

Yale University President's Public Service Fellowship

Proposal for Fellowship Placement • Summer 2017

- Organization: IRIS- Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services
- Full street address of organization: 235 Nicoll St., second floor, New Haven, CT 06511
- Website: www.irisct.org
- Name and title of the Direct Supervisor: Laurel McCormack, Volunteer Coordinator & Acculturation Programs Coordinator; Tanya Genn, Education Coordinator
- Phone number and e-mail address of Direct Supervisor: 203-562-2095; lmccormack@irisct.org ; education@irisct.org
- Placement dates (*8-11 weeks between Tuesday, May 30 and Friday, August 11, 2017*): Tuesday, May 30-Friday, August 4, 2017 (though having a week or two of vacation during that time and finishing on Friday, August 11 is also fine).
- Are placement dates flexible? If so, please describe: Yes – Fellow may begin or end placement later or earlier according to needs of their schedule.
- Hours of the program (*placements should be equivalent to full-time*): 37.5 hours/week

Placement Description

- Organization description:
- IRIS – Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services helps refugees and other displaced people establish new lives, regain hope, and contribute to the vitality of Connecticut's communities. Refugees, a subset of the larger immigrant population, are men, women, and children who have fled their country of origin due to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Refugees who successfully complete a rigorous screening process – conducted by the U.S. Department of State and Homeland Security – are granted legal “refugee status” and invited to resettle in the U.S. The overall goal of the federal refugee resettlement program – and therefore of IRIS – is

for refugees to learn about U.S. culture, become economically self-sufficient, and integrate into the communities in which they live. The U.S. government currently admits approximately 70,000 refugees annually. About 500 of them come to Connecticut; IRIS welcomes about 200 of these. IRIS resettles refugees from Afghanistan, Congo (DRC), Cuba, Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, and several other countries. The IRIS office, from which our services are offered or coordinated, is located in the East Rock neighborhood of New Haven, near the corner of Willow and Nicoll Streets.

- Please write a 1-2 sentence summary of the work that the Fellow would be conducting:
- When refugees first arrive in America, both adults and children alike desire education and to learn about their new home. At IRIS, children and their parents are served through our Education and Youth Services, while adults age 18 and up are served through our CORE (Cultural Orientation and Resettlement Education) program and the Cultural Companions program. The Yale President's Fellow has the chance to serve in one or both of these areas according to their interests and skills.
- Please write a complete description of the specific project you propose and list the duties/outcomes expected of the Fellow.
- Refugee children – economically disadvantaged racial and ethnic minorities who speak little, if any, English – are at extremely high risk for poor educational outcomes. To succeed in school, they need coordinated, wraparound, intensive services, but they enter an education system that is often poorly equipped to serve them.
- Through a multi-faceted approach of in-school tutoring, parent education workshops, and summer and enrichment programming, IRIS Education and Youth Services works intensively with refugees to improve their academic performance and social adjustment to schools. The main objectives of programming are to improve the level of English language proficiency, boost academic performance, ensure school attendance, improve school adjustment, foster school participation and leadership, and to help parents of refugee students become involved in all aspects of their children's education.
- IRIS Acculturation Programs include CORE class and Cultural Companions. CORE class is a series of workshops delivered regularly to all newcomer adult refugees. The classes are designed to educate refugees during their first month of resettlement to familiarize them with IRIS and New Haven. Topics include laws and rights in America, housing, finance, parenting and discipline styles, immigration legal aid, employment,

healthcare in New Haven, and adult continuing education opportunities. The classes combine instruction with interactive activities and materials in English and other languages. The goal of the CORE program is to expand refugees' connections within, understanding of, and ability to live self-sufficiently and thrive in their new community. Cultural Companions is a programs pairing a refugee teen or adult to a volunteer one-on-one with the purpose of building a long-term friendship based on shared cultural learning, language exchange, and community exploration.

- In Summer 2017, the Fellow may serve in the Education and Youth Services department or in Acculturation Programs, or in both. The Fellow will serve in the IRIS Education and Youth Services activities with a focus on summer enrichment opportunities for youth and families. The Fellow will help organize field trips and acculturation opportunities within the community for children. The Fellow will also help refugee youth take advantage of summer programming in the New Haven area, based on their particular needs and interests. This may include partnering with other youth service agencies to explore and negotiate possibilities for collaboration. Programming will make families aware of the rich array of family-orientated resources in New Haven. Ultimate outcomes for the Fellow's work in this program will be that all new refugee youth ages 5-17 are registered for school within the first 30 days of arrival and that appropriate ages are registered for and begin the summer school program.
- The Fellow will support the CORE program by providing both classroom support and logistical organization. The Fellow will be expected to do the following for the CORE workshops: research and prepare programmatic materials, notify client-participants and advertise, assist in Cultural Orientation interactive activities and drills as directed by the instructor, assist with childcare or in supporting the CORE childcare team as needed, teach one CORE class regularly under supervision of Acculturation Program Coordinator, and support the Coordinator with additional tasks as necessary to design, maintain and improve the Cultural Orientation Program. The Fellow will also assist in recruiting refugee participants for the Cultural Companion and IRIS soccer programs, including giving relevant information and interviewing refugees before helping the Coordinator pair them with a volunteer. Ultimate outcomes for the Fellow's duties will be that all adult clients will attend all sessions of the CORE class within their first month and a half after arrival, and for all refugees who want a Cultural Companion to be successfully matched within one to two months of signing up.
- Specific skills/experience required for the project (*Please list*):
- Excellent organizational skills.

- Excellent intercultural communication skills
 - Willingness to take initiative in meeting and developing rapport with refugees.
 - Ability to work independently (after extensive training) and manage time effectively.
 - Ability to practice creative problem solving.
 - Experience working with people from non-Western cultures
 - Interest in or knowledge of youth education and adult education
 - Proficiency in a language spoken by refugee clients (Arabic, Dari, Farsi, Tigrinya, Kiswahili, etc) is a plus, but not a requirement
 - A willingness to “help where help is needed.”
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- Additional requirements (e.g. a car or weekend working hours):
 - Having a driver’s license and a car – and the willingness to drive clients to educational events when bus transportation isn’t feasible – is greatly preferred, though not an absolute requirement. On street parking and mileage reimbursement are available. If fellow does not own a car, must be willing to learn and navigate the public bus system with refugees.
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- Briefly describe the work that Yale PPSF Fellows have done with your agency in the past and present. If you have not worked with Yale Fellows, please describe any work that Yale students have done with your agency.
 - IRIS has hosted Presidential Public Service Fellows for the past seven summers, in positions similar to the one described here, helping refugee youth and families learn and adapt to US culture.