



Newcomer.life

# *HOW TO HOST* **TOOLKIT**

A How-To Guide to Host a Conversation  
That Builds A More Welcoming Community For Newcomers

## *WELCOME*

**Thank you** for agreeing to host a Community Conversation, and for supporting the Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA), and our Newcomer.Life, a platform designed to share newcomer stories and welcoming exchanges.

**Simply sharing our arrival stories** with each other can have a powerful impact and can help us understand why people from across the globe seek refuge in the United States. Modern day refugees follow in the traditions of our ancestors, yearning to realize our country's core ideal: that **equality, liberty, and justice exist for all**. Talking to each other opens doors, minds, and hearts.

Hearing the sometimes tragic, sometimes heroic, sometimes uplifting and always inspirational stories of our new neighbors builds a community of connected people who become empowered to take concrete steps to create a more **welcoming and inclusive** environment for newcomer families.

## *HOW TO HOST*

Read this whole guide before setting up your first conversation!

1. **Invite between 6-12 people** to a conversation.
2. **Open your home** or reserve a room at a local library or coffee house and invite neighbors, extended family members, work colleagues, and friends.
3. **Make a plan** to create a welcoming, hospitable, safe space for an open dialogue.
4. **Choose a value** to frame your discussion. More on this below and at <http://newcomer.life/framing>
5. **Host** your conversation, and enjoy the discussion and your guests' insights!
6. Encourage your guests to **take concrete actions** that will help them feel empowered and will help realize our large goal of achieving equity and justice for all. Use a sign-up sheet to help hold each other accountable!
7. **Become a connector** between your guests and future activities and events!

## *PURPOSE*

1. **Build awareness** of refugee issues and share the realities of resettlement.
2. **Offer concrete steps** people can take to create a more welcoming environment for newcomer families.
3. **Deepen our relationships** with the people closest to us and in our community.

# PREPARATION

## 1. Set your goals.

- Figure out **how many** people you'd like to attend, and invite enough people to meet that goal, knowing many will have to decline for various reasons.
- Figure out **who** among your contacts you'd really like to see embrace a new image of newcomers.
- Read up on the **basics** so you feel comfortable leading off the conversation at <http://newcomer.life/start>

## 2. Prepare your “pitch.”

- Prepare your welcome and introduction, and think about **how you'll frame** the issue of immigration and refugee resettlement. (Lots of ideas at <http://newcomer.life/framing>)
- Prepare a fun **icebreaker**, see <http://newcomer.life/icebreakers> for ideas

## 3. Prepare activities and materials in advance.

- Because we are building community, plan to **make your guests feel welcome**, with refreshments, coffee or tea, or even a meal—whatever works best for those you've invited.
- **Effective community conversations** can take many forms and don't necessarily follow a standard format. Conversations can be formal or free-flowing. You know your guests best! We offer what has worked for us, but do what works best for your own style and group.

## MATERIALS <http://newcomer.life/materials>

- **Who is a Refugee?** Fact sheet with frequently asked questions
- **“Refugees Welcome” signs** to pass out to your guests. Perfect for putting up in businesses, houses of worship, places of work, or homes
- **Refugees Welcome** handout
- **Sign-up sheet** for your guests who also would like to host a conversation
- [ Any other materials you know of to help guests feel prepared.]

## VIDEOS <http://newcomer.life/videos>

- **“Rethink Refugee Resettlement”** - a short, watchable video describing the current refugee resettlement experience.
- **Abdalaa, Ammar, and David's Stories** - Personal interviews helps your guests get to know refugees as relatable fellow humans, and helps them imagine what it is like to be a newcomer family in America in the 21st Century.

# Day-Of Step-by-Step Guide

## 1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

10-20 minutes

Creating a welcoming and inclusive discussion space is the first step to creating a welcoming, inclusive San Diego! Have coffee, simple snacks, and casual conversation between guests before you formally begin the conversation. Pass around the sign-in sheet.

Begin with introductions. Have everyone share their name (if everyone doesn't already know each other) and why they are participating, what they hope to learn or experience, and whether they have any doubts or concerns. Make it clear that you hope the conversation will be profound and authentic.

### NOTE FOR HOSTS

You'll need to be the model for introductions. Set the context: Why did you invite these folks to this conversation? What inspired you and what is the purpose? You might want to demonstrate that it's safe to express doubts or concerns so your guests don't feel they have to be 100% on board before the conversation begins. You could say something like, *"I didn't know anything about newcomer families until I met Ammar. I used to think everyone should just "come in the legal way, by standing in line, but I learned so much after hearing directly from someone who risked everything to come to America."* Obviously, this will be a personal reflection of your own.

## 2. BREAK THE ICE

5-10 minutes

Because many people will feel shy or nervous talking in a group, especially about emotional or political issues, it helps to start with an activity that relaxes people, makes them feel comfortable talking to the other people you've gathered, and demonstrates that this is a comfortable, safe space. See our handout, "Icebreaker Examples," or feel free to come up with your own!

## 3. WHAT WE KNOW, WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

5-10 minutes

Ask attendees to share what they know about San Diego refugee communities. What have they seen, heard, been told by the media, friends, colleagues? What do they think refugees need? What barriers do refugees face to settlement? Allow room for different thoughts and understandings.

## 4. WATCH TWO SHORT VIDEOS

10 minutes

Take a few minutes to watch the "Rethink Refugee Resettlement" video together as a group. Then run one of the personal testimonies that are available on [newcomer.life/videos](https://newcomer.life/videos).

## 5. DIALOGUE & REFLECTION

30-45 minutes

Invite attendees to take a moment to quietly reflect about:

- *What was your experience, if any, with refugees before this evening?*
- *Think about your family members who immigrated to America. What was it like for them when they first arrived?*
- *What do you think refugees need?*
- *What have you been hearing over the last year about refugees?*
- *What is something new that you learned from the “Rethink Refugee Resettlement” video or from hearing from the Newcomer Story video we just watched?*

Ask someone from the group to share their thoughts. Explain that these topics are tough to tackle, and that it's okay to feel nervous, but that by participating we're already engaging in an activity that can lead to meaningful unity. (People might still be reserved about sharing at this point, so be prepared to start the ball rolling with your own thoughts.)

You can allow your group to engage in conversation freely, but know that you can guide the discussion if it seems to go off topic.

Here are a few good questions to ask if people are shy:

- *What new information did you learn?*
- *What ideas, new insights, or words caught your attention or surprised you?*
- *How did the video and the refugee experiences affect you?*
- *If you were sharing this with a close friend, how would you describe how you're feeling right now?*

### NOTE FOR HOSTS

Refugee resettlement has become a political issue at a time when we need to affirm the humanity and dignity of 65 million people who deserve our compassion. Fear-based and inflammatory rhetoric creates a community that is distrustful and violent.

History has demonstrated that fear-based policies only lead to outcomes that violate the human rights of people. A powerful example to reflect on is the fact that in our parents' or grandparents' lifetimes, the United States refused entry to hundreds of thousands of Jews who ultimately perished in concentration camps. Then, like now, those fleeing were thought to hold extreme political views, harbor anti-American sentiments, and bear diseases.

## 6. ACTION STEPS

10-20 minutes

After a deep, and perhaps intense conversation that has hit people on an emotional, human level, your guests often will feel, “I want to help—what can I do?” It’s important to empower them to help “Be the Change.”

Folks may want to explore one idea to do as a group, which would be a wonderful way to continue to build community. Your partner at PANA can offer support, and will have up-to-date action steps at varying levels of commitment for your guests to sign up for. We’ve created a variety of options, from the simple to the more profound. See the next section, “Let’s Take Action!”

To be most effective, it is a good practice to go around the room and have each person say what they’ll be doing in response to what they learned after this conversation. Not only is it important that each of us contributes what we can if we hope to achieve real and sustainable change, but it is also empowering to those who have just been hit with a new way of looking at a controversial and thorny issue.

## 7. DEBRIEF & CLOSING

5 minutes

Thank your guests for participating, and for opening up by sharing their thoughts and feelings. Ask each person to share their reactions, and whether the meeting met their expectations and goals. Acknowledge that this is difficult to do, especially any time there is so much emotion and politics involved. Review all the commitments people made, and celebrate the moving conversation and the concrete action steps!

# YOU DID IT!

Grow the movement and share a group photo of your house meeting using the hashtag **#NewcomerLife**.

When we know the stories of others, we have an understanding and a personal connection. After hearing the tragic, yet inspiring stories of people seeking refuge in the U.S., people likely will want to do something concrete to help refugees through the transitional adjustment period. **ACTION IDEAS ON NEXT PAGE »**

# **TAKING ACTION!**

## **LEARN / READ**

- **RESEARCH books and articles** discussing refugees and the root causes for resettlement. Visit [www.panasd.org/bookclub](http://www.panasd.org/bookclub) for some of our favorites.

## **TALK AND SHARE**

- **HOST** a conversation in your own home. **Invite friends, family, and colleagues** to a conversation in your home to **build awareness** of refugee issues, share the realities of resettlement, and **offer concrete steps** people can take to create a more welcoming environment for newcomer families. PANA partners will help you all along the way!

## **BE VISIBLE**

- Become a **WELCOMING business**. Hang-up a “Refugees Welcome” window sign, available from PANA. Get signs at <http://newcomer.life/materials>
- Make a commitment to hire new neighbors. Learn where to advertise or who to talk to so newcomers know yours a welcoming business. Learn more at <http://newcomer.life/businesses>

## **SHOW UP LOCALLY**

- **Contact your local elected officials**, regularly—strive for one call, email, letter or tweet a week! (See handout or <http://newcomer.life/showup> for contact information).
- Write Letters to the Editor often—whenever you’re moved by an issue!
- Attend vigils, marches, rallies, meetings with elected representatives, and city council and board of supervisor meetings. Share your own arrival story. PANA supports local advocacy that promotes full inclusion for refugees.
- **Volunteer to provide direct services** with our four local resettlement agencies: [Alliance for African Assistance](#), [Catholic Charities](#), [International Rescue Committee](#), and [Jewish Family Services](#). Links to each are at Newcomer.Life.

## **JOIN PANA!**

- Support efforts of the Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans to advance fact-based policies by following **@PANASanDiego** on Twitter and Facebook!
- Volunteer at PANA or support us financially so we can help even more newcomer families and engage in more community education projects like this one!

## **CREATE YOUR OWN ACTION**

- Knowing what you now know, the possibilities are endless. PANA partners are eager to help empower neighbors to “Be the Change.” Tell us your ideas and we’ll work together to help you realize them!

## *ABOUT THIS PROJECT*



**Newcomer.life**

**Newcomer.Life** is an exploration of the contributions and experiences of people on the move who improve the overall health, economic well-being and quality of life in our communities.

@**NewcomerLife** #NewcomerLife

<http://newcomer.life>

## *ABOUT PANA*



**Partnership for the  
Advancement of  
New Americans**

**Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans** aims to bring local refugees into San Diego's political, cultural and economic mainstream.

@**PANASanDiego** #ShowUp4Refugees

[www://panasd.org](http://panasd.org)