



## **Brazilian Worker Center's Family Welcome Center Host Family Program Frequently Asked Questions 2024**

Thank you so much for your willingness to host a migrant family! We greatly appreciate your hospitality and kindness. Here are some frequently asked questions about the program. If you have additional questions, please email us at [emergency@braziliancenter.org](mailto:emergency@braziliancenter.org) or call 617-817-5012. **Read more about the Family Welcome Center at [braziliancenter.org/family-welcome-center](https://braziliancenter.org/family-welcome-center).**

### **Why are host families needed at this time?**

The majority of hosts are receiving newly arrived migrant families, who are in urgent need of housing due to the overwhelming demand for emergency assistance shelters, which are currently operating at full capacity. The state overflow centers are also at maximum capacity. Families in need are facing increasingly difficult situations as they find themselves on a waiting list for shelter assistance. Providing hospitality as a host family, even for a few nights, can make a tremendous difference for a family in need.

- We need host families to provide hospitality and accommodation for any period you are comfortable hosting, as even one night allows a family respite and comfort.
- Some families may not yet be on the waitlist (for example, gathering documentation), but most will be on the waitlist and all are in process.

### **Where are the families from, and how long have they been here??**

- Most families arriving in Massachusetts right now are coming from Haiti or countries in Central and South America, including Venezuela, Nicaragua, Colombia, or Brazil. Nearly all of the families we place with hosts have just arrived within the past week or two.

### **Why did they come to the U.S.?**

- Families come for a wide range of reasons, but most have left situations of profound dysfunction and systemic violence, both physical and economic. They may also be fleeing the impact of a natural disaster, chronic hunger due to lack of economic opportunities, or seeking medical care unavailable to them in their home country. Some may be seeking to reunite with family members already in the US.

- We ask hosts to remember that in all cases, leaving one's familiar land, culture, and language for an uncertain and often harrowing journey is difficult, exhausting, and traumatic.
- Please be sensitive, recognizing that not everyone is comfortable sharing their reasons for migration or personal stories.

### ***Host Guidelines and Expectations***

#### **After I decide to host, what are the next steps?**

- Once you are ready to move forward, please fill out [this form](#). It will put you into our database as a prospective host and will let us know details such as the number of people you can host and for how long. This is a secure form, as you'll see that one of things we'll ask for is your date of birth and the last 6 digits of your social security number for our background check.
- Next, we will initiate a phone conversation to be sure we understand your home's capacity and your dates of availability, as well as to answer any questions you have.
- The last step is a quick background check (often called a CORI check), for which we need the full names, dates of birth, and the last six digits of the Social Security Number (SSN) for each adult in your home. We also need to do a reference check, so we need the contact information of a non-family member who is well acquainted with the member of your home who is filling out the host form.
- When approved, we will add you to our standby list, with the dates and length of time you are able to host, and will communicate with you via email, text, or phone regarding our needs and your availability.
- If a family will be placed with you, we will call you with as much notice as possible, though often this will be just a day or two before. We will coordinate with you for the most convenient time that the family can arrive at your home.

#### **What is expected of me as a host?**

- The most important thing you can do is to make a family's stay with you as comfortable and friendly as possible! Most immediately, this includes welcoming them warmly, introducing yourself, and learning their names. Language barriers can be challenging, but the guest family will be so grateful for your hospitality and also quite tired and in need of rest.
- Please show them where they can put their coats and luggage: Many families arrive after one or several days sleeping in uncomfortable public spaces, and their highest priorities may be bathing and resting.
- Having food available is a wonderful thing! Many families arrive at their host homes at the end of a long day, so having something already prepared for the first night is generally very welcome (see below for food suggestions).

- Show them the bathroom, and where they can find towels, soap, shampoo, etc., and how to use your faucets for hot and cold water.
- Show them how to navigate your kitchen, including where to find pots and pans, silverware and dishes, and stored food such as rice and pasta. Indicate that they are welcome to prepare food for themselves, and which foods they're free to use.
- Write out clearly your internet information—name and password—so they can access it easily. Most families have phones and use WhatsApp.
- Show them how to use your stove and dishwasher, where to put the trash and recycling, and if you want dirty diapers disposed of in a particular way.
- Leaving your home while hosting is fine! Let the family know your schedule when you'll be away from the house for work or other plans, and how to reach you if there is an emergency while you're away.
- If there are places nearby where the family can walk on their own, especially parks with playgrounds, please show them how to get there within the first day or two of their stay with you. Being able to exercise agency and get someplace pleasant on their own is a wonderful gift!
- Please communicate what you need in terms of knowing their comings and goings. We generally recommend that guest families do not receive visitors while they are staying with a host family, but please set that expectation with them as they settle into your home.
- If your guests seem to prefer staying in their room—even if it's crowded—this may be in part because they've had no privacy or "room of their own" for a long time.

### **Should I child-proof my home?**

- Because young children will usually be staying with you, we recommend taking a few steps to child-proof your home: secure cabinets, cover electrical outlets and ensure fragile items or harmful substances are out of reach.
- Please do not feel obligated or compelled to alter your daily routine, as parental responsibility for their child's protection lies with them.

### **How will the family be transported to and from my home?**

- BWC's Family Welcome Center provides transportation to and from the host family's residence by an Uber, taxi, or minibus.
- We will also organize transportation for essential appointments during their stay, including medical needs, immigration proceedings, and necessary visits to DTA offices.

### **How will we communicate with the family?**

- Haitian families speak Haitian Creole and often (though not always) French as well; many also speak Spanish and/or Portuguese. Those from Central or South America speak Spanish or Portuguese. Some individuals speak some level of English. We

recommend using language apps such as Google Translate for effective communication, offering a live speaking recognition and translation feature (though Haitian Creole appears only in writing). In addition to language apps, written communication and gestures are helpful alternatives. Someone from the Brazilian Workers Center will also check in periodically to offer guidance and support as needed. Remember that a lot of communication can also happen through gestures, smiles, and showing someone what you mean!

### **What kinds of food should I have on hand?**

- Common staples families can cook for themselves will be very welcome: white rice, pasta, dried beans of several kinds, eggs, chicken, and bread. Many Haitian families like to cook with bouillon cubes (chicken or beef) for flavor.
- If your home is meat-free, it's fine to communicate that to the family and provide only what you're comfortable having in your home.
- Fresh produce is very welcome, both to cook with and use raw: green and red bell peppers, onions, and garlic; cucumbers and cabbage; fruits like bananas, grapes, oranges and apples.
- Most families have young children, so juice, milk, and crackers, peanut butter, and fresh fruit are welcome.
- If you prepare a meal ahead of time for the family's arrival, keep it simple and don't use a lot of spice. Roast chicken with rice or potatoes is a good option, as are simple soups or stews with bread, or a pan of mac and cheese or other pasta.

### **Will children need any special food or supplies?**

- The Family Welcome Center will provide families with an initial supply of diapers, wipes, and formula for young children.

### **What comes next for the family, once they leave my home?**

- After their stay with you, the family's next step depends on the state's capacity for Emergency Assistance, which fluctuates according to the number of new arrivals. They may be relocated to another temporary location or be placed into an EA Shelter. The State is working hard to provide accommodation. Regardless of the family's next placement, the days or weeks they spend with you will be a respite for them that will ease their path forward.

### **Can families use my address to apply for workers' permits, State benefits, or asylum?**

- We advise against letting families use your address for applications related to work permits, state benefits, or immigration documentation.
- Your residence serves as temporary accommodation, and relevant social service agencies will contact the families directly to provide assistance, as the families are already on their lists.

- School-age children will be enrolled in schools when the family is placed in a supplemental shelter.

**Is there any reimbursement for my out-of-pocket expenses?**

- No, not for this program. Hosts are offering their homes and food as a gift and are encouraged to spend only what they can comfortably give.

**What support can we expect from the State while we're hosting?**

- We will check in regularly with host families and encourage hosts to reach out to us as well if any questions or problems arise. We also have volunteers available who have hosted and/or are currently hosting, who can help answer your questions.

**What should I do if I encounter a challenge that I am unable to solve independently?**

- Please contact the Family Welcome Center by email at [emergency@braziliancenter.org](mailto:emergency@braziliancenter.org) and explain the difficulty. Please understand that every day is very hectic at the Center, and we have to prioritize the kinds of questions that come in, so it may take some time for someone to respond to your question. If there is a true medical emergency, please call 911. Otherwise, please just continue to make your family comfortable until your situation can be resolved or it resolves on its own.

**What if things aren't working out?**

- If the current situation is not proving to be suitable, please communicate your concerns with the Family Welcome Center. You have the option to retract your offer as a host family at any point. Together, we can explore potential solutions or make necessary adjustments to ensure a more comfortable arrangement for both you and the host family.