



Afghan Cultural Considerations

CWS staff, volunteers, and community partners are asked to be considerate of Afghan culture and customs as they work to welcome new arrivals to their community. It is important to acknowledge that integration requires neither the newcomer nor the welcoming community to give up their history, culture, or identity but to respect one another.

This resource provides some general information about Afghan culture. It is necessary to acknowledge that any cultural overview must be taken with an understanding of the diversity of customs, beliefs, attitudes, and practices which reside within any nationality group. Do not take cultural backgrounders as truth for the individual you are welcoming, rather, look to the individual or family to provide you with an understanding of their preferences as they transition to your community.

[USA Hello provides a backgrounder designed](#) for educators of Afghan students in the United States.

Take-Aways

- Afghans are diverse in political orientation, religion, ethnicity, social class, and attitude toward modernization.
- There are 19 different ethnic groups in Afghanistan.
- Family is of great importance.

[The Cultural Atlas provides cultural background](#) which highlights core concepts, greetings, dos and don'ts, etiquette, and other topics of importance. Their [Do's and Don'ts section](#) is filled with good take-aways to consider some common considerations when welcoming Afghans. Cultural Atlas is an Australian agency, and you will notice some considerations specific to Australia, however, the information is applicable for our communities within the United States as well.

Take-Aways

- Be sensitive of the experiences and trauma of arriving Afghans. Do not push an individual to share their story or information about their journey to the United States.
- Unless it is invited as okay- handshakes and forms of greeting which touch people of other genders should be avoided. Greetings where opposite genders touch are typically reserved for close family or friends.
- When speaking of the people group use the term 'Afghan.' 'Afghani' refers to the currency and not the Afghan people. Similarly, do not use 'Arab' or 'Middle Eastern' in that Afghanistan is in South Central Asia and none of the local ethnicities are Arab.

[**Learn more about how CWS is partnering with communities across the country to welcome Afghan arrivals!**](#)