

Refugee Resettlement

1. Flight

A refugee is a person who is *outside their country* and cannot return owing to well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular group. (UNHCR)

Refugees frequently flee in order to protect themselves or their loved ones. Often, the choice to leave one's country must be made on short notice, with little time to pack important documents, mementos, or supplies.

2. Refugee Status

Once a refugee has crossed an international border, they must apply for legal refugee status with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Only the UNHCR is capable of granting official refugee status. The UNHCR may also provide protection, travel documents and other forms of assistance to refugees.

3. Referral

Resettlement in a third country is the last option available to refugees. No country is legally mandated to accept refugees. Therefore, the number of countries with active resettlement programs remains small.

Only 1% of the total refugee population is referred for resettlement. Of that number, only half will be resettled. Resettlement is reserved for persons or groups deemed to be of specific humanitarian concern. Similarly, family unification, professional abilities and language skills are important factors in the decision making process.

Based on these criteria, a refugee may be referred for resettlement either by the UNHCR or an embassy. Referral for resettlement does not guarantee approval.

Sources:

- State Department Foreign Affairs Manual: 9 FAM Part IV Appendix O
- OIG Report No. MERO-IQO-08-02, Status of US Refugee Resettlement Processing for Iraqi Nationals, July 2008



The Resettlement Process in Brief:

1. A refugee flees their own country
2. A refugee seeks refugee status
3. UNHCR or US embassy refers a refugee for resettlement
4. Applications and interviews are conducted by the US State Department
5. A refugee is placed with a voluntary agency
6. A refugee is received in the United States by a resettlement agency like RefugeeOne

“Safety, Dignity, Self-Reliance”

4. Application

Each year, the United States sets an admissions ceiling and reviews eligible cases which have been referred to its Immigration and Naturalization Service Office. Officers at regional embassies collect biographical information about the applications, conduct interviews, process background checks, and medical evaluations. Once this information has been collected and the security clearance and medical examination have produced no adverse finding, a refugee may be approved for resettlement.

Once a refugee is approved for resettlement, they receive an orientation to American culture. If a refugee is denied approval for resettlement, they have 30 days to reapply. Reapplications are only accepted if new information is submitted.

5. Placement with a Voluntary Agency

Prior to arrival in the United States, each refugee is matched with one of nine national Voluntary Agencies. These agencies provide reception and placement services to refugees being settled in the United States.

In order to receive refugees, RefugeeOne partners with the national agency, Church World Service.



6. Reception

When a refugee is resettled in the United States, they cannot decide the location. Refugees are assigned to a community based largely on the availability of an agency to receive them.

RefugeeOne typically receives between two weeks and five days' notice before a group or individual arrives. On the day of arrival, the refugee will be met at the airport by RefugeeOne staff and taken to their new home. Every resettlement agency must provide a range of services designed to promote early self-sufficiency. The following is a list of services provided by RefugeeOne:

- Case Management
- Housing Services
- Wellness Services
- Family Strengthening Programs
 - Women
 - Youth
- English Classes
- Employment Programs
- Citizenship Classes
- Immigration Assistance

