



HOW TO START
**A SEWING
MINISTRY**
BUSINESS

WITH REFUGEES



Send
Relief



Restoring Dignity through Skill, Community, and Hope

Every morning in Clarkston, Georgia, the quiet hum of sewing machines tells a story. It is the sound of women rebuilding their lives after fleeing war, violence, and upheaval. Inside the Send Relief Ministry Center, the Refugee Sewing Society creates a place where refugee women can earn income, learn skills, and rediscover dignity they feared had been lost forever.

Refugee Sewing Society is a local nonprofit and tenant partner inside the Send Relief Ministry Center in Atlanta. Here, women gather for sewing classes, language practice, and community. They learn to turn their skills into beautiful, useful products that help support their families.

With limited space and equipment, the program can work with only a small number of women at a time, and there is often a waiting list of others hoping to join. Together they create jewelry, skirts, shirts, dresses, bags, and home goods—many crafted from donated or recycled materials. The proceeds from each sale are shared between the artisan and the program, helping women earn income while sustaining a safe place where hope, friendship, and faith can grow.

Creating a Business to Minister through Sewing and Bible Study

Every year, thousands of families are forced to flee their homes with little to no notice. They escape with only what they can carry. They are people just like you who are seeking things like food, shelter, and safety. You have the opportunity to come alongside these families in prayer and friendship.

For many refugee women, finding employment that aligns with their family's cultural expectations is challenging—sometimes even impossible. At the same time, many long for genuine community and belonging in their new home.

A sewing and Bible study ministry meets both needs. As women gather to create together, the atmosphere naturally fosters friendship, healing, and creativity. Through shared work and shared faith, they build confidence, discover new skills, and gain a meaningful way to support their families.



How to Pray for Refugees

Every ministry begins with prayer. Here are 25 meaningful ways to pray for refugees in your community.

Safety

- The means to escape persecution and war
- Consistent access to necessities like water, food, clothes, shoes, and toiletries
- Reliable transportation to their new home countries
- Strength and persistence in acclimating to new cultures
- Jobs with a livable wage and trusted employers

Healing

- Attentive medical care and spiritual support
- Comfort and time to grieve after the loss of loved ones
- True healing from the trauma sustained in their journeys
- The reunification of separated families
- A smooth adjustment period as they settle into their new homes

Spiritual Growth

- God to make Himself known in their lives
- Supportive spiritual guides along the journey to help them grow and mature in faith
- Supernatural wisdom, strength, and peace as they navigate difficult situations
- A church body that will welcome them with open arms
- The strength to share their faith with family and friends

Home Life

- Their new communities to have grace as they adjust to new customs
- Patience as they answer questions about their lives and culture
- Affordable, safe housing
- Reliable work to be able to support their families
- Friends for their children

Relief Agencies and Churches

- Greater networks of support for refugees
- More developed programs to financially and emotionally support families
- Church bodies to answer God's call to welcome their new neighbors
- Nonprofits to receive the funding necessary to remain open and operating
- Word to spread about the availability and willingness of churches to help refugees

Starting a Sewing Ministry for Refugees

A sewing ministry for refugees provides the opportunity to build relationships with international women while teaching them practical skills that help them integrate into life in the United States, earn income, learn and/or improve their English, and hear the gospel.

Use the following checklists to help you begin a sewing ministry through your church.

Start-Up Considerations

- What will your sewing ministry be called?
- Who will serve in the sewing ministry?
- How will you connect with refugee women who may participate in the ministry?
- Will the church host the ministry, or will another facility be needed?
- Will you need to set up a 501(c)(3) organization for your sewing ministry? Consult with your church's attorney and/or IRS.gov for specific information.
- What is your ministry statement and/or bylaws? This will help with your 501(c)(3) application, if needed

The Sewing Ministry Team

- Will volunteers run the ministry, or will workers be compensated?
- Who will serve in the sewing ministry? Consider the following roles:
 - **Director:** leads the sewing ministry, oversees and trains volunteers and participants, and serves as liaison to church staff
 - **Co-director:** sets the sewing ministry schedule and assists with overseeing the sewing ministry
 - **Finance manager:** oversees budget, income, and payroll
 - **Volunteer coordinator:** coordinates schedule of volunteers who serve in the sewing ministry
 - **Sewing volunteer:** serves in the ministry, assists participants to grow in their sewing skills, and builds relationships with participants
 - **Bible study leader:** teaches a Bible study lesson to participants during each session or class
 - **ESL leader:** provides English lessons to participants
 - **Prayer coordinator:** gathers and shares prayer requests from participants and volunteers
 - **Marketing coordinator:** helps to advertise and promote the products made by the sewing ministry participants
 - **Transportation coordinator:** arranges transportation for participants, as needed
 - **Childcare worker:** provides care for children of participants and/or volunteers, as needed
- Will you include volunteers from other churches or your community?
- How many hours per week or per month will volunteers commit to serve?



Facility

- Will you host the sewing ministry in your church or at another facility?
- How many sewing machines will fit in the space?
- Where will donated supplies and equipment be gathered and stored?
- Where will supplies and equipment be stored when not in use?

Logistics

- Where will the sewing ministry meet?
- When will the sewing ministry meet?
- How long will each gathering last? Remember to allow adequate time for sewing and Bible study, as well as transportation needs.
- How often will the sewing ministry meet?
- How many sewing machines are available? This will determine your maximum number of participants per gathering.
- Will you create new products to sell or offer services like alterations and embroidery?
- Will you purchase equipment and supplies or request donations?
- Is transportation needed?:
 - What vehicles may be used?
 - Who will drive participants?
- Is childcare needed?
 - What space may be used?
 - How many volunteers will be needed?
 - What supplies and/or activities will be needed?
- What training will you provide volunteers? If you are unsure, consider the following:
 - [How to Care for Refugees](#)
 - [How to Respond to a Border Crisis](#)
 - [How to Share the Gospel Through Everyday Acts of Compassion](#)
 - [Evangelism in Compassion Ministry](#)
 - [How to Become a Trauma-Informed Church](#)

Finances

- Will participants be paid per item or hourly?
- What percentage of each sale will be needed to help fund sewing ministry expenses?
- What budget is needed? Consider:
 - Start-up costs
 - Three months of operating expenses
 - Supplies, such as sewing machines, furniture, fabric, thread, and so forth
 - Compensation for workers
 - Rental fees for sewing ministry space
 - Utility and maintenance fees
 - Miscellaneous ongoing expenses
 - Marketing of the ministry to volunteers and participants
 - Marketing of the products available for purchase
- Who will manage finances?

Raising Awareness

- How will you raise awareness about the new ministry to potential volunteers?
 - Church announcements
 - Church bulletins
 - Church social media
 - Small groups or Sunday school classes
- How will you raise awareness about the new ministry to potential participants?
 - Local community organizations
 - Other local churches
 - Resettlement agencies
- How will you raise awareness about the new ministry to market products?
 - Local TV channels
 - Local radio stations
 - Social media groups

Working with Refugees

- Will you work with one language group that is learning English or a diverse group with proficient English skills?
- How will you incorporate Bible study time into your sewing ministry? What resources or curriculum will you use? Consider using the following questions as you discuss a Bible story:
 - What does this teach us?
 - How did people respond in the story?
 - Who do you relate to in this story?
 - Based on this story, what should we do?
- What gospel-focused resources will you provide to participants and their families?
- How will you invite participants and their families to your church?
- How can you teach participants about culture through your sewing ministry? Consider holidays, traditions, and so forth.
- How will you encourage church members to build relationships with refugee families in your community?
- In what other ways will your church serve refugees outside the sewing ministry?

Marketing

- How much will each product or service cost? Consider factors such as:
 - What are the expenses to produce each product or service?
 - What markup is necessary for participants to earn income and to cover ministry expenses?
- How will you market the products and services?
 - At church
 - Online
 - Craft fairs or festivals
 - A store
- How will you tell the story of the ministry through your marketing efforts?
 - Local TV channels
 - Local radio stations
 - Social media groups

Trauma-Informed Care

What Is Trauma?

- Trauma is anything that does not nurture. The dictionary defines it as a deeply distressing or disturbing experience.
- Trauma leaves a lasting negative effect on the victim's brain and well-being.
- Trauma impairs one's memory, concentration, regulation, behavior, relationships, self-identity, new learning, and focus.
- Trauma has led to heart disease, obesity, addiction, mental illness, and many other medical conditions.
- Trauma impacts an individual's ability to trust, cope, and form healthy relationships.
- Trauma disrupts emotion identification, the ability to self-soothe or control emotional responses, and the ability to distinguish between safe and unsafe.
- Trauma shapes a person's belief about self and others, one's ability to hope, and a person's hope and entire outlook on life.
- Be aware trauma could affect those you serve. It sometimes shows up as negative or unhealthy behaviors.
- Consider the possibility that the person's behaviors are a valiant attempt to cope with a horrendous situation. Those behaviors may be saving their life.

Fundamental principles to consider when interacting with a victim of trauma:

- Remember the ways that trauma changes the brain, thus changing the person.
- Treat the trauma, not the behavior.
- Healing should be the goal, not behavior modification.
- Follow the principles of Trauma-Informed Care.

What is Trauma-Informed Care?

Trauma-Informed Care engages people with histories of trauma that recognize the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges its role in their lives and behaviors, both past and present.

The goal of trauma-informed care is to acknowledge the impact of trauma on individuals so that they are not re-victimized in the process of seeking help. In addition, being trauma-informed allows you to focus on the root of presenting behaviors or circumstances to see what truly needs healing.

5 Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

1. Safety

Addressing the physical and emotional safety of an individual is the first important step to providing Trauma-Informed Care.

In Practice:

- Create a warm, hospitable, inviting environment and allow the individual to have some say over the place where you meet.
- Ensure physical safety and emotional security when talking on the phone or meeting in person.
- Identify potential sights or sounds that could trigger reactions from the individual and eliminate them by reducing or avoiding loud noises or sudden, surprising events.

2. Choice

The more choices and control the individual has over their experience—through a collaborative effort with service providers and those meeting their needs—the more likely they will participate in services. And those services will prove effective.

In Practice:

- Ask questions that allow the individual to make decisions, such as where they would like to go on an outing or where they would like to sit in a room.
- Offer information but allow the individual to make their own decisions about the care and resources they'd like to receive.

3. Collaboration

Collaborative care involves sharing the responsibility to make decisions with the individual who has experienced trauma. It means working with them to plan, providing insight and input into their safety and plans. When collaborating with someone in need, you do not make decisions for them but with them.

In Practice:

- Set aside enough time to get to know them and their needs, their story, and what they have to offer in the equation of having their needs met.
- Allow the individual to play a significant role in planning and evaluating their needs and the services they receive.

4. Trustworthiness

When serving an individual who has experienced trauma, clearly communicate tasks, boundaries, and the role of all involved. Following through on what you say and respecting boundaries build trust with the individual in need.

In Practice:

- Communicate the steps you will take to care for the individual in need.
- Allow the individual to communicate the role they will play in the process.
- Follow through with all things you have agreed to do.

- Allow the individual to communicate the boundaries they need you to hold or for them to feel comfortable.
- Reiterate and respect those boundaries.

5. Empowerment

Focusing on an individual's strengths and empowering them to build on those strengths while developing more vital coping skills provides a healthy foundation for them to fall back on if and when they stop receiving services or assistance for their needs.

In Practice:

- Do not do for the individual what they can do for themselves.
- Allow the individual to decide their future, even if you disagree with it.
- Follow the individual's lead, support them in their efforts to analyze, assess, and meet their needs.



Explore Other Ways Your Church Can Serve Refugees

As you start a sewing ministry business with refugees, you will likely discover other ways your church can serve refugees in your community. This may involve working with local churches, community organizations, and resettlement agencies.

If you are unsure where or how to get started, these Send Relief resources can help.

- [How Can We Serve? An In-Depth Guide to Discovering Community Needs](#)
- [How to Care for Refugees](#)
- [How to Respond to a Border Crisis](#)
- [How to Establish a Local Ministry](#)
- [How to Become a Trauma-Informed Church](#)
- [English as a Second Language \(ESL\) Ministry](#)
- [How to Share the Gospel Through Everyday Acts of Compassion](#)
- [Evangelism in Compassion Ministry](#)
- [How to Pray for a Heart of Compassion: A 30-Day Prayer Guide](#)
- [The Call of Compassion eBook](#)



Send
Relief



4200 North Point Parkway | Alpheretta, GA 30022

SendRelief.org