

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN West Virginia

REFUGEES IN WEST VIRGINIA

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. West Virginia residents have played a vital role in the resettlement program and refugees have positively contributed to WV communities. In 2016, organizations and communities across West Virginia welcomed less than [1% of refugees arriving in the U.S.](#) In 2016, West Virginia welcomed 25 refugees and 26 unaccompanied children who were released to the care and custody of sponsors.

Where are most
refugees in West
Virginia from?

Burma
Eritrea
Syria

SERVICES AVAILABLE TO REFUGEES IN WEST VIRGINIA

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 Health and 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.

FEDERAL FY16 ORR FUNDING TO WEST VIRGINIA FOR REFUGEE PROGRAMS		
Total	Cash & Medical Assistance	Refugee Social Services
\$109,238	\$34,238	\$75,000

Another service available to refugees in West Virginia 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.

"My boat was small. They put more than 500 people on the boat. When we got to Malaysia, 119 people survived. ..sometimes I dream about all that I went through. It never really leaves you. But I'm doing well now in the United States. I became a citizen 12 years ago."

--Ha To Ta

REFUGEES MAKE WEST VIRGINIA STRONG

[Ha To Ta grew up poor on a farm in Vietnam.](#) He has worked hard all his life and has carried that work ethic to the United States where he was resettled as a refugee. Ha trained as a hairdresser in Saigon and eventually opened up his own beauty shop. When his country was taken over by communist military groups, he lost his beauty shop. In 1978, he finally escaped as one of the "boat people" taking the dangerous journey by sea to Malaysia. He waited two years in a refugee camp in Malaysia and eventually was sponsored by the Baptist Temple in Charleston, West Virginia. When he first arrived he washed dishes in a Chinese restaurant and lived in a one-room apartment with three other refugees. He saved up enough money and opened up Reema's Beauty Shop in Kanawha City, WV. He renovated the shop himself. Ha eventually married and has two boys. Not only is he a proud business owner, but a proud father and husband.

LOCAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT OFFICES AND AFFILIATES IN WEST VIRGINIA

- USCCB, Remote Placement West Virginia

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.