

# Assistance for Immigrants in Oregon Refugee Program



The Refugee Program serves those fleeing persecution from their country of origin who have been legally admitted for resettlement by the US government and have been granted one of the eligible immigration statuses approved by the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement.

## 683 Refugees<sup>(1)</sup>

Men, women and children fleeing war, persecution, or political upheaval who have crossed borders to seek safety in another country.

## Getting Settled in Oregon

When refugees first arrive into the US, they are assisted by a resettlement agency (RA). The RAs help refugees for their first 90 days with services, which include locating permanent housing, applying for public benefits, acquiring furniture, arranging for utilities, and referral and coordination services in the areas of health and employment with local program and service providers.

Refugee resettlement is a collaborative effort involving federal, state, county, and nonprofit entities. There are two overarching support systems: The United States Department of State's Reception and Placement program and the Office of Refugee Resettlement programs.

## Programs and Services

**Refugee Cash Assistance:** Up to eight months of cash assistance for those newly arrived refugees who are not eligible for any other cash assistance program.

**Refugee Medical Assistance:** Up to eight months of medical assistance for those who are not eligible for Medicaid.

**Refugee Employment Services:** Employment assistance to help refugees achieve and maintain self-sufficiency.

**Pre-Employment Training:** Instruction on finding work, job application and interview skills, appropriate on-the-job behavior, and short employment trainings to help refugees understand the dynamics of the American workplace and improve the ability to retain a job.

**Oregon Refugee Children Assistance Services:** Assists school age children and their parents in school enrollment, understanding the school system, school outreach, orientations, and enhanced academic support so children can achieve academic success.

**Refugee Senior Services:** Helps prevent isolation by providing seniors with regular social activities, including cultural meals. There is also case management and citizenship assistance.

**Refugee Youth Mentoring Projects:** Assists youth ages 15-24 in acculturating to their new country. Projects may include college information, mentors, activities and tutoring.

**Extended Case Management:** Provides case management to those refugees who need assistance with acculturation, advocacy, and obtaining government or community services.

## Overview

<b>Who is eligible?</b>	Those who have been granted one of the eligible immigration statuses approved by the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement
<b>Where does the money come from?</b>	The program is funded through federal funds from the Office of Refugee Resettlement; however, Oregon invested \$2 million in General Fund in the 19-21 biennium via HB 2508 (2019).
<b>What is the purpose of the Refugee Program?</b>	To provide financial assistance, medical assistance, employment-related services and acculturation (assimilation) services.
<b>How are benefits delivered?</b>	Benefits are delivered monthly on electronic debit (EBT) cards.
<b>How are the programs and services delivered?</b>	Cash and medical assistance are administered by ODHS Self-Sufficiency Programs. ODHS contracts with RAs and local refugee organizations to provide services to refugee communities.

## Responding to COVID-19

For refugees, COVID-19 is more than a health crisis, it is a socio-economic crisis and a protection crisis. To help, a series of short-term waivers were enacted to help refugees in Oregon:

- Extended the time for some newly arrived refugees, who are either single or are a childless couple, to access cash assistance
- Implemented additional supports through September 2021
- Instituted a telephonic signature through February 2021
- Increased the resource limit to \$10,000 for new applicants
- Housing assistance to refugees that have been negatively impacted by COVID-19

(1): 2019 calendar year.