What is the Role of a Counselor?
A Refugee College Guidance Counselor (RCGC) supports refugees in their effort to access and succeed in tertiary education opportunities. Counselors collaborate with partners who offer higher education, vocational training, scholarships, and other post-secondary opportunities to refugees in camp and urban settings.

Keep reading for a closer look at the essential support that guidance counselors provide to refugee students.

For more information email info@kepler.org

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Supporting High School Students/Graduates

Many refugee students aren’t well informed about post-secondary opportunities and don’t have anyone to guide them. Counselors need to know how to prepare refugee high school graduates to access tertiary education.

The majority of schools in refugee camps have insufficient resources to support students, like Kakuma refugee camp (Kenya) where they have only one teacher for classes of more than 100 students. Those who finish secondary school might lack the support to access tertiary education.

Counselors help students to picture their future life in higher education by:

- Giving them information about higher education opportunities
- Assisting them through the admissions process – research admission protocols of different higher education institutions
- Supporting them academically with content that will prepare them to be competitive candidates

Supporting Refugee Students in Tertiary Education Programs

Counselors can play a large role in institutions with refugee students by ensuring that these students can access the necessary support when adapting to new systems of learning, or when they encounter challenges that can affect their learning. To do this, counselors connect with UNHCR and other partners to ensure tertiary institutions and students are well supported.

A Refugee College Guidance Counselor can be particularly helpful to institutions during admission/orientation week. The counselor can help determine whether newly admitted refugees need a remediation program due to language barriers or skills gap. They can also work with the academic team to make sure that refugee students can access the school support effectively and feel included in the new environment.

In Summary: The Function of Refugee College Guidance Counselors

1. Increase Access:

   Provide tertiary admission guidance to secondary students, run preparation programs, and advocate directly with universities and scholarship providers

2. Provide Individual Support:

   Support students to identify and achieve educational goals, discuss links between education and employment opportunities, and assist students in setting employment goals

3. Collect and Create Resources:

   Build connections with stakeholders, develop program material to support both students and partners, and disseminate helpful information for students to succeed/access college opportunities

★ Note: In some refugee camps and urban centers you’ll find programs that prepare refugee students for higher education, e.g. the Imente Program in Rwanda and the Women Platform in Cape Town, South Africa. Find out if a program like this exists in your area or start one of your own. See our “Preparation Program” resource for more info.

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