key positions.
IAT	Secure funding	Proposed funding mechanisms outlined below.

1. Arrival prep

When CILC or UW-IJC encounter an asylum seeker who is a good match for our program, pre-identified arrival prep volunteers mobilize to prepare for the guest's arrival (usually a few weeks after matching).

Identify housing		
Type	Description	Notes
Volunteer	Notify short-term host	Arrival Prep Coordinator notifies volunteer short-term host of estimated arrival date. The short term host will house the guest in their own home for <1 week if gap coverage is needed while rental housing is finalized. ¹
Volunteer	Notify congregation	Arrival Prep Coordinator also asks Pastors to include an announcement in the next worship services that a guest has been identified and that if anyone is willing to host the guest for a long-term stay (eliminating the need for rental housing), they should contact the Arrival Prep Coordinator.
Volunteer	Seek rental housing	In parallel, the housing search volunteer searches for affordable apartments, contacts landlord(s), attends walkthrough(s), and recommends an apartment to the Arrival Prep Coordinator.
Prepare housing		
Type	Description	Notes
Volunteer	Prepare paperwork ²	Paperwork organizer works with Midvale Bookkeeper to sign lease agreement, start renter's insurance policy, and initiate utilities (electric, gas, water/sewer). MCLC will be billed directly for these during the pre-employment phase. ³
Volunteer	Obtain donated	Donations coordinator organizes donations of gently used

	furniture, ² clothing, and basics ²	furniture, clothing, and household consumables by the congregation. The coordinator communicates needs through worship service announcements, the weekly Moments email, and the Community newsletter. Donations are collected at church.
Volunteer	Set up apartment	Donations coordinator, in congregational communications, communicates date and time for moving items into the apartment and provides an RSVP for those wishing to help. On the day of setup, volunteers help move donated furniture and belongings.

2. Welcome and orientation

When the guest arrives, specialty area volunteers welcome the guest and provide orientation to services. This two-week period is the most time intensive phase of the program; the Orientation Coordinator facilitates the schedule so that the guest is not overwhelmed and volunteer overhead is reduced.

Day 1: Welcome guest		
Type	Description	Notes
Volunteer	Drive guest to house	Mentor picks up the guest and drives them to the short term host's house.
Mentor	Review commitments	Mentor explains Midvale role (including program timeframe) and guest commitments (including rules for living space). The mentor communicates either a brief outline of the week ahead or a date/time for the next touchpoint.
Volunteer	Welcome guest	Short term host welcomes the guest to their home.
Week 1: Get settled in apartment		
Type	Description	Notes
Volunteer	Provide transportation for errands	Driver assists the guest in running first-week errands (using \$100 arrival personal needs stipend) to obtain personal care items.
Volunteer	Activate phone plan	Paperwork organizer activates low cost mobile plan and meets with guest to provide phone (if guest does not have one) and explain any coverage limits and input Midvale emergency numbers into contacts. Phone costs will be billed directly to MCLC. ³
Volunteer	Arrive at apartment	Housing coordinator and mentor drive the guest to the apartment, walk through any landlord rules, and provides keys.
Volunteer	Cook meals	Orientation Coordinator contacts MCLC Connections Coordinator (staff position -- not volunteer), who reaches out to existing congregational healing meals email list to provide

		an easy breakfast option (e.g. oatmeal or cereal) and homemade dinners for the first three days in the apartment.
Volunteer	Visit food pantry	Food pantry volunteer accompanies the guest to the food pantry and assists them in signing up.
Week 2: Initiate services		
Type	Description	Notes
Volunteer	Explain weekly stipend	Mentor meets with the guest to walk through the mechanics of how to access the weekly stipend, how much it will cover, and any limitations on use of funds.
Volunteer	Set up bus pass	Bus Buddy assists the guest in purchasing a low-income bus pass, meets with the guest to explain how to navigate the bus system, and accompanies the guest on a first bus ride if desired.
Volunteer	Connect to medical services ⁴	Healthcare advocate volunteer assists the guest in coordinating any needed healthcare (including medical, pharmacy, and dental) through no- or low-cost Madison organizations. See the appendix for a map of these offerings.
Volunteer	Enroll in school, ESL classes if needed	If needed, the education advocate volunteer assists the guest in signing up for Zoom-based ESL classes (e.g. as offered by the Literacy Network or the Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel), enrolling children in public school, and signing up for the school subsidized lunch program. If children are present, Education Advocate reaches out to the Donations Coordinator to facilitate congregation donation of school supplies.

3. Pre-employment

During this phase as pro bono counsel steps through the asylum application process, Midvale's volunteer commitment decreases significantly as the guest has independent use of public transportation and a connection to local services. Church involvement consists of periodic mentor check-ins and, since the guest is not yet legally allowed to work, a weekly stipend for basic needs.

Continue legal process		
Type	Description	Notes
Mentor + CILC or UW-IJC	Obtain a state ID	A non-REAL-ID compliant state ID may be possible to obtain using a pending asylum application as proof of legal presence, CBP arrival record as proof of name and date of birth, and documentation from Midvale as proof of residency. Otherwise, the mentor may support a driver's license application.
CILC or UW-IJC	Register for the selective service	Pro bono legal counsel assists the guest in registering for the draft, which increases their standing with ICE and the

		USCIS Immigration Court.
CILC or UW-IJC	Apply for asylum	Pro bono legal counsel prepares an I-589 (Application for Asylum and for Withholding of Removal) submission.
CILC or UW-IJC	<i>(after one year)</i> Apply for employment authorization	One year after submission of the I-589 asylum request, pro bono legal counsel assists the guest in submitting an I-765 (Application for Employment Authorization). If granted, the guest will be permitted to seek a job.
Provide check-in support		
Type	Description	Notes
Mentor	Check in regularly	Mentor provides case management check-ins on a regular cadence.
Volunteer	Drive to two ICE check-ins	Ad hoc volunteer from congregation or the Dane Sanctuary Coalition driver network drives the guest to one ICE check-in after detention release and one follow-on check-in after work permit submission. These two check-ins are not accessible by public transit (e.g., Milwaukee or Waukegan IL) and cover biometric screening (photo, fingerprints, background checks).

4. Employment

During this phase, Midvale's financial commitment tapers as the guest obtains employment. Note: there is not a fixed window for when a work permit application can be processed, so the period of pre-employment congregational financial support may be longer than one year..

Assist with job start		
Type	Description	Notes
Mentor	Support job search	Mentor provides coaching on the job search process.
Mentor	Transition to guest payment of expenses	Mentor explains guest contribution to rent and expenses, helps guest open a checking account, and checks in for the first few weeks for support. The housing coordinator will work with the landlord to list the guest as the tenant so that they can begin building credit and rental history. The weekly stipend will diminish or stop.
Mentor	Financial coaching	During periodic check-ins, mentor ensures the guest has needed background on financial basics like taxes and avoiding phishing scams (which often target immigrants in Madison with impersonated ICE or police calls).
Continued legal processes		

Type	Description	Notes
CILC or UW-IJC	Apply for a social security card	Pro bono legal counsel completes a social security card application after the work permit is issued.
Mentor	Drive to asylum hearing	Mentor accompanies the guest to their asylum hearing in Chicago for emotional support.

Addendum: Case processing

In 2019, the average length of time for cases to process through the immigration courts system was 696 days. If the case is lost, our community will accompany the guest through planning for deportation and provide spiritual support. If the case is won, Midvale financial and volunteer support will wrap up and the guest will be connected to the Office of Refugee Resettlement for transition services.

IV. Program cost and funding

Budget

Item	Unit cost	Yearly cost	Two-year total	Source
Basic needs*			\$35,200	
Housing	\$1,200 / mo	\$14,400	\$28,800	Median one-bedroom apt rent in Madison
Groceries	\$50 / wk	\$2,600	\$5,200	Supplemented by food pantries
Clothing and supplies	\$50 / mo	\$600	\$1,200	Estimated from graduate student budget tracking
Services			\$2,072	
Incidental medical	\$25 / qtr	\$100	\$200	See appendix for low- and no-cost medical, pharmacy
Bus pass	\$28 / mo	\$336	\$672	Low income rate
Internet and phone	\$50 / mo	\$600	\$1,200	Unlimited mobile data plan , no separate internet coverage; 8gb plan or internet w/o cell comparable
Asylum process **			\$499	
I-589 Asylum Application	\$0 once	\$0	\$0	
I-765 Work Permit	\$410 once	\$410	\$410	
Biometrics exam	\$89 once	\$89	\$89	Required
Legal services	\$0 / yr	\$0	\$0	Pro bono from UW-IJC or CILC
Total expenses		0	\$37,771	
Guest contribution after work permit				
Income	\$7 / hr	-n/a-	\$ 15,080.00	40 hours/week of minimum wage

				employment***
Less: Health insurance premium	-\$1,168 / yr	-n/a-	-\$1,168	Average single-person employee contribution for workplaces with a high percentage of minimum wage earners
Less: Savings	-\$500 / mo	-n/a-	-\$6,000	To cover security deposit and ~3 months' expenses after end of program
<i>Total guest contribution</i>		0	<i>\$ 7,912</i>	
<i>Net congregational commitment</i>			<i>\$29,859</i>	Assumes full minimum wage employment

* Can vary widely depending on family size and availability of in-home housing.

** These USCIS fees often covered by pro bono attorneys

*** This income increases substantially if the mentor and guest are able to apply for higher wage hourly roles, many of which offer \$15 per hour (the minimum wage for county contractor roles).

Proposed funding mechanisms

IAT has submitted an endowment grant request to cover the costs of the program. If full funding is not available, IAT will ask the Council to consider alternate funding mechanisms (for example, inclusion in the annual budget, a direct congregational campaign, or partnership from another sponsoring congregation).

Source	Type	Annual	Two-year total
Endowment Fund	Grant	\$18,000	\$36,000
MCLC Annual Budget	Budget	\$0	\$0
Congregational campaign	Direct appeal	\$0	\$0
IAT individual seed funding	Pre-committed donation	\$1,000	\$2,000
<i>Total</i>		19,000	<i>\$38,000</i>

V. Recommendation and next steps

The Immigration Action Team requests the Council's prayerful consideration of this service opportunity.

Positives:

1. Welcoming a new person or family
2. Learning about a rich new culture
3. Sharing traditions
4. Developing deep lasting friendships

Negatives:

1. Gaining a personal close view of the hardships and terrors experienced by the asylum seeker
2. Being ready for personality conflicts and hard decisions
3. Planning for deportation if the asylum case is lost

Next Steps

Pending approval by Social Ministry and the Congregational Council, we would begin [pre-launch activities](#) and request consideration from the Council on how they would like to be kept informed of progress.

Appendix

References and footnotes

¹ Rabbi Bonnie, who is on the notification list when Fabioli Hamden of Dane County seeks emergency housing for release of asylum seekers, reports that there is usually a few weeks' notice between identification of an individual and release from detention. This matches the Swandby family's experience.

² These items will not be needed if a Midvale member responds to the call to host the asylum seeker in their own home.

³ This reflects our current understanding based on Judy Kessler's experiences with the Road Home and conversations with a landlord.

⁴ Based on Ngwa's experiences, we expect the guest will have received a covid-19 vaccine and other standard vaccines at the border and/or while in detention.

Medical care details

Physician services

Several Madison organizations offer low- or no-cost healthcare:

- [Access Clinic](#) -- Care on a sliding fee scale. For individuals below the poverty line, payment is a nominal fee rather than a percentage of care costs.
- [MEDiC Southside Clinic](#) -- This multilingual program coordinated by the UW Madison School of Medicine offers zero-cost care to uninsured adults through medical student volunteers supervised by licensed professional healthcare providers. The clinic offers some telehealth options during the pandemic and can act as a resource coordinator, referring individuals to other low-cost care options in the Madison area. The Southside Clinic can be reached at 608-265-4972 ext. 2.
- [Our Lady of Hope Clinic](#) -- This Madison nonprofit clinic provides zero-cost care for uninsured patients who are not eligible for government programs like Badgercare and Medicaid.

Medications

Once a prescription is written, low-cost medications can be obtained from the [St. Vincent de Paul Charitable Pharmacy](#). Phone number 608-257-0919, press 1 to continue, press 38 for receptionist.

Dental

The healthcare advocate volunteer will evaluate the best dental care pathway. A number of low-cost options exist in the Madison area:

- [Donated Dental Services Program](#) -- this program by the Wisconsin Dental Association offers zero-cost exams with volunteer dentists to individuals with limited income after a simple [application](#) and screening by a DDS coordinator. Since this is a private volunteer-based program, there are not citizenship requirements (only residency).
- [Madison College Dental Hygiene Clinic](#) -- a \$35 copay covers dentistry services by dental hygiene students under the supervision of an instructor.
- [Affordable Dental Care, Inc](#) -- this donation-supported clinic offers cash-pay dentistry at approximately half of traditional rates.

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- [New patient promotional rates](#) -- Several private dental clinics in the area offer a first exam and cleaning at significantly reduced rates.