



Refugee Crises in the Middle East: A Shared Responsibility

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International Community and US Government Responses to Refugees from the Middle East

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It is an honor to be here today to speak to you. I know that many of you already play a critical role in welcoming refugees to communities across the United States for which we are deeply appreciative.

Today, I would like to provide you with an overview of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and its services, highlight efforts that ORR is working on to strengthen integration outcomes and promote welcoming communities and discuss the ORR budget. We remain committed to the Administration's efforts to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees in the United States this year.

Service to the most vulnerable is at the heart of the mission of the United States resettlement program. Our success as a nation of immigrants is rooted in the American values of equality and opportunity, this is reflected in our commitment to welcome and integrate newcomers into the fabric of our nation. These efforts benefit not only immigrants and their families, but also strengthen our communities and our nation as a whole.

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) was established by the Refugee Act of 1980 to help refugees integrate into their new communities and become self-sufficient. ORR carries out this mission through an extensive public-private partnership network and funding to state governments and non-profit organizations. Over 3 million refugees from more than 70 countries, the majority of whom are women and children, have been provided safe haven in the United States since the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980. People fleeing persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion come to the United States seeking a new beginning, and freedom from persecution and displacement.

From the date of arrival, ORR provides time-limited cash and medical assistance to newly arrived refugees, as well as case management services, English-Language classes, and job

readiness and employment services – all designed to facilitate refugees’ successful transition and integration into life in the United States.

In addition to refugees, our mission has steadily expanded over the past 35 years to include asylees, foreign-born victims of human trafficking, Cuban and Haitian Entrants, Iraqi and Afghani Special Immigrants, Survivors of Torture, and unaccompanied children.

As reflected in our country’s commitment to welcome and integrate refugees, we believe refugees should be able to participate in all aspects of American life, including involvement with their children’s schools and parent-teacher associations, and are able to read and speak English well enough to shop at a grocery store and complete a job application.

In order to effectively integrate refugees, it is important that refugee organizations partner with other civil society organizations on the local level, such as vocational and literacy agencies, employment agencies, and other mainstream service providers.

Receiving communities play an important role in our efforts to resettle refugees. As we have seen, it is critical to engage receiving communities and effectively communicate both the need and the assets that refugees bring to our communities. With this outreach, we can foster a welcoming environment. Successful resettlement requires two-way interactions between refugees and receiving communities in workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, places of worship, etc.

ORR supports a range of programs that foster employment, economic development, and integration. Some examples are:

- **The Microenterprise Development program** assists refugees to start businesses and the **Individual Development Accounts** are matched saving accounts to help refugees advance financial goals related to economic development.
- **Refugee Family Child Care** – provides business opportunities to refugee women in a market where there is a shortage of childcare providers. Through the grant, mentors will help refugee women establish agreements or contracts with state or county child care offices so they may qualify for state/county childcare reimbursement as childcare service providers, and become successful, independent entrepreneurs.
- **Matching Grant** – is an alternative to public cash assistance providing services to help ORR-eligible populations to become economically self-sufficient within 120 to 180 days of program eligibility. Privately raised funds are matched by government funds.
- The **Ethnic Community Self-Help** program supports ethnic community-based organizations in providing refugee populations with critical services to assist them in becoming integrated members of American society. The program provides assistance to refugee community-based organizations and other groups that address community building, facilitate cultural adjustment and integration, and deliver mutually supportive functions.

In addition to the services I previously highlighted, ORR has a number of technical assistance providers to support states and providers in creating welcoming communities, enhancing mental health services, strengthening relationships with employers, creating pathways to citizenship, and creating opportunities for youth.

One of the TA providers is Welcoming America, which works to create welcoming communities by providing technical assistance to the refugee resettlement network, offering new tools and support to enhance and sustain resettlement work in local communities; build new partnerships; address challenging climates; and ensure the successful integration of the refugees in communities across the United States.

Although we want to help refugees transition to their new lives in the United States, we never want to lose sight of their unique gifts and needs. Their identities and experiences make our communities better. Through our work we know there are a number of indicators that demonstrate integration:

- Health and Well Being
- Language Acquisition
- Economic Opportunity
- Civic Values
- Education
- Housing
- Social Connections

The FY 2016 enacted budget level for all ORR programs (including the unaccompanied children program, which ORR also administers) is \$1.6B, this is an increase from our FY 2015 budget level. ORR will serve approximately 85,000 refugees in FY 2016, in addition to the other eligible populations for a total projected 192,000 individuals. ORR provides funding to states on a quarterly basis and to date has provided FY16 funding for the first two quarters.

The President's FY 2017 budget request includes \$2.2 billion for ORR programs, and represents the cost of maintaining services for additional refugees and other entrants and unaccompanied children and for expanding assistance to domestic victims of trafficking.

The President' Budget request would support a total of 213,000 humanitarian arrivals in FY 2017, including 100,000 refugees, consistent with the Administration's commitment to admit at least this number of refugees in FY 2017.

ORR has a number of discretionary grants to support states and other service providers meet the needs of incoming refugees. This year our funding opportunities include:

- Microenterprise Development Projects
- Individual Development Accounts
- Ethnic Community Organizations
- Preferred Community Programs

- Targeted Assistance

ORR also supports mentoring and after school tutoring services to youth through our School Impact Program, currently this is a discretionary grant to states.

Thank you for this opportunity and for what you do every day across the county. Refugee resettlement is a reflection of a core value of who we are as a country – providing protection to individuals fleeing persecution and we appreciate your continued partnership in this vital mission.