

# REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN Virginia

## REFUGEES IN VIRGINIA

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. Virginia residents have played a vital role in the resettlement program and refugees have positively contributed to Virginia communities. In 2013, organizations and communities across [Virginia](#) welcomed just under 2% of refugees arriving in the U.S. [Of the 2,943 newcomers to Virginia in 2013](#), were 1,183 asylees, 18 were Cuban/Haitian entrants, 1,472 were resettled refugees, 270 and were Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) recipients who served alongside U.S. troops.

Where are most refugees in Virginia from?

Bhutan  
Burma  
Iraq  
Columbia

## SERVICES AVAILABLE TO REFUGEES IN VIRGINIA

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 [Virginia Department of Social 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 VIRGINIA FOR REFUGEE PROGRAMS (AS OF DECEMBER 2013)

Total	Cash & Medical Assistance	Matching Grant	Refugee Social Services	State Targeted Assistance	School Impact	Preventive Health	Elderly	Cuban/Haitian	Ethnic Community Self-Help (ECSH)	Individual Development Accounts	Micro-enterprise Development (MED)	Survivors of Torture	Home-Based Child Care
11,429,992	6,405,000	1,425,600	1,509,381	139,071	388,800	121,564	97,200	98,376	150,000	245,000	250,000	415,000	185,000

Another service available to refugees in Vermont 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.

*Patty Shifflette, the human resources director for the hotel (Omni Hotel in Charlottesville, VA) says the hotel has been employing refugees for about nine years, and describes them as "fabulous."*

- Story by [Jane Morse](#) in USINFO.

## REFUGEES MAKE VIRGINIA STRONG

When Aruna Kenyi was five, his small village in Sudan was attacked by a militia group. He and his siblings were separated from their parents and forced to flee from camp to camp until, at age 14, he boarded a flight bound for Virginia through a refugee resettlement program in 2005. Since then, he has graduated high school and studied community health education with hopes of giving back to his homeland. With his summer vacation, he started The Sudanese School Lunch Program to provide meals for students at Kansuk Primary School, a volunteer-run school in his hometown. Typically, students will attend school from very early in the morning until late afternoon without anything to eat. [Kenyi](#) hopes to provide nutrition and enhance learning by providing each student with a simple lunch. "I was helped a lot to get to this country, especially from the UN and Catholic Charities and all the case workers...I see people do things and I think I could do similar to contribute to society," [Kenyi says](#).

## LOCAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT OFFICES AND AFFILIATES IN VIRGINIA

- **CWS, Church World Service Immigrant and Refugee Program**, Harrisonburg, Richmond
- **IRC, The International Rescue Committee**, Charlottesville
- **LIRS, Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area**, Falls Church
- **USCCB, Catholic Diocese of Arlington**, Arlington, Fredericksburg
- **USCCB, Commonwealth Catholic Charities**, Richmond, Newport News, Roanoke

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.