Family Reunification

Guidebook
The Family Reunification Guidebook was developed for the reunified families of the Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture (PSOT). We anticipate that other PSOT families and immigrant families will also benefit from the information and resources in this Guidebook.

The categories of the Guidebook are areas of need that PSOT families have expressed to us over the years. This Guidebook is not intended to be the only resource that families will use in order to be well informed about resources and services in New York City. Instead, this Guidebook serves as a starting point for families who will have both anticipated and unanticipated needs and challenges as they settle in to life in New York City. In each section is a brief description of common areas of need, resources and how to access them, as well as required documents to access services.

We encourage PSOT families to reference this Guidebook when questions arise and to seek assistance at PSOT and other organizations when additional information is needed.
Use the information in this guidebook to create a plan for your family’s arrival.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Plan</th>
<th>Before Your Family Arrives</th>
<th>After Your Family Arrives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal:</td>
<td>Legal:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Housing:</td>
<td>Housing:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education:</td>
<td>Education:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health:</td>
<td>Health:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PSOT Family Assessment Appointment:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BEFORE YOUR FAMILY ARRIVES

☐ Prepare immigration documents to bring to airport....... 6
☐ Prepare housing for family...................................7
☐ Make an appointment with PSOT to discuss education... 8
☐ Get to know employment resources in guidebook........ 10
☐ Know food and clothing resources in your area............ 11
☐ Learn about childcare options in your neighborhood..... 16
AFTER YOUR FAMILY ARRIVES

- Make an appointment with PSOT for family assessment
- Apply for social security cards..........................................................6
- Make an appointment with PSOT for child school enrollment..8
- Enroll spouse and adult children in English classes.....................9
- Educate your family about NYC laws and safety......................... 12
- Make a medical appointment for children.................................13
- Get health insurance for family.................................................14
- Look up public benefits options for your family......................14
Confirm that the following information is correct on all the above documents: NAME, DATE OF BIRTH, COUNTRY OF ORIGIN and ALIEN NUMBER. Speak with an immigration officer at the airport if corrections are needed. Officer will apply for Employment Authorization Document (EAD) for each family member. If possible, review the applications.

Documents to Bring to the Airport

- Approval letter for each family member
- Your I-94
- Your ID (passport or NYS ID)
- Your social security card
- Copy of all documents submitted for family petition
- Your address and telephone number written on paper

Documents to Receive After Arrival

- Employment Authorization Document (EAD)*Should arrive in mail within two weeks – should be coded (A5) for Asylee and be valid for two years
- Unrestricted Social Security Card for each family member (should apply as soon as possible after arrival)
- New York Identification Card or Learner’s Permit (must present EAD, Social Security Card, and one additional document)

Do not throw away any documents or their envelopes. Bring all legal documents to PSOT social service staff.
Prepare Housing for Family

- Talk to current housemates about family arrival. Discuss any problems or conflicts.
- Get a letter from PSOT for entrance to a family shelter if needed.
- If you have stable income, see PSOT bulletin board for Housing Lottery information.

Family Shelters

If you do not have a place for you and your family to sleep, a PSOT staff member will provide you with a referral letter to go directly to a Family Department of Homeless Services (DHS) Shelter. From the airport, you can go directly to one of two shelters. No appointment is needed. See DHS shelter information sheet for rules and expectations.

** If you have school-aged children, a school will be assigned based on the “zone” where the shelter is located.

Option 1

If you have a child or children under 21 years, you should go to:

**Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing (PATH) Office**
151 E. 151st Street
Bronx, NY 10451
Open 24 hours, 7 days a week

Directions:
Subway: Take the 2, 4 or 5 train to the Grand Concourse Station. Head west on E. 149th Street toward Grand Concourse. Walk north on Grand Concourse two blocks, to E. 151st Street and turn left. Walk two blocks to Walton Avenue. The PATH office is located at the corner on your right.

Option 2

If you have a spouse and/or an adult child, you should go to:

**Adult Family Intake Center (AFIC)**
400-430 East 30th St./1st Ave.
New York, NY 10016 (Manhattan)

Directions:
Subway: 6 to 28th Street station. Walk east to 1st Avenue and turn left, heading north to 30th street.
Bus: M15 to 29th Street

For help, call 311 and say, “My family and I are homeless. Where can we go?”
EDUCATION for CHILDREN

Child School Enrollment:

- Make an appointment with PSOT as soon as possible to discuss education options

New York City Law says all children aged 6 to 17 must go to school.

It is important for you to be involved in your child’s education as much as possible. In the U.S. it is expected that parents go to parent-teacher meetings, know who the teachers are and talk with teachers and social workers/counselors about any problems. If you are invited to the school for a meeting, it is important that you go. If you are having problems enrolling your child in school or have other school issues, please schedule an appointment with a PSOT Social Service staff member for advice.

TO DO:

- Make sure you have all the necessary documents to enroll your child in school.
- Get child immunizations before enrolling.
- Discuss educational goals with your children and family members.
- Make an appointment with PSOT for help finding free/low-cost classes and applying to university.
- Go to the School Main Office at your child’s school for information about free or reduced meals, to learn about after-school care programs and transportation options (school bus and free metro cards).

School Meals: Breakfast is free to all students, at all schools, regardless of immigration status or income. Lunch can be reduced or free depending on the student’s household income. Children in families that get Food Stamps or Cash Assistance automatically get free school lunch.

You have the right to an interpreter at your child’s school to help you communicate with teachers and staff. Don’t hesitate to ask for an interpreter.
General Education Diploma (GED) Classes

- If you do not have a high school diploma and your English is at the intermediate level or above, you may want to take the GED to help you get a job.
- Enroll in our program’s GED Classes. (See bulletin board for information.)
- For more GED instruction, make an appointment with PSOT staff.

GED is the equivalent of a high school diploma. Some jobs require you to show proof of a high school diploma or GED.

Applying to University

Before going to an American university, you may need to get your past education credentials translated and evaluated, depending on the university.

Make an appointment with PSOT education staff to discuss university applications and financial aid options.
EMPLOYMENT

- Consider employment needs for your family

Obtaining stable work in NYC can be a challenge but there are many places that help people with preparing to work, being trained in a particular field, finding a job and advocating for your rights when you are working.

**Job Readiness**

*Consider the issues below when starting your job search:*

- Limited English Skills
- Education – lack of education, lack of education equivalent, lack of proof of education
- Daycare needs
- Other responsibilities (i.e. frequent appointments, caring for family members)
- Necessary documents to work in the United States legally (i.e. Employment Authorization Document, Social Security Card)
- United States-style resume in English
- Able to talk about strengths and skills in an American-style interview

**Job Training**

Receiving training and a certificate in a field that has frequent job openings may improve your chances of getting a job. There are many free job trainings in NYC.

*If you receive Food Stamps or Cash assistance, you may be eligible for the Back to Work Program.*

**Job Search and Placement**

There are several free job placement programs that PSOT has partnerships with where you can get assistance with searching for jobs.

**Employment Laws and Workers’ Rights**

There are federal and state laws on minimum wage, rights in the workplace, overtime pay, and the employment of people under age 18. Learn more: [http://www.labor.ny.gov](http://www.labor.ny.gov)

**For referrals and more information:**

- See PSOT’s bulletin board
- Attend a PSOT employment workshop
- Schedule an appointment with a PSOT social service staff member

In the United States it is common for both spouses to work. Help your spouse obtain employment.
FOOD and CLOTHING

☐ Educate yourself about food and clothing resources in your area

For many people in NYC, obtaining enough healthy food for a family can be a challenge. There are many free food resources in all the boroughs of NYC that anyone in need of food can access. Some documents may be required at the soup kitchens and food pantries.

Food

☐ **Soup Kitchens**
Free prepared meals that you eat onsite.

☐ **Food Pantries**
Free groceries that you take home to cook yourself.

☐ **Hunger Hotline**  866-888-8777
Call this number to get a referral to a neighborhood soup kitchen or food pantry. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

☐ **Emergency Food Locator**
http://www.cityharvest.org/locator

☐ **Pantry and Soup Kitchen Search**
http://www.nyccah.org/maps/index.php

Clothing

Many organizations around NYC provide free clothing. If you or your family members are in need of clothing, please tell a PSOT staff member. PSOT also provides free donated clothing.
SUPPORT and SAFETY

- In an emergency, call 911
- For information on NYC services, call 311 or visit http://www.nyc.gov/311
- Familiarize yourself with supportive services and laws

Emergencies

If there is a fire, you fear for your safety, you want the police or to report a crime in progress, call 911.

Supportive Agencies

- NYC Services: For information on NYC Services call 311.
- Child Protection: Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) exists to protect children and support families. If a child is being abused, is not going to school, or is suffering from psychological, medical or physical neglect, ACS may step in to help.
- Domestic violence: It is a crime to abuse your partner. If you experience violence from someone in your home, call the NYC 24-hour Domestic Violence Hotline at 1 (800) 621-4673.
- Speak to a PSOT staff member about support and safety concerns.

Community Support

- Visit your local library for Internet access and to explore things to do in NYC.
- Find community support by joining a local church, mosque, synagogue, or recreational center.

Buses and subway tips

- Bus customers who travel between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. can Request-a-Stop anywhere along the route.
- For the Select Bus, pay before you get on and KEEP your receipt!
- You may transfer free from local bus-to-subway, subway-to-local bus or local bus-to-local bus within two hours of the time you paid your fare.
HEALTH

- Make an emergency plan with your family
- Get health insurance for your family (see Public Benefits Section)

Health Services

If you do not have health insurance, you may be eligible for free or reduced health services (as low as $15 for a visit) at any public hospital in New York City. Find a public hospital in your area.

- If your child eats or drinks something that makes him very sick call the Poison Control Hotline at 1-800-222-1222 or go immediately to your nearest emergency room.
- All children under the age of 19 years old are eligible for affordable health insurance. Talk to a PSOT social service staff member for more information.
- New York City hospitals have special care for children under 19 years old. Go to a “Child and Teen Health Services” clinic in your area to get your children the immunizations they need for school and to get general or specialty care.

Interpretation

It is your right to have an interpreter who speaks your language when you visit a public hospital. You should request an interpreter when you see a doctor. They are required by law to provide an interpreter for you.

If you are having a medical emergency call “911” from any phone immediately and have an ambulance take you to an emergency room to be treated no matter what your immigration status is and even if you cannot pay.
Health Insurance

**Medicaid / Family Health Plus**
Medicaid is a public health insurance to cover medical expenses and medication. Individuals and families can qualify for Public Health Insurance if they have no or low income. To apply, you must go to a Medicaid office and that office will confirm if you are eligible. For help applying, go to: PSOT, Medicaid Office, Match Grant Office

Food-Related Benefits

**Food Stamps**
Food stamps are used to purchase food.
The Food Stamp Program provides an electronic benefitcard that can be used to purchase food items at participating grocery stores and farmers’ markets. For help applying, go to: Your local Food Stamps Office, Human Resources Administration (HRA) Office or Match Grant Office

**WIC – Women, Infants and Children**
The WIC Program is a food program for low-income women, infants, and children. The WIC Program provides nutritious foods, nutrition education and information on free or low-cost health care. You must be pregnant or have a child up to 5 years of age.
For help applying, go to: Eastside WIC (Bellevue Hospital), Ground Floor C&D Building or your local WIC Office

**School Meals**
See “Child Education” section of guidebook.

**Summer Meals (Breakfast and Lunch)**
The Summer Meals program offers free breakfast and lunch to children, no matter their immigration status. The program starts in late June and ends in late August at more than 700 schools, parks, pools, libraries, and New York City Housing Authority buildings in the city.
Financial Support

Temporary Cash Assistance
Temporary cash assistance is money provided by the government twice a month. Temporary cash assistance can last up to 60 months and is provided on an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card. Most people must engage in work activities to receive this benefit. For help applying, go to: Your Local HRA Office

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) – DISABILITY
SSI provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. SSI is a Federal income supplement program designed to help aged, blind, and disabled people, who have little or no income.
For help applying, go to: Your Local HRA Office

Child care Assistance
See “Child Care” section of guidebook.

Unemployment Insurance
If you are unemployed through no fault of your own, you may be eligible for financial support from the government. For help applying, go to: Your Local Department of Labor Office

Reduced Fare MetroCard
MTA offers a reduced fare MetroCard for people 65 years of age or older or people with certain disabilities.
To Enroll, visit: http://www.mta.info/nyct/fare/rfindex.htm

Housing

Housing Allowance
Housing Allowance is rent assistance for low-income households. Housing allowance comes in the form of vouchers and certificates paid to the apartment landlord or owner. For help applying, go to: Your Local HRA Office

Home Energy Assistance Program ( HEAP)
HEAP helps cover the costs of heating your home. HEAP provides regular heating assistance for families with a child under 6 or adult over 60 and emergency assistance in a heat related emergency. For help applying, go to: Your Local HRA Office

Accessing public benefits will NOT negatively affect your future immigration applications.
CHILD CARE

- Find childcare services in your neighborhood
- Talk to friends to share child care responsibilities

Head Start Programs (ages 0-5 years)
- Offers free educational and care programs for children ages 0-5 years.
- Ask at PSOT staff member to help find a head start program in your neighborhood.

Head start programs often have long waiting lists. Apply as soon as possible to ensure your child’s place in a program.

Child Care Assistance (ages 0-13 years)
Child Care Assistance provides assistance to low-income families who need child care. This service is generally provided for children under the age of 13 years of age.

You must also be either employed or enrolled in a training or education program. For help applying, go to: Your Local HRA Office

Sharing Child Care (any age)
One way to share child care is to talk to other parents in your community and take turns looking after each other’s children. If each day a different set of parents cares for the group’s children the rest of the parents will have time to work or relax.

After School Programs (6-18 years)
After school programs are activities for students organized by schools and other organizations. Activities usually take place after classes finish and run into the evening. They are a great way to keep your child active while you are at work.

- Talk to your contact at your child’s school to learn about after school programs such as: tutoring, sports teams, debate team, chess club.
- Talk to your child about what activities they would like to be involved in and help them sign up into these programs at their school.
PSOT Family Services

- Talk to PSOT staff about conflicts in the family
- Explore positive parenting strategies

Expect Emotional Ups and Downs

*There are challenges that may arise both before and after your family arrives. If you begin to experience conflict with your spouse or your children:*

- Speak to a PSOT staff member about your concerns

Parenting

*From BRYCS Raising Children in a New Country*

- **Nurture:** The pace of life in the U.S. is often fast and both parents may be expected to work, so finding time to spend with children can be challenging. Activities such as family meals and bedtime can be opportunities for nurture.
- **Supervision/Protection:** Parents are responsible for supervising their own children in the U.S., both inside and outside the home, and for keeping children safe.
- **Structure/Limits:** In this fast-paced life, it helps children if parents maintain a daily schedule and set limits or rules (about things like eating junk food, using the internet, watching TV, and helping with chores).
- **Discipline/Respect:** Discipline methods vary by culture. Common methods in the U.S. include: positive reinforcement, time-outs, limiting privileges, or establishing consequences.


Many parents in the U.S. use strategies for child discipline such as; limiting TV and computer use, holding back allowance, time-out, and grounding.
NOTES:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
To order a version of this guidebook that you can adjust for your agency and city, please contact:

Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture
462 1st Avenue, New York, NY 10001
Room CD 732, Floor 7
P: 212.562.8713
www.survivorsoftorture.org

March 2012

20