

# 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 2015, organizations and communities across [Virginia](#) welcomed [2% of refugees arriving in the U.S.](#) In 2015, [Virginia](#) welcomed 1,312 refugees, 67 unaccompanied refugee minors, and 1,694 unaccompanied children who were released to the care and custody of sponsors.

Where are most refugees in Virginia from?

Iraq  
Congo  
Bhutan  
Iran  
Burma

## 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 FY15 ORR FUNDING TO VIRGINIA FOR REFUGEE PROGRAMS (AS OF DECEMBER 2016)

Total	Cash & Medical Assistance	Refugee Social Services	State Targeted Assistance	School Impact	Targeted Assistance Discretionary	Preventive Health	Elderly	Cuban/Haitian	Ethnic Community Self-Help	Agricultural Partnership Program	Survivors of Torture
\$11,496,411	7,450,000	1,571,400	1,034,828	387,411	360,872	125,000	97,200	97,200	150,000	85,000	250,000

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.

## REFUGEES MAKE VIRGINIA STRONG

*"When I came here, it just blew me away in terms of the level of generosity. It definitely made me a better person in terms of looking at things totally differently from where I came from."*

- [Brigadier General Lapthe Flora](#), former Vietnamese refugee

When Lapthe Flora arrived in the United States as a Vietnamese refugee minor, placed in foster care in Roanoke County, he did not foresee becoming a brigadier general in the United States Army. Yet in 2016 at age 52, that is exactly what he has become and it seems to him "the best way to give back" to the country that welcomed him here to start a new life. Flora lived for three years in the jungles of Vietnam to escape communist forces, then fled to Indonesia where he lived in a refugee camp until he was offered the chance to resettle to the United States. His foster father had been an Army officer in World War II. Thus it was in keeping with family tradition that Flora, after rapidly learning English, completing high school in three years, and graduating from the Virginia Military Institute, would join the U.S. Army Reserve and serve in the Virginia Army National Guard. He was deployed three times and now as Brigadier General will serve as the assistant adjutant general for strategic initiatives at the guard's headquarters in Sandston. Yet he will continue to call Roanoke home. \*source for story, [The Daily Progress](#)

## LOCAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT OFFICES AND AFFILIATES IN VIRGINIA

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