

the Sillerman Center

FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF PHILANTHROPY

U.S. REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION: A Guide to High Impact Investments



The United States settles more refugees than any other country.* Through strong support systems and efficient refugee resettlement programs, refugees are able to quickly integrate and contribute to the U.S. economy and society. For the first 90 days after arrival, refugees receive food, shelter, medical care, job training and placement through a contracted resettlement agency.

In fiscal year 2016, the U.S. will permit 85,000 refugees to enter the country, and this number will increase to 100,000 in fiscal year 2017. These numbers are significant recent increases, though are lower than in prior years. Despite these increases, however, funding for refugee resettlement has not increased at the same rate. The Refugee Resettlement program is a public-private partnership by design in which federal funding only covers a portion of initial resettlement costs.

The Facts and the Barriers to Integration

As defined by the Immigration and Nationality Act, a refugee is a person who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her home country because of a “well founded fear of persecution” due to race, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, religion, or national origin. Settling refugees on a case-by-case basis, officials consider where a family is most likely to thrive. Refugees sign a promissory note to repay the U.S. government for resettlement services and are expected to have a job within six months of arrival. After one year, a refugee may apply for Lawful Permanent Residency, known as a green card, and if granted, he or she may petition for citizenship five years after arrival.

Did you Know?

Refugees are more likely to have a high school degree than other immigrants and just as likely as U.S.-born residents to have graduated from college.

Refugee resettlement is one of the most carefully controlled and vetted processes in the United States. Prior to entry, refugees are intensively screened and interviewed by departments such as Homeland Security and the FBI.

Nearly 60% of refugees who arrived between 2009 and 2010 are now citizens.

Barriers to effective resettlement:

- Lack of transportation
- Language
- Vulnerability due to trauma
- Cultural and social barriers
- Mental health
- Access to medical services
- Employment opportunities
- Stable housing
- Financial literacy

Refugee Resettlement Programs

The strongest refugee resettlement programs provide longer-term support, including comprehensive and strategically-delivered resources. Research indicates that focusing on refugee reception, orientation to a new social reality, and social mobility helps refugees to become self-sufficient quickly. Funding is needed to address both the short-term barriers that refugees face and the longer-term needs they have.

Please visit the [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services](#) website and the [Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration](#) website for more information about refugees. This guide was developed using information from “Ten Facts about U.S. Refugee Resettlement” (MPI), the [Office of Refugee Resettlement, An Overview of U.S. Refugee Law and Policy](#) by the American Immigration Council*, [Where Refugees to the U.S. Come From](#) by Pew Research Center, the Office of Immigration Statistics [Annual Flow Report on Refugees and Asylees](#) (2013), [School and Community-Based Interventions for Refugee and Asylum Seeking Children: A Systematic Review](#) by Rebecca A. Tyrer and Mina Fazel (2014), and “Where is integration in the refugee crisis?” by Jenny Phillimore (2015).

What is a Strong Refugee Resettlement Program?

- PRESENTS a comprehensive approach to resettlement and integration
- COLLABORATES with ethnic community-based organizations, religious organizations, school systems, local government, local business owners, hospitals, healthcare and health insurance providers
- PROVIDES access to job training, health services, and housing services
- GRANTS additional resources and mental health services for refugees with disabilities and refugees who identify as LGBTQ
- BUILDS trust and focuses on integration leading toward social mobility

Successful refugee resettlement and integration must provide short- and long-term opportunities and services.



Comprehensive support is necessary for refugee resettlement and integration so that refugees can thrive in the United States. With funder involvement, strong refugee resettlement and integration programs can provide mutual benefits to not only the refugees but also to the U.S. society and economy.

For more information please visit:

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