

Illinois Refugee Resettlement Program

STATE FISCAL YEAR 2026
ANNUAL REPORT

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

A refugee is a person who fled from their country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. The Refugee Act of 1980 created the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program to provide for the effective resettlement of refugees and to assist them in achieving economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible after arrival in the United States. An asylee is a person who has fled their country for the same reasons, but an asylee's case is filed in the United States rather than outside of the United States, as in the case of a refugee.

The federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) funds states to provide services to refugees, asylees, and similarly situated immigrants. Individuals with a variety of immigration statuses including refugees, asylees, Cuban and Haitian Entrants, Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders, non-citizen victims of human trafficking, certain humanitarian parolees, and certain Amerasians.

Refugee resettlement during federal FY 2026 began slowly, following an eight-month period (Feb-Sept 2025) during which only 43 refugees were admitted to the United States. The President initially set the refugee admissions capacity for federal FY26 at 7,500, designated primarily for Afrikaners from South Africa. Refugee admissions capacity was later increased to 17,500, with the additional slots designated solely for Afrikaners from South Africa. Despite experiencing an 87% year over year reduction in refugee arrivals to Illinois during FFY26, Illinois served over 9,000 clients across the state, providing vital services to refugees and immigrants who have resettled in Illinois over the past five years.

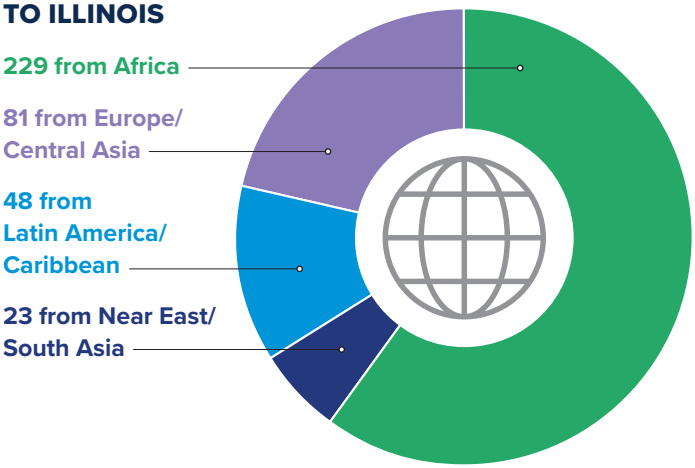
ILLINOIS PROGRAM

The State of Illinois has operated a successful refugee resettlement program since 1975. More than 135,000 refugees from 86 countries have resettled in Illinois. With funding provided by the ORR, the Illinois Refugee Resettlement Program is administered by the Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Services at the Illinois Department of Human Services. The goal of these programs is to help refugees achieve stability and move toward healthy integration in their local communities. The program has three main components:

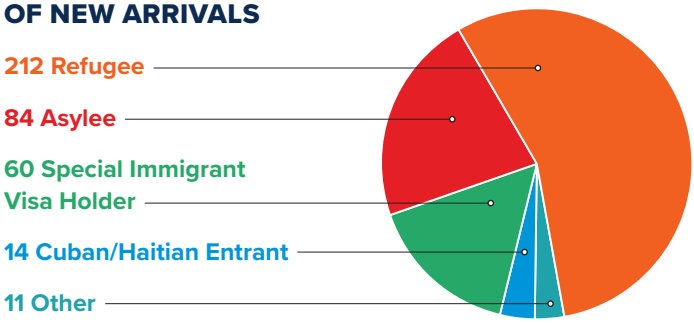
- **Short-term cash assistance** administered by the Illinois Department of Human Services. Under this program, refugees not otherwise eligible for federal cash assistance can receive assistance for up to eight months. This cash assistance helps meet basic needs while refugees work with service providers to secure their first job in the United States.
- **Refugee health screening program** administered by the Illinois Department of Public Health in partnership with six local health care providers. The program aims to reduce the spread of infectious disease, treat any current ailments, and promote preventive health practices. Refugees may also be assisted in establishing a relationship with a primary care provider.
- **Refugee Support Services**, operated in partnership with Illinois organizations. Services include case management; employment; English language learning; behavioral health services; children and youth services; medical health education and navigation support, and support for senior adults. Refugees and other eligible immigrants benefit from these services for up to five years from their date of arrival/eligibility. The Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago is contracted to manage the day-to-day operation of this program.

New Arrivals in Illinois *State Fiscal Year 2026: July 1, 2025–June 30, 2026*

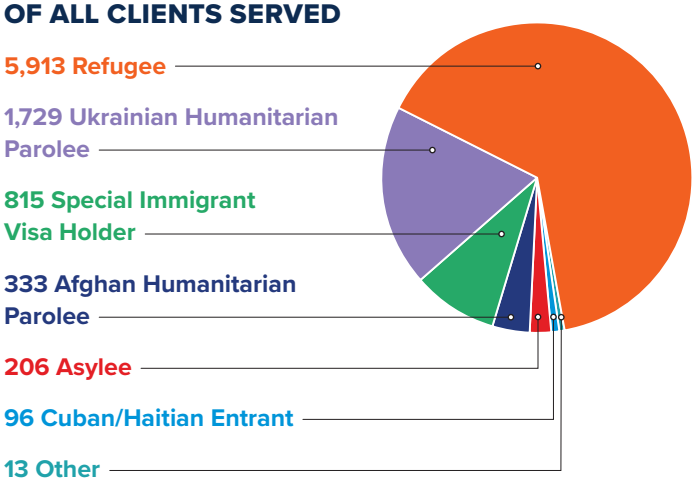
ORIGIN OF NEW ARRIVALS TO ILLINOIS



IMMIGRATION STATUS OF NEW ARRIVALS

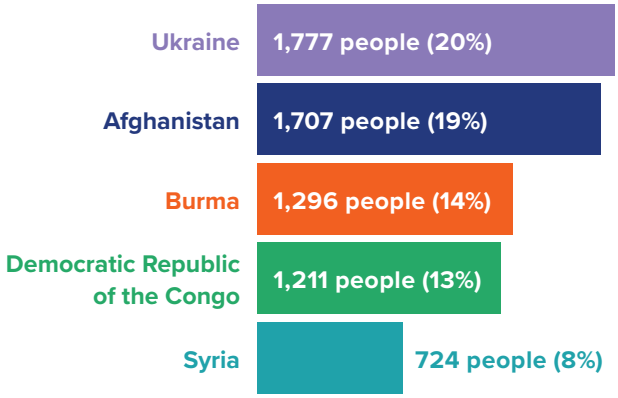


IMMIGRATION STATUS OF ALL CLIENTS SERVED



TOP FIVE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN FOR ALL CLIENTS SERVED

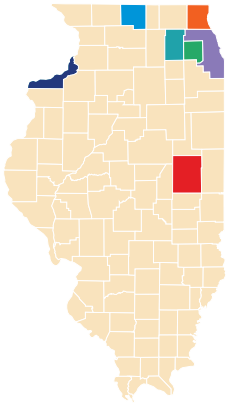
74% of clients who accessed Illinois Refugee Support Services in FY 2026 came from these five countries:



KEY ILLINOIS RESETTLEMENT SITES

98% of all clients served reside in these seven Illinois counties.

	Number of People:	
Cook County	**5,823**	64%
DuPage County	**1,094**	12%
Kane County	**689**	8%
Rock Island County	**586**	6%
Winnebago County	**436**	5%
Champaign County	**163**	2%
Lake County	**100**	1%



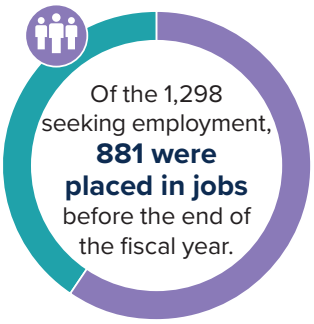


Nearly 3,000 young people from refugee families took part in educational activities including after-school art programs.

Support Services

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

2,022 clients received services to secure employment, improve job readiness skills, navigate the U.S. workplace, and move toward skills recertification and career advancement.



Of those placed in jobs:

- **85%** of clients retained jobs after 90 days
- **741** (84%) had full-time jobs
- **$18.69** average hourly wage (FT)
- **$17.61** average hourly wage (PT)

JOB READINESS ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING

748 participants took part in the Job Readiness English Language Training (JRELT) program. JRELT provides English language instruction with a focus on employment-related skills. **414 clients** (55%) advanced to a higher English class or graduated from their English program before the end of the fiscal year.

SENIOR SERVICES

274 seniors (60+) accessed dedicated senior services designed to link them to programs such as food, income, and utility assistance, to public transportation, and to other senior services programs. **49 seniors** were assisted to prepare for naturalizing as a U.S. citizen.



REFUGEE HEALTH SCREENINGS

Refugee health screening provides linguistically appropriate comprehensive health assessments and intervention. Services provided include vaccinations, follow-ups, and referrals to treat health conditions identified in the assessment process.

222 clients received health screenings in FY 2026

- **175** individuals with refugee status
- **47** individuals with all other eligible statuses
- **97** (44%) screened within 30 days of arrival/eligibility
- **208** (93%) screened within 90 days of arrival/eligibility

CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

4,123 clients were provided with orientation, assistance, and social adjustment support services designed to help them integrate successfully into their new communities.

YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAM

The Youth Mentoring program is designed to match young adults with a mentor to help them consider their next educational or vocational steps and chart a path forward. Together, the young adult and mentor work to explore options and address challenges faced in pursuing their goals.



144
youth and young adults ages 16–24 were served in the Youth Mentoring Program in FY 2026.

EDUCATION ASSISTANCE TO CHILDREN & YOUTH

2,821 total youth served

- **927** served in after-school programs
- **785** participated in social-emotional learning programs
- **689** served in summer programs
- **494** children aged 0-5 engaged in early childhood services
- **138** enrolled in preschool or early learning programs



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES



Behavioral Health services support the emotional wellness of refugee and immigrant populations, recognizing its importance for successful resettlement and integration. The program provided individual and group behavioral health counseling and wellness services to **590 individuals** this year, all delivered by qualified professionals in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner. **508 clients (85%) reported positive progress.**

REFUGEE HEALTH PROMOTION

852 individuals were served in the Refugee Health Promotion program, which serves to promote health literacy, coordinate physical and mental health care, and offer health education and wellness groups.

Stories of Success

María was granted asylum in the United States in May 2024 after fleeing persecution in her home country of Venezuela. She arrived in the U.S. with a variety of professional skills and years of experience in the education and nursing fields, but with limited English proficiency. She enrolled in RefugeeOne's Case Management Services shortly after her asylum was granted and secured employment at a factory. After working there for approximately one year, she was ready to take the next step toward returning to her profession in the United States.

María enrolled in RefugeeOne's Employment Program in May 2025 and immediately began working toward a degree evaluation. Staff supported her throughout the evaluation process and assisted her in simultaneously applying for an Illinois teaching license. After her degree was recognized and she obtained her license, she began applying for positions in her field.

In early December, María was offered a full-time position as a Teacher/Early Childhood Specialist, contingent upon receiving her Paraprofessional license. After navigating a few challenges in the licensing process and with the support of her employment counselor, María was awarded her license a few days after starting her new position, and she continues to work there today.



ILLINOIS REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

Administration

Illinois Department of Human Services/Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Services

Refugee Support Services

Administration

- Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago

Service Providers

CHICAGO AND COOK COUNTY

- Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago*
- Forging Opportunities for Refugees in America (FORA)
- Heartland Alliance Health
- Heartland Human Care Services*
- JCFS Chicago*
- RefugeeOne*
- Rohingya Culture Center
- Sinai Medical Group
- Syrian Community Network
- Tapestry 360 Health
- World Relief – Chicago*

GREATER STATE OF ILLINOIS

- The Refugee Center (Champaign)
- Rock Valley College (Rockford)
- World Relief – DuPage/Aurora*
- World Relief – Quad Cities*

Refugee Health Screening

Administration

- Illinois Department of Public Health/ Office of Racial and Cultural Health Equity

Community Health Clinics

- Aunt Martha's Clinic (Aurora)
- Champaign-Urbana Public Health District (Champaign)
- Community Health Care, Inc. (Rock Island)
- Rock Island County Health Department (Rock Island)
- Sinai Medical Group, Antillas Clinic (Chicago)
- Winnebago County Health Department (Rockford)

** These agencies are known as Resettlement Agencies, which have contracts with the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Health & Human Services to provide initial (30–90 days) resettlement services to refugees. ICNA Relief is also a resettlement agency but did not operate any Refugee Support Services programming in FY26.*