

# REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN Tennessee

## REFUGEES IN TENNESSEE

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. Tennessee residents have played a vital role in the resettlement program and refugees have positively contributed to Tennessee communities. In 2016, organizations and communities across Tennessee welcomed [2% of refugees arriving in the U.S.](#) In 2016, Tennessee welcomed 1,959 refugees and 1,354 unaccompanied children who were released to the care and custody of sponsors.

Where are most refugees in Tennessee from?

Dem. Rep. of the  
Congo  
Iraq  
Syria  
Somalia  
Burma

## SERVICES AVAILABLE TO REFUGEES IN TENNESSEE

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 [Catholic Charities of Tennessee, Inc.](#) serves as the refugee resettlement office for the state. Primary program services include cash and medical assistance, access to English language classes, vocational and employment assistance. [Discretionary grants](#) are also awarded to private agencies for various other self-sufficiency programs.

FEDERAL FY16 ORR FUNDING TO TENNESSEE FOR REFUGEE PROGRAMS									
Total	Cash & Medical Assistance	Wilson Fish Obligation	State Targeted Assistance	Social Services	Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program	School Impact	Elderly Services	Refugee Health Promotion	Ethnic Community Self-Help Program
\$12,740,023	\$1,801,536	\$8,299,523	\$511,109	\$1,438,519	\$85,000	\$387,156	\$97,200	\$120,000	\$150,000

Another service available to refugees in Tennessee 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 TENNESSEE STRONG

"Yassin Terou was born in Syria. He left his country in 2011 because of escalating political conflict. When he arrived in Knoxville he applied for asylum. To become self-sufficient while waiting on government paperwork to be finalized, Terou began selling falafel sandwiches outside Annoor Mosque. It was that drive for success in a country of strangers that earned him friendships and eventually a business partner in his now-successful restaurant venture."<sup>1</sup> In 2018, Yassin's Falafel House was named the "Nicest Place in America" by Reader's Digest and he also received the 2018 Peace Award from the Rotary Club of Knoxville. He also provided free meals to those who were displaced by Hurricane Florence, and most recently, in December, Terou held a fundraiser in one of his restaurants in honor of a Knoxville police officer who suffered an attack while on duty.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.knoxnews.com/story/opinion/2018/12/30/yassin-terou-falafel-house-owner-news-sentinel-person-year/2373729002/>

<sup>2</sup><https://abcnews.go.com/beta-story-container/living/story/inside-nicest-place-america-refugee-owned-falafel-shop-58414615>

"Yassin' falafel house is about family, about love, about building community."<sup>2</sup>

- [Yassin Terou](#)

## LOCAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT OFFICES AND AFFILIATES IN TENNESSEE

- **EMM, Bridge Refugee Services, Inc.**, Knoxville, Chattanooga
- **ECDC, Nashville International Center for Empowerment**, Nashville
- **USCCB, Refugee And Immigration Service**, Nashville
- **USCCB, Remote Placement Tennessee**
- **WR, World Relief**, Memphis

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.