



NewYork-Presbyterian creates opportunities for skilled refugees to fill essential healthcare roles

NewYork-Presbyterian has always hired skills-aligned immigrants and refugees on an ad hoc basis. But in 2021, the hospital system was introduced to nonprofit Upwardly Global for help scaling its efforts to hire refugees with clinical backgrounds to support the COVID-19 vaccination rollout.

Working in registrar positions, the refugees brought in through this initiative proved so knowledgeable and attentive to patient needs that NewYork-Presbyterian decided to create a formal refugee hiring program. However, despite many refugees having obtained medical degrees in their home countries, U.S. regulations require almost all physicians to complete a residency program in the U.S. before they can practice medicine — a process that takes years to complete.

Recognizing how important it is for refugees to find meaningful employment to rebuild their lives, NewYork-Presbyterian set out to meet refugees where they were — placing them in positions throughout the healthcare system where they could apply their skills immediately while deciding if they wanted to go back to medical school, which the organization would help support.



“ Their prior experience allows them to bring empathy and soft skills that are so important in assisting patients and families... The feedback we’ve received from their managers and colleagues has been incredible.

Elyse Zlotnikov, Director of Talent Acquisition,
NewYork-Presbyterian

About NewYork-Presbyterian

INDUSTRY:
Healthcare

No. OF EMPLOYEES:
50,000

LOCATION:
New York, U.S.

The U.S. is expected to face a shortage of up to **3.2 million** healthcare workers by 2026.

Source: [American Hospital Association](#), 2021

Making the switch to a skills-based approach

NewYork-Presbyterian takes a flexible, skills-based approach to help refugees overcome barriers to fulfilling careers in healthcare:

Navigating overqualification concerns

Many refugees are overqualified for the roles they interview for. To ensure this isn't seen as a red flag, NewYork-Presbyterian focuses on educating its hiring managers about why refugees can't always access roles that match their qualification level and how eager they are to apply their skills at the organization. This has resulted in hiring managers being more attuned to barriers that other talent pools might face as well.

Bridging the gap between skills and experience

In addition to permanent placements, NewYork-Presbyterian offers returnships for refugees, which function like mid-career internships. These allow refugees to gain experience working in a U.S. healthcare setting while they identify where they want to apply their skills in the long term. For NewYork-Presbyterian, this is a solution to short-term staffing needs and an opportunity to identify skilled talent for future roles.

Building flexibility into the process

Operating in the highly regulated healthcare industry has led NewYork-Presbyterian to encounter some barriers to hiring refugees that other employers might easily sidestep, but nothing the healthcare system couldn't navigate with a little flexibility. One example is acquiring references, which isn't always easy when a person has had to flee their home. NewYork-Presbyterian learned to find alternative pathways of verification and to build longer pipelines for roles — lessons that made each cohort easier to hire than the last.

The results

Hiring refugees for their skills has helped NewYork-Presbyterian build a world-class team:

Strong retention and engagement: NewYork-Presbyterian has found that hires from refugee backgrounds are not only likely to stay with the organization, but are highly engaged in hospital activities, even outside of their departments.

Elevated patient care: Since many of the refugees hired by NewYork-Presbyterian have both rich medical experience and a wealth of soft skills, they've been able to provide knowledgeable, compassionate care — often in patients' native languages.

Fresh perspectives: By sharing what worked at hospitals in their home countries, refugee hires have helped NewYork-Presbyterian to improve processes. The refugee hiring program also helps to foster a culture of belonging throughout the entire team.

“ Now, I feel like all my skills that I developed in Venezuela are waking up again. In my interview, they asked me why I am applying for this job. I said it's because I feel like being in the surgery room is like being at home. It's the place that I know everything.

[Senior Anesthesia Technician,](#)
NewYork-Presbyterian

Embrace the benefits of skills-based hiring today

Watch our free [LinkedIn Learning path](#) for tips and best practices to help you get started.