



Refugee Services

Refugees come to the United States for protection from persecution or to find peace, freedom and opportunities for themselves and their families. The Refugee Services Program is designed to integrate refugees into America's economic and social landscape while helping them maintain their cultural heritage.

Refugees need help integrating into American culture as soon as possible. To do this, they need help understanding cultural differences, help interpreting and translating their native language into English, and classes to learn English. They also need help with transportation, child care and employment. The goal of the Refugee Services Program is to help refugees find work to support their families and to connect them with local schools and the community.

Who is a refugee?

A refugee is someone outside his or her country of origin who is unable or unwilling to return to that country. Refugees do not want the protection of their original countries because of persecution or fear of persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

Refugees are designated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and apply to resettle in the United States through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Resettlement into the U.S. is managed by the U.S. Department of State. People who receive refugee status are allowed to live in the U.S. legally. Those granted asylum, Iraqi and Afghan "Special Immigrants," certain individuals from Cuba and Haiti, certain Amerasians, and certified victims of human trafficking also are eligible for refugee services.

Where do refugees in Ohio come from, and where do they live now?

In 2017, Ohio welcomed approximately 3,000 refugees who resettled from more than two dozen countries. The majority were from Bhutan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Iraq. The majority of refugees in Ohio live in five counties: Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Montgomery and Summit.

What services are provided?

Refugees may be eligible for the Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medical Assistance programs for the first eight months after they arrive. Depending on who is in the family group, refugees also may be eligible for other federal programs.

Refugees also are eligible for social services programs for up to five years, to help them become self-supporting as quickly as possible. Examples of refugee social services include job and language training, employment counseling, job placement, child care and transportation related to employment, citizenship training, and naturalization services.

How can I apply for the program?

Contact your county department of job and family services to determine whether you, your family or someone you know may be eligible for the Refugee Services Program. After an interview, an application will be completed and filed regarding each household's situation. For more information, call (614) 466-4815 or email refugee@jfs.ohio.gov.