



Interfaith Action of Central Texas (iACT) has the mission of cultivating peace and respect through interfaith dialogue service and celebration. The Refugee Program is one of the two service programs at iACT and its main purpose is to teach English language and cultural orientation to newly arrived refugees from all parts of the world. The program is divided into an adult and a youth program. The youth portion includes three divisions: a 7-week summer program, a drop in tutoring program and a mentoring program for refugee teens. Refugee children have typically been in transitive situations for years whether under civil war, prolonged life in harsh refugee camps or living under the radar in countries where they are not welcome. When they come to the Austin they are put in public school classes according to their age no matter how few years of schooling they may have had, so are challenged by the academic and cultural expectation of the schools. Meanwhile, parents are unable to help their children with school work or wit navigating the school culture and the family is living in poverty.

With refugees as with most immigrants, the first generation needs time to adjust to the expectations and the way of life in this country, but the hope is in the children. Second generation immigrants are usually able to raise their parents from poverty and are the ones with hopes of achieving the American Dream. But if refugee children fail in school and become drop outs, it will only perpetuate the cycle of poverty and is a disappointing destruction of their families' hopes in the promise of their new country.