

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN Alaska

REFUGEE POPULATION OF ALASKA

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. Alaska residents have played a vital role in the resettlement program and refugees have positively contributed to communities in Alaska. In 2016, organizations and communities across Alaska welcomed less than 1% of [refugees arriving in the U.S.](#) In 2016, Alaska welcomed 128 refugees and 5 unaccompanied children who were released to the care and custody of sponsors.

Where are most refugees in Alaska from?

Somalia
Dem. Republic of the Congo
Eritrea
Burma

SERVICES AVAILABLE TO REFUGEES IN ALASKA

In addition to [programming](#) to support refugees when they first arrive to the U.S., 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. [Catholic Social Services' Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services](#) (CSS, RAIS) serves as the refugee resettlement office for the state of Alaska. Primary program services include cash and medical assistance, access to English language classes, and vocational and employment assistance. Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and case management are provided by funding from the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).

| FEDERAL FY16 ORR FUNDING TO ALASKA FOR REFUGEE PROGRAMS | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Total | Cash & Medical Assistance | Wilson Fish Obligation | Refugee Social Services | School Impact | Preventive Health |
| \$1,189,650 | \$91,386 | \$718,916 | \$128,612 | \$175,736 | \$75,000 |

REFUGEES MAKE ALASKA STRONG

"Employment Services Coordinator Said Elmi says employers are often impressed with refugee employees' motivation and loyalty. He's helped to place other refugees into jobs at hotels and schools in town."

- Story on Catholic Social Services in Anchorage, [KTVA Alaska](#)

At-Tahir Karief, a farmer from Sudan, arrived in Anchorage in February 2008 as the first refugee from Darfur to find a home in Alaska. Having fled the conflict in Sudan in 2004, Karief began his journey in a refugee camp in Chad. After leaving Chad, he and his family traveled by bus across Africa through Cameroon, Nigeria and Benin, and then lived in a refugee camp in Ghana for three years. In Ghana he felt safe, but living conditions in the camp quickly deteriorated. After several months, he found there was little food, water and medication for his family. UNHCR referred Karief to the U.S. resettlement program. After waiting for several months, Karief was told he would be resettled to the U.S. with his family. He now works for a cargo company loading and unloading airplanes at the Anchorage airport. A native Arabic speaker, he began learning English in refugee camps, but takes regular classes to improve his language skills. "I love it so much here. I can feel peace. I love freedom. Nobody bothers me. We are very satisfied and happy with what we have," says Karief.

LOCAL AFFILIATES AND OFFICES OF VOLUNTARY AGENCIES IN ALASKA

- USCCB, Catholic Social Services, Anchorage

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.