

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN Iowa

REFUGEES IN IOWA

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. Iowa residents have played a vital role in the resettlement program and refugees have positively contributed to Iowa communities. In 2016, organizations and communities across [Iowa](#) welcomed over [1% of refugees arriving in the U.S.](#) In 2016, Iowa welcomed 995 refugees and 352 unaccompanied children who were released to the care and custody of sponsors.

Where are most refugees in Iowa from?

Burma
D.R. of Congo
Bhutan
Syria
Somalia

SERVICES AVAILABLE TO REFUGEES IN IOWA

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 [Iowa Bureau of Refugee 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 FY16 ORR FUNDING TO IOWA FOR REFUGEE PROGRAMS

Total	Cash & Medical Assistance	Refugee Social Services	State Targeted Assistance	School Impact	Targeted Assistance Discretionary	Elderly Services	Ethnic Community Self-Help	Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program
\$2,566,962	\$587,711	\$738,960	\$579,555	\$175,736	\$150,000	\$75,000	\$175,000	\$85,000

Another service available to refugees in Iowa 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.

"We knew the refugees were there and needed jobs, and we had these jobs to fill."

—[Teri Wray](#), community liaison for the Tyson's Waterloo plant.

REFUGEES MAKE IOWA STRONG

Van Uk, 35, is a pre-med student at Marshalltown Community College, a proud mother, and a community activist living in Marshalltown, Iowa. While in school in Burma, she fled persecution and oppression and escaped to India. "As soon as we were in India we felt relief, we felt freedom." In 2000, Uk was resettled in the United States and lives with a larger community of Burmese refugees in Marshalltown. "My Burmese people, even if they don't speak the best English, they work." Seeing them have the freedom and opportunity to work is Uk's favorite part about living in Marshalltown. This has provided them the opportunity to earn income and contribute to the local economy. Uk believes one of the most difficult things for her and for other Burmese in the community is learning English. She said that she and many others try

very hard to learn the language and find a lot of support in the community. She is excited about her educational opportunities and would like to use her education to give back to this community, and maybe someday to Burma.

LOCAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT OFFICES AND AFFILIATES IN IOWA

- USCCB, Catholic Charities, Des Moines
- USCCB, Catholic Charities, Cedar Rapids
- USCCB, Remote Placement Iowa
- USCRI, United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Des Moines
- USCRI, United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Cedar Rapids

In addition to these agencies, many ethnic community-based organizations (ECBOs) exist throughout the state to help various refugee communities integrate and succeed. These organizations are run by refugees to aid in resettlement by providing a variety of direct services, increasing civic participation, and preserve the community's cultural identity and history.