

# REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN Rhode Island

## REFUGEES IN RHODE ISLAND

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. Rhode Island residents have played a vital role in the resettlement program and refugees have positively contributed to Rhode Island communities. In 2016, organizations and communities across [Rhode Island](#) welcomed [less than 1% of refugees arriving in the U.S.](#) In 2016, Rhode Island welcomed 337 refugees and 269 unaccompanied children who were released to the care and custody of sponsors.

Where are most  
refugees in  
Rhode Island  
from?  
  
D.R. of Congo  
Syria  
Somalia

## SERVICES AVAILABLE TO REFUGEES IN RHODE ISLAND

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. Refugee services in Rhode Island are administered by the state. The Rhode Island Department of Health initiated a [Refugee Health Program](#) in November of 2003 and 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 RHODE ISLAND FOR REFUGEE PROGRAMS						
Total	Cash & Medical Assistance	Refugee Social Services	Targeted Assistance Discretionary	School Impact	Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program	Refugee Health Promotion
\$888,443	\$241,661	\$136,046	\$175,000	\$175,736	\$85,000	\$75,000

Another service available to refugees in Rhode Island 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.

"I don't like to sit down, I like to be doing," says [Marie, a former refugee from Congo](#). She volunteers coordinating a community garden and at a Rhode Island hospital. She recently enrolled in community college with help of Dorcas International Institute.

## REFUGEES MAKE RHODE ISLAND STRONG

On July 22, 2010 Marie and her family stepped off an airplane in Warwick, RI, after a long journey from a rural village in The Republic of Congo. With her 3-year old twins and husband, she began to build a new life. Her husband, proficient in several languages including English, quickly found employment at a local linen supply company. Marie enrolled in English and Life Skills classes at IIRI. After her first semester, Marie signed up for more classes. She looked for work, went to class, and took care of her family – just like so many Rhode Island parents juggling the demands of life today. But Marie's story is also one of a refugee, forced to leave a homeland that was dangerous and unstable. Unable to carve out a secure life in a neighboring country, she and her husband took that ultimate step to start again in an unknown place to give their children a chance for a better life. Marie's eyes well with tears when describing why she is

so lucky – not just to be here, to have opportunity, to see her twins going to kindergarten – but because her mother gave an even bigger gift – an education and the permission to dream of a better life. Unlike most girls in rural Congo, Marie had a mother who insisted that all her sons AND daughters go to school. Marie became a lifelong learner, embracing as much education as she could at IIRI through job skills classes, Pre-Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training, and English as a Second Language classes.

## LOCAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT OFFICES AND AFFILIATES IN RHODE ISLAND

- USCCB, Immigration & Refugee Services, Providence
- USCRI, Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island, Providence

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.