

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN Iowa

REFUGEES IN IOWA

The United States has been a leader in welcoming [refugees](#) who seek safety from persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Following World War II, the U.S. began welcoming refugees and over time the system has evolved to have a strong infrastructure centered on [public-private partnerships](#). Communities across the U.S. have recognized the important economic and social benefits of resettling refugees. Iowa residents have played a vital role in the resettlement program and refugees have positively contributed to IA communities. In 2013, organizations and communities across [Iowa](#) welcomed less than 1% of [refugees arriving in the U.S.](#) Of the 630 newcomers to Iowa in 2013, 27 were asylees, 1 was a Cuban/Haitian entrant, 598 were resettled refugees, and 4 were Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) recipients who served alongside U.S. troops.

Where are most refugees in Iowa from?

Bhutan
Burma
Iraq
Sudan

SERVICES AVAILABLE TO REFUGEES IN IOWA

In addition to [programming](#) to support refugees when they first arrive to the United States, the federal government provides monetary aid through grants to the state, Voluntary Agencies, and other refugee aid organizations for community and short-term refugee support. The [Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services](#) serves as the refugee resettlement office for the state. Primary program services include cash and medical assistance, access to English as a second language classes, vocational and employment assistance. [Discretionary grants](#) are also awarded to private agencies for various other self-sufficiency programs.

FEDERAL FY14 ORR FUNDING TO OREGON FOR REFUGEE PROGRAMS (AS OF DECEMBER 2013)

| Total | Cash & Medical Assistance | Matching Grant | Refugee Social Services | State Targeted Assistance | School Impact | Targeted Assistance Discretionary | Elderly Services | Preventative Health | Ethnic Community Self-Help | Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program |
|-------------|---------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|--|
| \$2,916,270 | \$995,000 | \$475,200 | \$573,316 | \$122,502 | \$145,800 | \$150,000 | \$97,200 | \$97,252 | \$175,000 | \$85,000 |

Another service available to refugees in Iowa is the employment [Matching Grant Services](#), administered by Voluntary Agencies in the state. An alternative to public cash assistance, private agencies match federal contributions and provide intensive case management services to help refugees get employed and become self-sufficient within 120 days of arrival.

"We knew the refugees were there and needed jobs, and we had these jobs to fill"

–[Teri Wray](#), community liaison for the Tyson's Waterloo plant.

REFUGEES MAKE IOWA STRONG

Van Uk, 35, is a pre-med student at Marshalltown Community College, a proud mother, and a community activist living in Marshalltown, Iowa. While in school in Burma, she fled persecution and oppression and escaped first to India. "As soon as we were in India we felt relief, we felt freedom." Uk was eventually resettled in the United States in 2000 and lives with a larger community of Burmese refugees in Marshalltown. "My Burmese people, even if they don't speak the best English, they work." Seeing them have the freedom and opportunity to work is Uk's favorite part about living in Marshalltown. This has provided them the opportunity to earn income and contribute to the local economy. Uk believes one of the most difficult things for her and for other Burmese in the community is learning

English. She said that she and many others try very hard to learn the language and find a lot of support in the community. She is excited about her educational opportunities and would like to use her education to give back to this community, and maybe someday to Burma.

LOCAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT OFFICES AND AFFILIATES IN IOWA

- **USCCB, Catholic Charities**, Des Moines
- **USCRI, United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants**, Des Moines

In addition to these agencies, many ethnic community-based organizations (ECBOs) exist throughout the state to help various refugee communities integrate and succeed in their new homes. These organizations are run by refugees to aid in the resettlement of fellow refugees by providing a variety of direct services, increasing civic participation, and preserve the community's cultural identity and history.