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Refugees

i **ALERT:** Afghan Nationals seeking refugee resettlement

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Afghan Nationals seeking refugee resettlement:

In general, you must be given access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. The following priorities are available to Afghan Nationals:

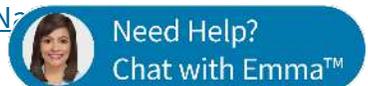
- Priority-1 Individual Cases: Cases are identified and referred to the program by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a U.S. embassy, or a designated non-governmental organization.
- Priority-2 Groups of special humanitarian concern: On Aug. 2, 2021, the Department of State [announced](#) a new Priority 2 Designation for certain Afghan nationals and eligible family members. For further information, please visit the [Refugee Processing Center](#).
- Priority-3 Family Reunification: Spouses, unmarried children under the age of 21, or parents of individuals already admitted to the U.S. as refugees or asylees are in this category.

Under United States law, a refugee is someone who:

- Is located outside of the United States
- Is of special humanitarian concern to the United States
- Demonstrates that they were persecuted or fear persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group
- Is not firmly resettled in another country
- Is admissible to the United States

A refugee does **not** include anyone who ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in the persecution of any person on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

For the legal definition of refugee, see section [101\(a\)\(42\) of the Immigration and Nationality Act](#).



The Refugee Process

You must receive a referral to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) for consideration as a refugee. For more information on the referral criteria, see the [USRAP Consultations and Worldwide Processing Priorities](#) page.

If you receive a referral, you will receive help filling out your application and then be interviewed abroad by a USCIS officer who will determine whether you are eligible for refugee resettlement. For more information about eligibility, see our [Refugee Eligibility Determination](#) page.

Your case may include your spouse, child (unmarried and under 21 years of age), and in some limited circumstances, other family members. You may include a same-sex spouse in your application provided that you and your spouse are legally married. As a general matter, USCIS looks to the law of the place where the marriage took place when determining whether it is valid for immigration law purposes. Same-sex partners who are not married but who are qualified to access the U.S. Refugee Admissions under one of the three designated worldwide processing priorities may have their cases cross-referenced so that they can be interviewed at the same time and, if approved by USCIS, resettled in the same geographic area in the United States.

There is no fee to apply for refugee status. The information you provide will not be shared with your home country.

For more information about USRAP and the referral process, see our [USRAP Consultations and Worldwide Processing Priorities page](#).

Coming to the United States

If you are approved as a refugee, you will receive a medical exam, a cultural orientation, help with your travel plans, and a loan for your travel to the United States. After you arrive, you will be eligible for medical and cash assistance. For more information on benefits available to refugees, please see the [Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement](#) page.

Bringing Your Family to the United States

If you are a refugee in the United States and want your family members who are abroad to join you, you may file [Form I-730, Refugee/Asylee Relative Petition](#), for your spouse and unmarried children under 21. You must file within two years of your arrival to the United States unless there are humanitarian reasons to excuse this deadline. For more information about bringing your family to the United States, see our [Family of Refugees and Asylees](#) page.

You may also be eligible to file an Affidavit of Relationship for your spouse, child (unmarried, under 21), or parents. The Affidavit of Relationship is the form used to reunite refugees and asylees with close

relatives who are determined to be refugees but are outside the United States. The Affidavit of Relationship records information about family relationships and must be completed in order to begin the application process for relatives who may be eligible to enter the United States as refugees through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. For information on the current nationalities eligible to file, see [U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees & Migration](#).

Working in the United States

As a refugee, you may legally work as soon as you arrive in the United States. When you are admitted to the United States, you will receive a Form I-94 containing a refugee admission stamp. We will also create a digital [Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#), for you if you have an approved Form I-590. After you are admitted to the United States, we will adjudicate your Form I-765. We will generally produce your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) within approximately 2 weeks after we approve your application. We will mail your EAD via U.S. Postal Service Priority Mail to your address of record.

The time frame for you to receive your EAD card may vary, depending on delivery times. While you wait for your EAD, you can present your Form I-94, Arrival-Departure Record, to your employer as proof you can legally work in the United States. If you were admitted to the United States as a following-to-join refugee beneficiary of an approved Form I-730, we will process your paper Form I-765 after we receive it.

If you do not receive your EAD card within 90 days of your admission into the United States as a refugee based on approved Form I-590, you may call the [USCIS Contact Center](#). When you call, indicate that you are calling about an auto EAD. You may also contact us by clicking on “Connect to Live Agent” in the Chat with Emma feature on our website. When you contact about your EAD, you must have your A-Number and Form I-765 receipt number available. You can find your Form I-765 receipt number on the Form I-765 receipt notice we mailed to your address of record.

Filing for a Permanent Residency (Green Card)

If you are admitted as a refugee, you must apply for a Green Card one year after coming to the United States. To apply for permanent residency, file [Form I-485, Application to Register Permanent Residence](#) or to [Adjust Status](#). There is no fee for refugees to file the Form I-485. In addition, refugees do not have to pay for fingerprinting/biometrics fees.

For more information on obtaining a Green Card, see our [Green Card for Refugees](#) page.

Traveling Abroad

If you have refugee status and want to travel outside the United States, you will need to obtain a [Refugee Travel Document](#) in order to return to the United States. If you do not obtain a Refugee Travel Document

in advance of departure, you may be unable to re-enter the United States. If you return to the country from which you fled, you will have to explain how you were able to return safely.

Related Links



Refugee News

- [Refugee News Releases](#)
- [Refugee Alerts](#)
- [USCIS Welcomes Refugees and Asylees \(PDF, 1.35 MB\)](#)

More Information

- [USRAP Flowchart \(PDF, 279.73 KB\)](#)
- [USRAP Consultation and Worldwide Processing Priorities](#)
- [Refugee Eligibility Determination](#)
- [Refugee Processing Data](#)
- [Refugee Processing and Security Screening](#)
- [Request for Review Tip Sheet](#)
- [Questions and Answers: Refugees](#)
- [Immigration and Nationality Act](#)
- [USCIS Welcomes Refugees and Asylees \(PDF, 1.35 MB\)](#)

Forms

- [I-730, Refugees/Asylee Relative Petition](#)
- [I-485, Application to Register for Permanent Residence or Adjust Status](#)
- [I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#)

Other USCIS Links

- [How Do I Get a Refugee Travel Document? \(PDF, 622.89 KB\)](#)
- [How Do I Show My Employer That I Am Authorized to Work in the U.S.? \(PDF, 686.31 KB\)](#)
- [Green Card for a Refugee](#)
- [Family of Refugees and Asylees](#)

External Links

- [U.S. Department of State Report to Congress: Proposed Refugee Admissions Fiscal Year 2023](#)
- [U.S. Department of State: Refugee Admissions Statistics](#) 
- [Improved Security Procedures for Refugees Entering the United States, Oct. 24, 2017](#)

- [Fact Sheet on Renting to Refugees and Other Eligible Newcomers \(PDF\)](#)
- [FAQs on Renting to Refugees and Other Eligible Newcomers \(PDF\)](#)

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