

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN Washington

REFUGEES IN WASHINGTON

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. Washington residents have played a vital role in the resettlement program and refugees have positively contributed to Washington communities. In 2013, organizations and communities across [Washington](#) welcomed 3.45% of [refugees arriving in the U.S.](#) Of the 2919 newcomers to Washington in 2013, 380 were asylees, 28 were Cuban/Haitian entrants, 2,414 were resettled refugees, and 97 were Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) recipients who served alongside U.S. troops.

Where are most refugees in Washington from?

Bhutan
Burma
Iraq
Congo
Eritrea

SERVICES AVAILABLE TO REFUGEES IN WASHINGTON

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 [Washington State Department of Social and Health 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 WASHINGTON 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	Preventive Health	Individual Development Accounts	Micro-enterprise Development (MED)	Services for Survivors of Torture
15,724,715	9,345,000	1,485,000	2,092,812	783,837	631,800	200,000	97,200	145,877	152,000	441,189	350,000

Another service available to refugees in Washington 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.

“They get an employment authorization card the moment they step on U.S. soil. They’re good workers. They want the same thing we all want—they want a job to support their families and put their children in school for the first time in their lives. They want to start their lives over again.”

- [Mark Kadel](#), Director of World Relief in Spokane, Washington

REFUGEES MAKE WASHINGTON STRONG

[Nandu is Bhutanese Nepali](#), and had to flee from his home in Bhutan during the cultural purge of all Nepali people in 1991. He lived for 17 years in a crowded Nepali refugee camp with no electricity or clean water, and finally resettled in Seattle in 2008. He and his large family found Seattle overwhelming at first, but have begun to settle in and feel at home. Nandu is taking English classes, and works as a courtesy clerk in a Des Moines Safeway. In Bhutan, he was a public school teacher, and he hopes to find a way to be able to teach again in the United States. His son is the best of his family at communicating in English, and works at a deli in the SeaTac Airport. They have found a Bhutanese community where they have friends who speak Nepali and English who have been eager to help them.

LOCAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT OFFICES AND AFFILIATES IN WASHINGTON

- **HIAS, Jewish Family Service of Greater Seattle**, Kent
- **IRC, International Rescue Committee**, Seattle
- **LIRS, Lutheran Community Services of the Northwest**, Seattle, Vancouver
- **WR, World Relief**, Richland, Kent, Spokane

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.