Regional Refugee Response
For the Ukraine Situation

Guidelines for Responsible Volunteering:

Essential tips for supporting refugees (March 2025)

The Guidelines have been developed in consultation with the partners of the 2025 Regional Refugee Response Plan in Poland

What are the Guidelines?

• A straight-up, down-to-earth guide to help you be a responsible volunteer to refugees in a compassionate and effective way while maintaining consistency across the entire volunteer network.

• It provides you with important steps, relevant contacts, and crucial pointers to help you navigate various situations.

How should you use it?

• As a handy reference guide before and during your volunteer service.

• To stay informed and prepared, allowing you to respond with compassion and confidence in any situation.

Why was it created?

• To ensure that every volunteer, regardless of experience, is equipped and supported when providing aid to refugees.

• To be simple and useful, so you have what you need without feeling overwhelmed by information.

DOs and DON'Ts for Supporting Refugees

1. Introduce Yourself — Clearly state your name, organisation and role to build trust.

2. Be Honest — Provide only verified information; never make false promises.

3. Maintain Confidentiality — Keep all refugee-related information private.

4. Respect Privacy — Avoid pushing refugees for details they don't wish to share.

5. Child Safeguarding — Do not engage directly with children (persons under 18 years old); follow protocols and refer them to specialized personnel. For more information, visit: www.gov.pl/web/sprawiedliwosc/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich-wytyczne.

6. No Fees — Services are free; report any cases of refugees being charged.

7. Zero Tolerance for Sexual Abuse — Sexual exploitation is strictly prohibited; report any incidents. To report sexual exploitation and abuse, email inspector@unhcr.org.

8. Show Empathy — Treat everyone with dignity, patience, and respect.

9. Handle Medical Emergencies — You are obligated to help if doing so does not endanger your life or health. Call the emergency number 112.

10. Cultural Sensitivity and Effective Communication — Respect different backgrounds; avoid assumptions and intrusive questions.

11. Refer Vulnerable Individuals — Direct those in need to specialized services rather than handling cases yourself.

12. Empower Refugees — Encourage self-reliance rather than creating dependency.

13. Use of Pictures and Media Engagement — Do not take photos or share stories without explicit, informed consent.

Tips to help you help others as a volunteer

1. Stay Informed — Information on services available for displaced persons in Poland can be found at: help.unhcr.org/poland.

2. Confidentiality in Data Handling — Follow confidentiality guidelines provided by the organization you work for. Collect only necessary information with consent and store it securely.

3. Mental Health — Seek support if emotionally overwhelmed; access counselling if needed:

- Toll-free hotline of the Support Center for Adults in Mental Crisis: 800 702 222 (24/7)
- https://116sos.pl

4. Practical Preparedness — Carry ID, dress appropriately, and stay aware of logistics and safety measures.

Useful Contact Information

National Toll-Free Emergency Numbers

112 — General emergency number (PL/EN)

999 — Ambulance (PL/EN)

998 — Fire brigade (PL/EN)

997 — Police (PL/EN)

Emergency Support Helplines

- La Strada Foundation's helpline for victims and witnesses of human trafficking

+ 48 22 628 99 99, + 48 605 687 750, + 48 22 628 01 20 (UA/RU/PL/EN)

- Psychological emergency hotline for children and teenagers

+48 800 121 212, 116 111 (UA/PL)

- Psychological emergency hotline for adults

+48 800 702 222 (UA/PL)

Government Websites and Numbers

- General information and information on temporary protection: https://www.gov.pl/web/ua
- Health-related hotline of NFZ (National Health Fund)

+48 800 190 590 (24/7)

Call Center at the Embassy of Ukraine in Poland (general information on consular services, requirements for border crossings, general information on temporary protection and legal stay in Poland)
+48 574 702 685, +48 574 703 414, +48 574 707 627
+48 574 711 813, +48 (22) 621 39 79
(Mon-Fri, 08:30–16:30)

If you wish to report a case of sexual exploitation or abuse, scan the QR code or send an email to inspector@unhcr.org