

# REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN Oklahoma

## REFUGEES IN OKLAHOMA

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. Oklahoma residents have played a vital role in the resettlement program and refugees have positively contributed to Oklahoma communities. In 2016, organizations and communities across Oklahoma welcomed [1% of refugees arriving in the U.S.](#) In 2016, Oklahoma welcomed 534 refugees and 301 unaccompanied children who were released to the care and custody of sponsors.

Where are most  
refugees in  
Oklahoma from?

Burma  
Iraq  
Eritrea  
Syria

## SERVICES AVAILABLE TO REFUGEES IN OKLAHOMA

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 [Department of Human Services](#) 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 OKLAHOMA FOR REFUGEE PROGRAMS		
Total	Cash & Medical Assistance	Refugee Social Services
\$1,907,126	\$1,441,744	\$465,382

Another service available to refugees in Oklahoma 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.

*After having been through all that, the father of the family came home and helped other refugees to get their beds and salvage furniture.*

*[Lewis](#) summed it up: "Generosity goes in one and goes out to the other."*

—Catholic Charities

## REFUGEES MAKE OKLAHOMA STRONG

Tluang Bawi grew up as a Christian in Myanmar where his family could neither celebrate holidays nor worship without the fear of being killed. Bawi knew that if he stayed in Myanmar, he and his family would likely be killed so they decided to flee, finding themselves on a year-long journey to safety. First, they tried to go to India but were denied entry. They then trekked back across Myanmar to Thailand, followed by Malaysia, where they stayed for nearly five years. Almost six years ago, his family was among the first from Myanmar to be resettled in Oklahoma City. Bawi is now a homeowner and works as an electrician. He helps Catholic Charities of Oklahoma City translate and welcome refugees from Myanmar to his new home.

## LOCAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT OFFICES AND AFFILIATES IN OKLAHOMA

- USCCB, Catholic Charities, Oklahoma City
- USCCB, Catholic Charities, Tulsa

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.