

United States Refugee Resettlement Process

1. Refugees flee their homeland

Because of a well-founded fear of persecution, a refugee will flee his/her home country.



2. UNHCR Registration

A refugee seeks protection from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Protection can come from one of three possible solutions:

- Return to the home country when homeland is deemed safe.
- Settle into the country to which they fled.
- Resettle permanently into a third country (only about 1% of the world's refugees)



3. UNHCR Interview

UNHCR legal staff conduct an initial interview to determine that the refugee has a valid, well-founded fear of persecution. The UNHCR then forwards the refugee's name to the U.S. Embassy. An Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) begins a file on the case and forwards their information (family, medical, and background information) to the U.S. Embassy.



4. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Interview

The refugee is scheduled for an interview with a representative of USCIS. These interviews include additional background checks and ensure that the refugee is telling the truth about their claims of fear of persecution and serves to see if he/she will be granted permission to enter the U.S. Refugee Program.



5. Approval

If a refugee is approved by USCIS, the case is allocated to one of several domestic resettlement agencies, of which Catholic Charities/USCCB is one.



6. Medical Examinations

The refugee is screened for any highly contagious diseases that may prevent them from being resettled into the U.S. They also begin to receive immunizations, if they have not been administered previously, and treatment for illnesses.



7. Cultural Orientation

Refugees attend a basic orientation to U.S. life and culture. The classes range from several hours to several days, depending on the location of the class.



8. Travel to the United States

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) schedules flights for the refugee to travel to the United States. Refugees receive an interest-free loan for the cost of their plane ticket, which they will begin to repay after 6 months in the U.S.



9. United States Reception

The refugee's case is assigned to a local office in the U.S., where help is found for the refugee. Assurance is based on an analysis of available resources in a given community to meet the needs of specific refugees, with preference given to family and friend relationships.



10. Refugee Resettlement (Reception and Placement)

In the United States resettlement agencies, like Catholic Charities, will help the refugee adjust to life in the U.S. and begin to achieve self-sufficiency. Services include: securing housing, arranging medical screenings and immunizations, enrolling in school, obtaining necessary paperwork, teaching about life and culture in the U.S., connecting with employment services, and assistance with applying for appropriate public benefits, just to name a few.