

About Refugees and Asylees

A refugee is a person who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country..."

The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees

Who is a refugee?

The [1951 Convention](#) was approved by the United Nations on July 28, 1951. It is the key legal document in defining who is a refugee, and the kind of legal protection, other assistance, and social rights he or she should receive from states that are parties to the document. Equally, it defines a refugee's obligations to host governments and certain categories of persons, such as war criminals, who do not qualify for refugee status.

Who is an asylee?

Also known as a person seeking "political asylum." This status is granted by the [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services](#) to an alien residing in the United States as a result of a well-founded fear of persecution in the individual's country because of race, religion, ethnic group, or social group. This status is similar to refugee status. The difference is that refugees are granted their status abroad while individuals seeking asylum apply after they enter the United States.

What are some of the reasons that force people to leave their countries?

Refugees may flee their country of origin due to persecution based on their religion, social status, ethnicity, gender, economic status, or political beliefs.

What is the difference between a refugee and an immigrant?

Generally speaking, an immigrant is considered to be a person who chooses to leave his or her country and is usually seeking employment and education opportunities that are either not present or are inadequate within their own country. Refugees flee their country because of the threat of persecution and cannot return safely to their homes in the prevailing circumstances.

What kinds of benefits and services are refugees eligible for?

Refugees are eligible for a variety of [Federal assistance programs](#).

How many refugees enter the United States each year?

In 2015, 69,933 refugees were admitted into the United States (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)).

What is the role of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in refugee health?

The CDC [Division of Global Migration and Quarantine](#) (DGMQ) has statutory responsibility to make and enforce regulations necessary to prevent the introduction, transmission, or spread of communicable diseases from foreign countries into the United States. DGMQ is responsible for oversight of the medical examinations of refugees and immigrants.

What are some of the obstacles refugees face while resettling in the United States?

Refugees who are resettling in the United States may face a variety of obstacles and challenges primarily related to health, education, culture shock and language barrier, loss of livelihood, and economic hardship

What is the role of a resettlement agency?

There are many voluntary agencies that assist refugees in resettling in the United States. The primary role of resettlement agencies is to provide temporary assistance to refugees during their initial state of resettling within a new culture. “Temporary” may mean anywhere from 6 months to several years depending on the needs of the refugee and nature of the resettlement agency. The assistance offered also varies and agencies will assist refugees in finding employment, housing, literacy and education courses, counseling, primary health care services, and public assistance. Resettlement agency staff members and volunteers will also assist refugee families resettle by helping them cope with the cultural shock of language barriers and social differences. For more information, visit the Cultural Orientation Resource Center’s [Role of the Local Resettlement Agency toolkit](#).

Visit a Voluntary Resettlement Agencies (VOLAGs) website:

- **Church World Services**
<http://www.cwsglobal.org>
- **Episcopal Migration Ministries**
<http://www.episcopalmigrationministries.org>
- **Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc.**
<http://www.ecdcus.org>
- **Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society**
<http://www.hias.org>
- **International Rescue Committee**
<http://www.rescue.org>
- **U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants**
<http://www.refugees.org>
- **Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services**
<http://www.lirs.org>

- **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Migration and Refugee Services**

<http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-and-refugee-services/>

- **World Relief**

<http://www.worldrelief.org>