Minnesota’s refugee resettlement programs

The Resettlement Programs Office of the Minnesota Department of Human Services works with federal, state and local agencies to build the well-being of people with refugee status so they have a strong foundation for their new life and achieve self-sufficiency as quickly as possible.

Welcoming refugees

Refugees are people who have fled their home countries and cannot return because of a well-founded fear of persecution based on their identity or beliefs where their government was unwilling or unable to protect them. The U.S. Department of State oversees the Refugee Admissions Program and welcomes refugees of special humanitarian concern — more than 70% of whom are woman and children — to resettle through various resettlement agencies. Refugee programs in Minnesota place a priority on keeping families together; the majority of people who arrive in the state are being reunited with family.

The federal government annually determines the maximum number of people who may be admitted to the country as refugees from certain regions of the world and the populations that have priority status for resettlement in the United States. All refugees undergo a thorough security vetting process that takes a minimum of 18 to 24 months, with more than 17 background checks from eight federal and intelligence agencies. People with refugee status have legal, permanent status in the United States, authorization to work immediately upon arrival and a pathway to citizenship after five years.

Making Minnesota home

The Minnesota Resettlement Programs Office works with resettlement agencies, counties, schools, community-based organizations and others to support effective resettlement so that people who come with refugee status can join the workforce, contribute to the economy and help grow a stronger Minnesota.

In 2018, Minnesota welcomed 663 primary arrivals from 19 countries, with approximately 40% of those arrivals being children under 18. The largest number of arrivals came from the following countries:

- Burma: 48%
- Democratic Republic of Congo: 11%
- Ethiopia: 11%
- Somalia: 7%
- Ukraine: 7%
Supporting refugees

Six Minnesota agencies provide initial reception and placement services for the first 30 to 90 days in the United States to meet basic needs and connect people to ongoing services. Those agencies include:

- Arrive Ministries
- Catholic Charities, Winona Diocese
- International Institute of Minnesota
- Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota
- Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, St. Cloud
- Minnesota Council of Churches

People with refugee status have experienced extreme loss and had to start their lives and careers over. There is an initial investment in people to help them rebuild their lives. They are eligible for state and federal benefits under the same requirements as U.S. citizens. Resettlement focuses on self-sufficiency through employment to enable people to become contributing citizens living in strong, welcoming communities. Minnesota’s Resettlement Programs Office provides federally funded services for up to five years after refugees’ arrivals through community-based organizations for services that include:

- Employment services
- Social services
- Student success support
- Health screenings
- Medical assistance

People with refugee status contribute to the economy as earners, taxpayers and consumers. Many become successful in their new communities, becoming legislators, school board members, teachers, state workers, nurses, factory workers and business owners.

For accessible formats of this information or assistance with additional equal access to human services, write to dhs.info@state.mn.us, call 651-431-4000, or use your preferred relay service. ADA1 (1-18)

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