



A Refugee's Journey to the US: Finding Hope in a New Home

Who is a refugee?

A refugee is a person who has fled their country of origin due to persecution or well-founded fear of persecution due to race, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

How do you obtain refugee status?

Refugees are the most carefully checked and vetted people entering the country. The total process for a refugee to come to the United States is rigorous and takes about 18 to 24 months to complete.

To become a refugee, a person must first register with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Their application is received by one of the overseas Resettlement Support Centers (RSCs).

What are the other humanitarian programs and protections?

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) offers various humanitarian programs to help people in urgent situations, including those fleeing disasters, oppression, medical issues, or other urgent circumstances. Additional statuses include:

Asylee	Special Immigrant Visa Holder	Entrant	Certified Victim of Human Trafficking
An asylee is an individual who applies for and receives asylum while in the U.S. or on U.S. territory, based on the same qualifying reasons as a refugee.	Special Immigrant Visa holders are individuals who assisted U.S. military objectives in Iraq and Afghanistan. While they share similarities with refugees, they are a distinct immigration class.	An entrant refers to a Cuban/Haitian individual who was granted parole status or any other special status subsequently established under immigration laws.	A person certified or determined eligible under the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act, having experienced severe forms of trafficking.

Are refugees citizens upon arrival?

Refugees arrive with authorized entrance documents and are immediately available for employment. Refugees are eligible to apply for a Green Card one year after arrival and citizenship after five years.

What is the process like?

Refugees must undergo multiple checks through many agencies like the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate (FDNS), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of Defense (DOD), and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The screening steps include:



Security checks



Interviews



Background screenings



Health screenings

Anyone who is unable to complete or pass all of the security checks, interviews, and health screenings is denied admission to the U.S.

How many refugees are allowed annually?

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) was created by Congress through the Refugee Act of 1980. The act focuses on ensuring refugees are economically stable and self-sufficient in the United States as soon as possible. The executive branch of the federal government reports the number of refugees allowed to Congress each year. You can view the reports at www.state.gov/documents-for-congress.

How many refugees come to Wisconsin?

Currently, Wisconsin has over 75,000 Refugees living in communities across the state.

Who helps refugees settle?

Local resettlement agencies, in partnership with contracted agencies and volunteers, help refugees assimilate to their new community by connecting them to employment, housing, healthcare, education, and other services.

Where are refugees resettled?

Refugees may be placed in a city where they have relatives or friends, or where there is an established community that shares their language or culture. Other considerations include medical services, housing, and other services that may be needed.

In Wisconsin, the primary areas refugees resettle include, but are not limited to, Barron, Dane, Milwaukee, Outagamie, Wausau, and Winnebago counties. The community's ability to support refugees, employment opportunities, housing, and access to services are considered when making determinations.

How are new sites determined?

Per federal requirements, resettlement agencies must consult with community stakeholders when proposing new sites. These stakeholders include state and local government representatives; health, education, and safety officials; and community organizations.

What type reporting is needed after resettlement?

Agencies report on the refugee arrivals and projected arrivals. They must also discuss the community's capacity to support refugees and their strategies for integration, including factors like family ties, job opportunities, local resources, and access to services.

The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call the Bureau of Refugee Programs at (414) 270-4744. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.

