



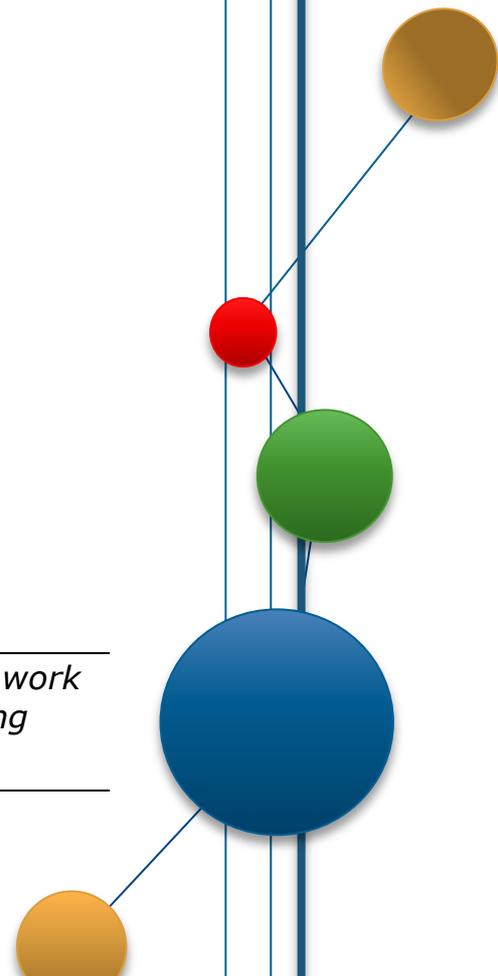
Office of Asian and Pacific Islanders

Iowa Department of Human Rights

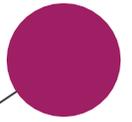
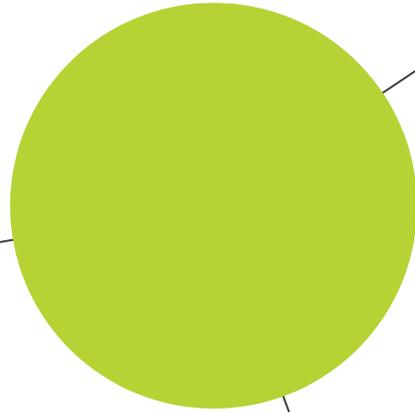
CONNECTING WITH REFUGEES

A GUIDE FOR IOWA EMPLOYERS

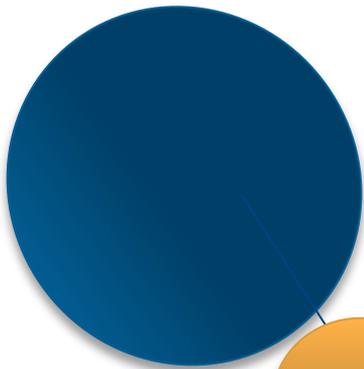
Connecting your business to information and resources for work authorization, implementing best practices, and obtaining assistance







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Who is a refugee?

The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (the Refugee Convention) defines a refugee as a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside of the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country or return there because there is a fear of persecution ...”





More about refugees

Refugees are people from other nations who are permanently admitted to live in the United States. Refugees come to the United States for humanitarian reasons and are required apply to become legal permanent residents after one year as a refugee. All are eligible to become citizens after five years.

Refugees are assisted in becoming self-sufficient. One important step in achieving self-sufficiency is obtaining employment. They arrive in the country with an identification card called an I-94. After arrival, refugees also receive their Social Security card and an Employment Authorization card.

**Most
refugees
speak
several
languages**

**Refugees are nurses,
small business
owners, farmers,
construction
workers, graphic
designers, tailors,
cooks, news
reporters and more**

**“It is challenging to
retain workers, but
refugee employees have
stayed with us for many
years. Our retention
rates have never been
better.”**

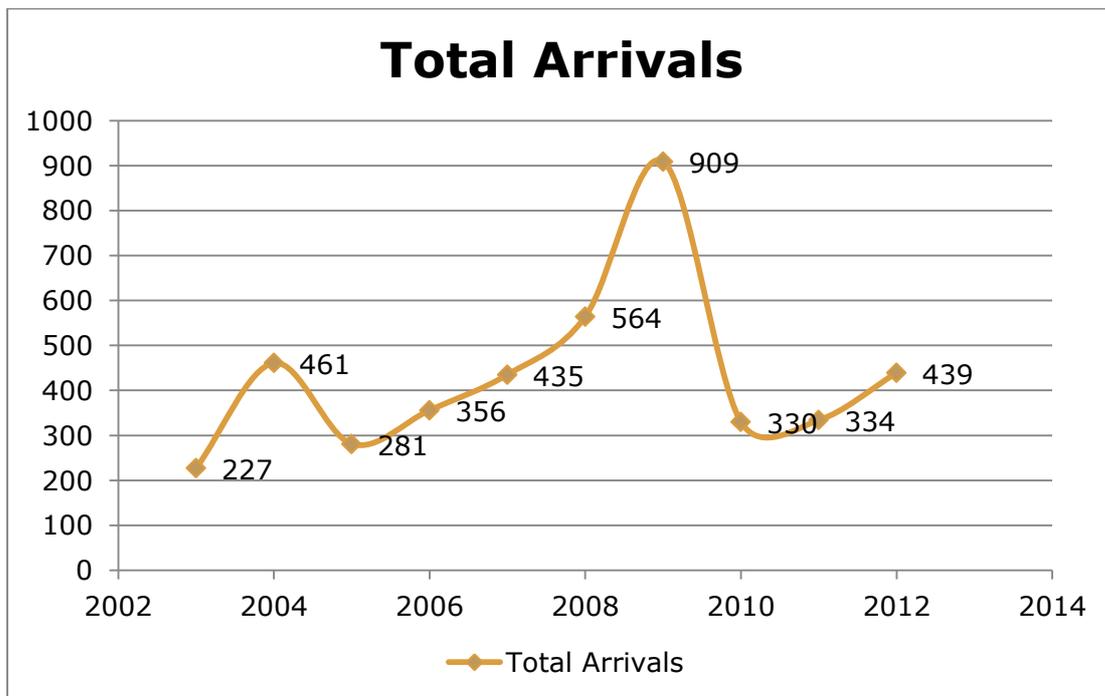
**Manager, *Renaissance
Savery Hotel***

Making the connection

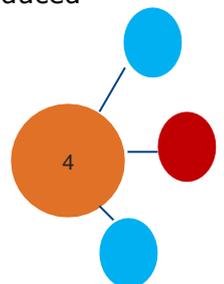
Iowa's history as a welcoming home for refugees has its roots in our response to the refugee crisis that was created by the fall of Saigon in 1975. Then Governor Robert Ray accepted the responsibility for resettling 1,200 Tai Dam refugees, emphasizing that the success of the effort hinged on self-sufficiency and job creation rather than welfare. In November of 1975, the first three plane loads of new Iowans arrived in Des Moines.

Building on the solid results of this initiative, Iowa has remained a leader in resettling refugees from all over the world. In 1987, families from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary resettled in Iowa. In the 1990s, we welcomed an influx of people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo. And in the 2000s many of our newest residents have come from Somalia, Sudan, Liberia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Burma/Myanmar and Bhutan.

According to the Department of State, Population Refugee and Migration (PRM) 941 refugees were resettled in Iowa in FY 2013.



The Iowa Department of Human Rights, Office of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs has produced this guide to provide some useful tips and resources to help you and your employees to understand each other better in turn improving the productivity of your business



What can refugees bring to your workplace?

Different viewpoints may bring unexpected benefits

Diverse employees bring diverse viewpoints and thoughts. Diversity in viewpoints and thoughts bring in unique ideas and encourage innovation which is a key driver for success in many businesses. Refugees bring in international experiences and cultural perspectives. These ideas can change the way you do business for the better. In today's world where companies serve a global market, a diverse workforce is better equipped to create products and services that meet the needs of a diverse market.

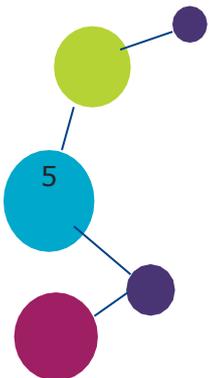
Enthusiastic, motivated and hardworking

Refugees and Immigrants have already shown their ability and willingness to adapt to new circumstances by leaving their comfort zones and moving themselves and their families to a completely new environment.

When immigrants and refugees come to the US, they are highly motivated to work hard and participate fully in American workplaces and our society.

The resilience, enthusiasm and variety of experiences refugees and immigrants have can make them valuable employees.

Different cultures celebrate different holidays therefore during important American holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving you will still have many other employees who are happily willing to work.



Skills

Refugees showcase a variety of employable skills. Refugees are doctors, nurses, small business owners, farmers, construction workers, graphic designers, tailors, cooks, news reporters and more. Most refugees speak several languages. Some refugees have had an opportunity to attend schools and even higher education.

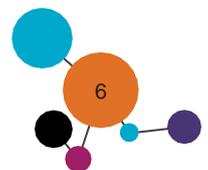


Strong work ethics and high retention rate

The majority of refugees were working before they arrived in the US. Refugees who come to the United States want to regain self-sufficiency and economic stability. Strengthened by their experiences, they make capable, resilient and loyal employees.

Build-in retention support

Local resettlement agencies manage external factors so that employees can focus 100% on their work. Agencies provide holistic services to refugees so that child care, transportation and other barriers to employment are addressed before the job begins.



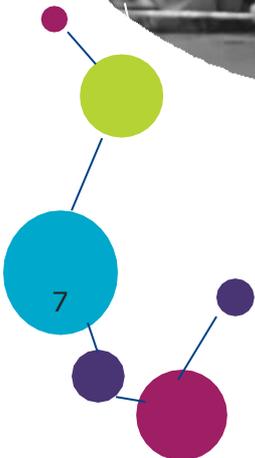
Opportunities for Innovation

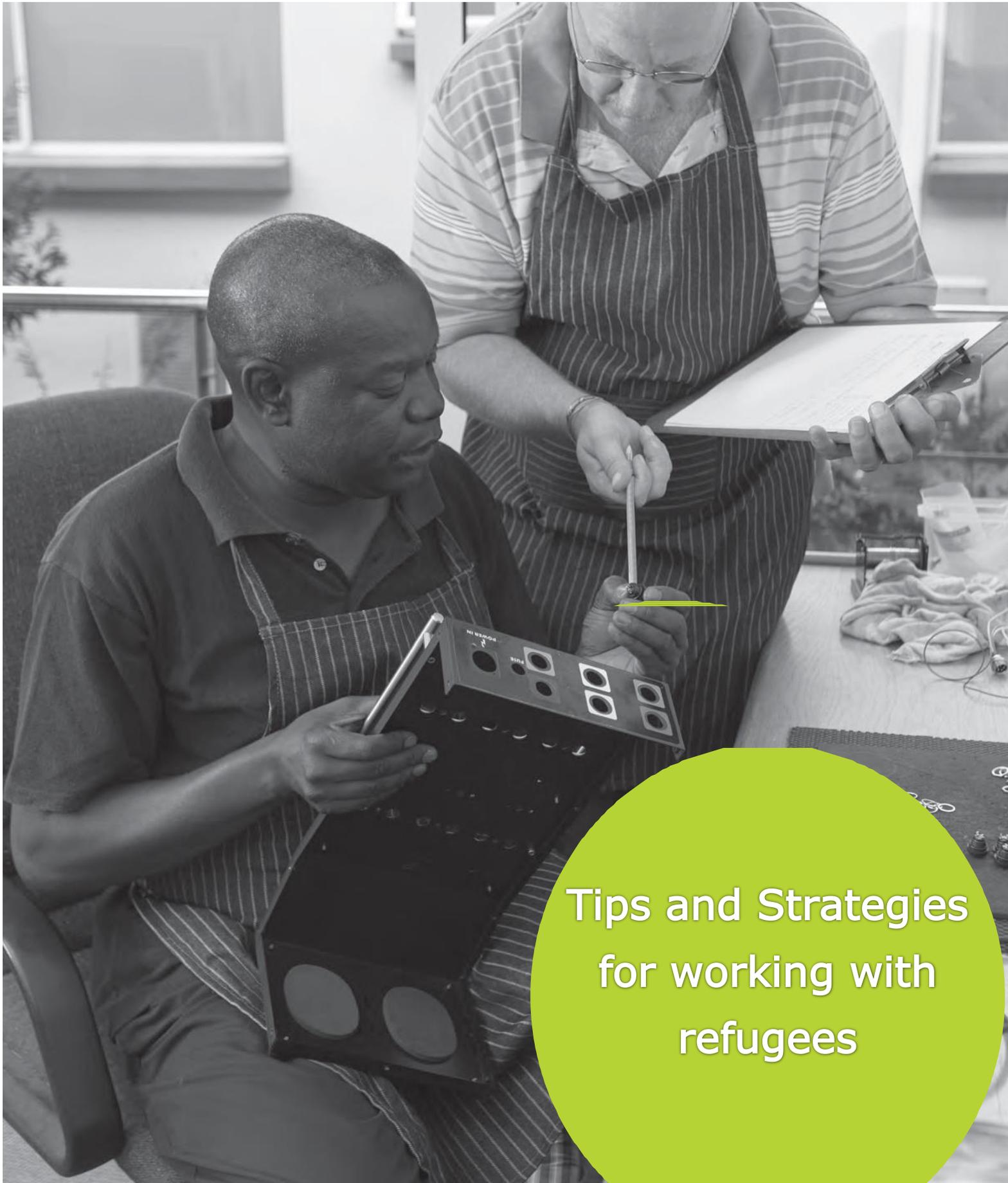
Diversity can bring about new ways of thinking that change your business for the better. Today, most companies serve a global market and have diverse customers. Refugees bring experiences and skills that can help meet the needs of a broadening market.



Positive economic and community impact

Refugees are new Americans and they contribute to the economy by spending locally, living locally and paying taxes. Hiring refugees promotes self-sufficiency by strengthening families and communities.





Tips and Strategies
for working with
refugees

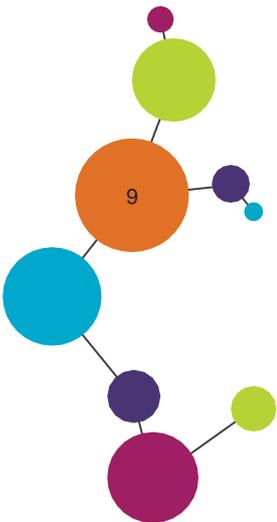


Arrange a mentor or buddy

By assigning a mentor or buddy to the new employee, he/she can practice language skills and gain experience with productivity requirements. This also enhances workplace safety.

Mentors not only provide ongoing support on work related matters, but also become cultural brokers and help both parties (employer and new employee) understand each other's cultures.

Mentors can help the new employee with US slang, practice English and help the new employee to integrate in workplace social activities.

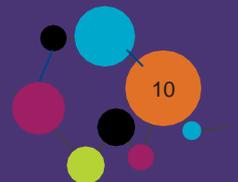


Group Hire

Hiring limited English speaking employees in groups along with one person who has a stronger command in English can serve as a leader/liaison/interpreter for the group. This will help employers to break the language barrier, making interpretation accessible and less expensive.

This will also help employees to deal with their transportation problems, if any.

They can share rides to work.



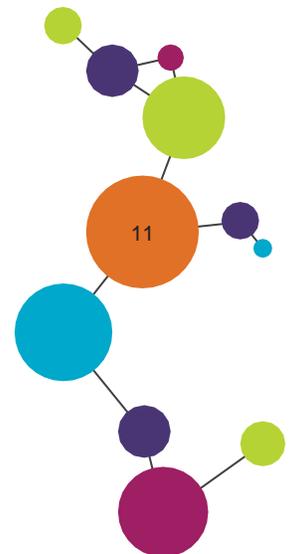
Provide orientations in native languages using interpreters

Give practical demonstrations or show a video

Give clear instructions in writing or use pictures and images.

Even if they may not be able to read on their own they are good at finding someone who knows how to read and explain it to them. If possible translate a few important notices and documents in the key languages of your employees. However, it is strongly recommended to find out if the employees read their own languages. There are several groups who are unable to read their own language. It will be a good idea to first find out their ability to read their own language.

Recording orientations in different languages in a digital format (video) can save time and cost of using an in-person interpreter every single time

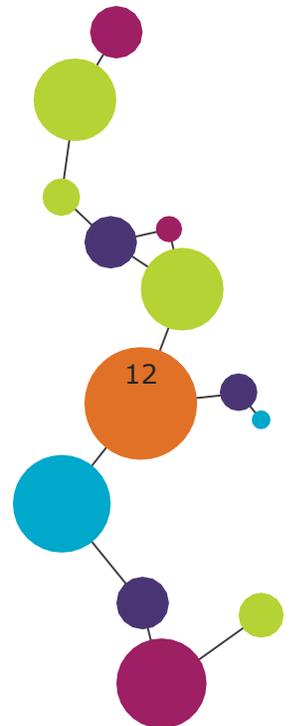


Arrange a culture day, picnic or potluck

Everyone loves sharing about their culture and food. Arrange employee culture day, picnic or potluck on a regular basis and let your employees from different cultures share about them, their food, beliefs, clothing, etc. This helps them with integration in the company and others in the company get to know them better.

Organize Lunch and Learns

This will be a form of continuing education and learning. Most refugees work two or three jobs or very long hours. Therefore attending classes in the community to learn about various things is less practical. Give them this opportunity to learn about different things such as language, culture, jargons, slangs, American holidays, etc. This will increase morale, sense of belonging to the company which in turn will increase productivity and retention.



Consider offering English as a Second Language (ESL) in the workplace.

Offering ESL in the workplace is a win-win situation. Consider partnering with your local community college, church or other volunteers who are able to teach ESL to these employees even if it is a few hours every week.

You can take this to the next level by offering a computer lab with Rosetta Stone software for employees who can learn English in their own time at their own pace. Consider partnering with your local workforce development offices, community colleges, Goodwill Industries or other institutes to get the computers and Rosetta Stone software donated.

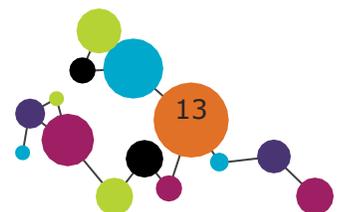
Provide cross cultural and diversity trainings to supervisors and other employees

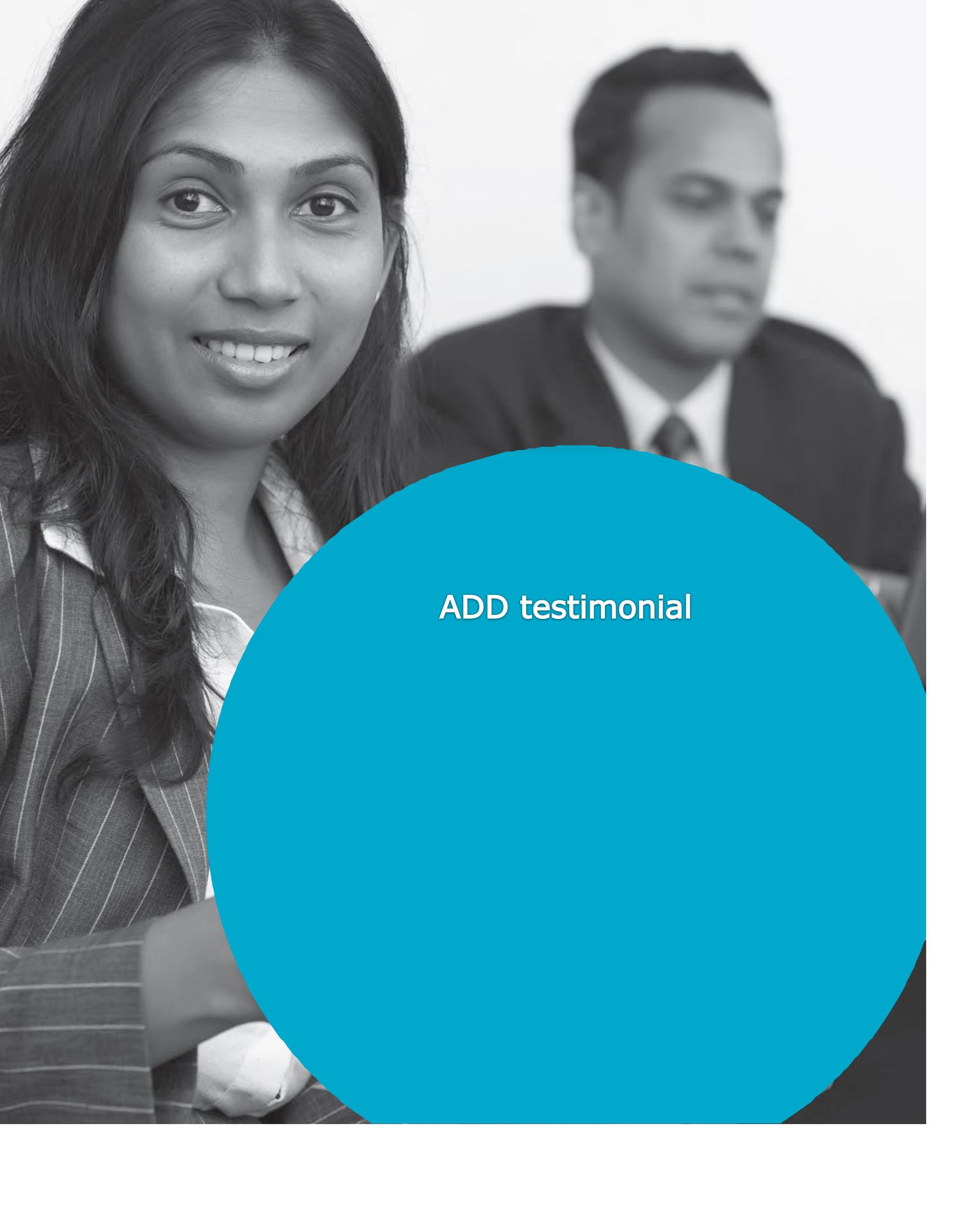
Diversity training is a way of equipping your managers and supervisors and other employees with the skills, knowledge and sensitivity to provide support to a diverse workforce.

A diverse workforce is not only about people from different cultures who speak different languages. Diversity encompasses employees of different genders, ages, races and work styles, as well as people with disabilities. Using the 'diversity' approach can involve:

- * Giving people a chance
- * Creating supportive team environments
- * Ensuring comprehensive induction for new employees
- * Providing appropriate training to all staff and supervisors
- * Seeing advantage in workplace diversity
- * Being flexible in how the workplace operates.

This is likely to reap benefits for you across your entire workforce, regardless of the cultural backgrounds and life experiences of your employees. This will help all other employees and supervisors to learn about the new groups, diverse groups they work with, how to handle conflicts, develop tolerance and make a friendlier better workplace.





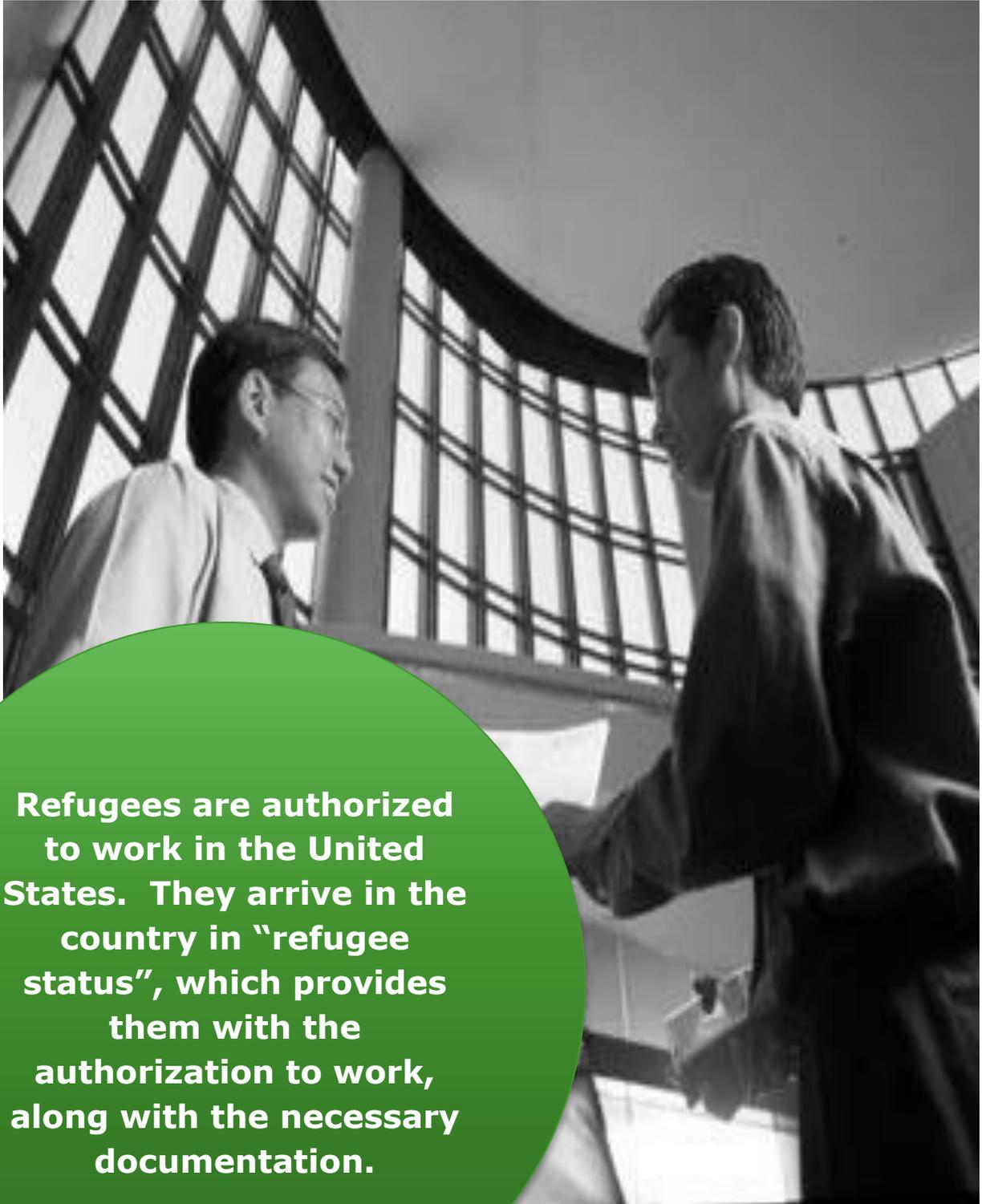
ADD testimonial



**When refugees
come to the US, they are
highly motivated to work hard
and participate fully in American
workplaces and society.**

**Using a few easily implemented
best practices, an employer can
help make this transition
quicker and more effective.**

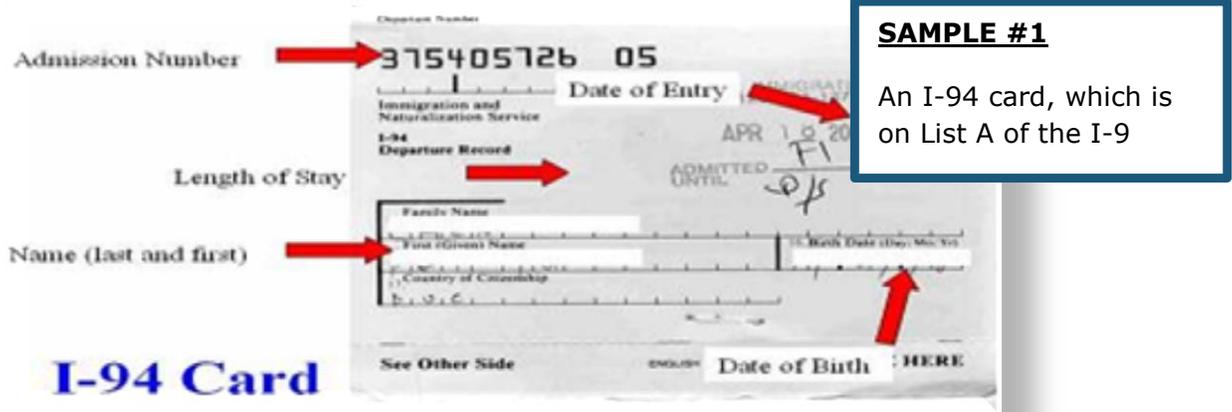
Employment Authorization and Documentation



Refugees are authorized to work in the United States. They arrive in the country in "refugee status", which provides them with the authorization to work, along with the necessary documentation.

All refugees have

- An I-94 Card issued by the Department of Homeland Security

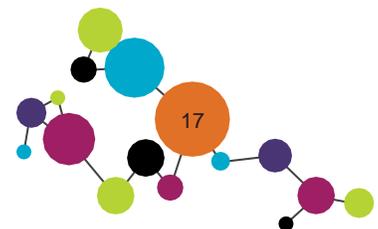


- An Employment Authorization Card



This work authorization does not expire; however, all refugees are required to adjust their status from Refugee to Legal Permanent Resident by applying for a green card. They are eligible to become citizens after five years in the United States.

All refugees upon arrival are assisted to receive their Social Security cards that are available to employers from List C for employment verification



Links and Resources

Resettlement Agencies

Catholic Charities

601 Grand Avenue

Des Moines, Iowa 50309

Phone: 515/244-3761

Web: www.dmdiocese.org/migration-and-refugee-services.cfm

Provides resettlement and employment services to newly arriving refugees.

United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)

601 Forest Avenue

Des Moines, Iowa 50314

Phone: 515/528-7525

Web: www.refugees.org

Provides resettlement and employment services to newly arriving refugees.

State Refugee Office

Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services (BRS)

1914 Carpenter Avenue

Des Moines, IA

Phone: 515-875-5600

Web: <http://dhs.iowa.gov/refugee-services>

Offers Promise Jobs service providers for refugees who are on the TANF program, known in Iowa as the Family Investment Program (FIP). Also provides direct employment services.

Community Organizations

Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI)

3200 University Avenue

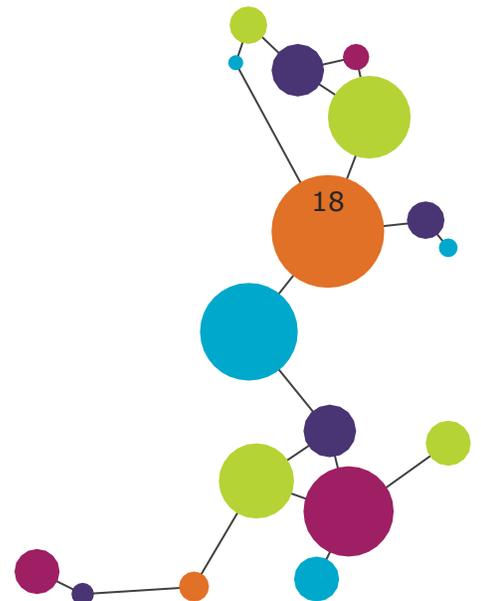
Des Moines, Iowa 50311

Phone: 515/271-7335

Web: www.lsiowa.org/index.php/services/refugee/

Provides a number of programs:

Elderly services – goal-setting, case management, citizenship-focused English as a Second Language, citizenship classes,



resource connections and quality of life programming for refugees who are at least 60 years of age.

Intensive Work Readiness Courses – 5 week courses that focus on helping recently arrived refugee groups understand the basics of finding and retaining jobs in the US. The class covers topics such as job search, interview preparation, employer expectations, earning an income, employment related English vocabulary and career advancement. The class is translated into the native language of the students who are taking the course.

Community Development and Capacity Building – Provides a needs assessment for refugee ethnic communities and community service providers; technical assistance to government and community organizations; and facilitates training, education and provides resource connections.

Global Greens connects refugee gardeners to garden plots. Also coordinates training and education on growing food in Iowa climate and soil, and helps refugee farmers sell their produce at the Farmer's Market on the LSI campus in Des Moines.

Ethnic Minorities from Burma Advocacy and Research Center (EMBARC)

Web: www.embarciowa.org

Helps refugees through advocacy, education and community development.

The Refugee Resource Center

Tifereth Israel Synagogue

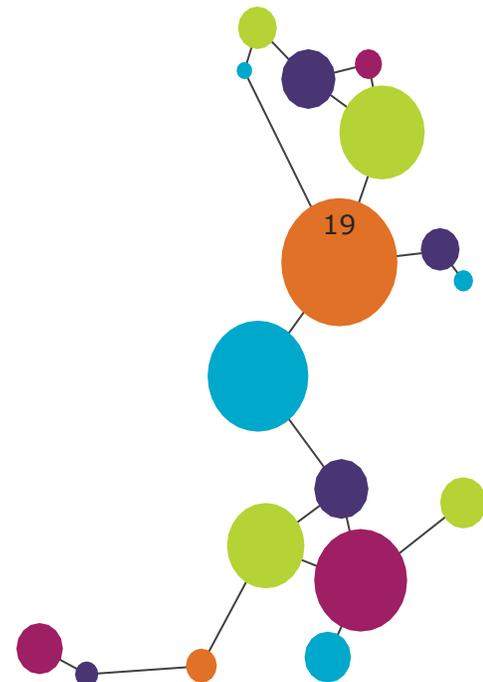
924 Polk Blvd

Des Moines IA

515-650-9272

Rrciowa.org@gmail.com

Open Wednesdays for direct services to refugees families needing assistance.



Translating and interpreting services

The following organizations can provide phone interpretation:

Optimal Phone Interpreters
Web: www.callopi.com

Languageline Solutions
Web: www.languageline.com

The following organizations can provide interpreters:

Community Voices Interpretation
Services & Visiting Nurse Services
1111 9th Street, Suite 320
Des Moines, Iowa 50314
Phone: 515/557-9008
Email:
info@communityvoicesiowa.org

Language Tech, Inc.
PO Box 41190
Des Moines, Iowa 50311
Phone: 515/277-6058
Email: info@langtechinc.com
Web: www.langtechinc.com

Iowa International Center
319 7th Street #200
Des Moines, Iowa 50309
Phone: 515/282-8269
Web: www.iowainternationalcenter.org

International Translation Center
605 SE Northbranch Drive
Waukee, Iowa 50263
Phone: 641/751-1147
Web: www.translatorsiowa.com

