



An Overview of the Office of Refugee Resettlement

The Office of Refugee Resettlement is a key government actor in welcoming newly arrived immigrants forcibly displaced from their home countries, offering vital support to those seeking refuge and stability in the United States. Established as part of the Refugee Act of 1980, the Office of Refugee Resettlement, or ORR, is a division of the Administration for Children and Families in the federal government. Since its inception, ORR's mandate has evolved to meet the changing needs of those it serves.

ORR's mission is to promote the health, well-being, and stability of refugees, unaccompanied children, and other eligible individuals and families through culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and strengths-based services. The vision of ORR is for all new arrivals to be welcomed with equitable, high-quality services and resources so they can maximize their potential.

Who qualifies for ORR-funded programs? ORR currently offers grant programs that benefit the following populations: Refugees, Asylees, Cuban and Haitian Entrants, Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders, Amerasians, and Victims of Trafficking. You can learn more about each of these statuses by watching Switchboard's video "Understanding Newcomer Immigration Statuses," linked on this video's webpage.

It's important to note that ORR also provides select services to humanitarian parolees who arrived in the United States through initiatives like Operation Allies Welcome and Uniting for Ukraine, ensuring that those paroled to the U.S. receive the assistance they need in the event of a humanitarian crisis.

In addition to these statuses, ORR runs additional programming in some states for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors through ORR's Refugee Program Bureau, as well as the Unaccompanied Children Program for children and youth who enter the United States from other countries without an adult guardian or legal status.

ORR also offers services in certain areas to Survivors of Torture by providing rehabilitative, social, and legal services to individuals who have experienced torture outside of the U.S., regardless of their immigration status. It comprises two types of programs: Direct Services for Survivors of Torture, designed to provide comprehensive, trauma-informed services to survivors and their families, assisting in their healing and recovery journey; and Technical Assistance to Survivors of Torture organizations, aimed at equipping service providers with essential training and resources to deliver quality, integrated, and sustainable support to survivors and their families.

ORR-eligible newcomers are eligible to receive certain services from ORR grant programs for up to five years after arrival. After these first five years, newcomers are eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship. However, there are some exceptions to this five-year limit on ORR-eligibility, such as for minors without parents or legal guardians who are placed in the URM program or in exceptional circumstances, individuals with disabilities, ongoing medical treatment, or extreme hardship.

Now let's dive into the kinds of benefits and services that ORR-eligible populations may receive as part of their integration process. Some refugees are eligible to apply for mainstream federal benefits in their state, such as cash assistance through Social Security or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF; health insurance through Medicaid; and food assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP.

Additionally, newcomers can be screened for eligibility at a state government benefits office or the closest resettlement agency in their state for the various benefits and services ORR offers even if they are not eligible to receive these mainstream benefits.

During their ORR-eligibility period, newcomers can receive a range of support services. These services fall into four major areas: social adjustment and integration, physical and behavioral health, employment and economic/social stability, and children and youth. You can learn more about the major grant programs in each of these service areas in the second video in this series, entitled "Major Service Areas and Grant Programs of ORR's Resettlement Program."

Throughout the year, resettlement agencies, ethnic community-based organizations, and other newcomer services organizations can apply directly to ORR or to their state refugee office to receive funding for newcomer services. For up-to-date information about current and future funding opportunities, go to ORR's grants page on their website, or access your state's office for refugee services.

For more information about the services that ORR offers to eligible populations, we hope you will watch Switchboard's other videos, including the second video in this series, "Major Service Areas and Grant Programs of ORR's Resettlement Program," as well as "Who Are Refugees" and "Understanding Newcomer Immigration Statuses." You can also check out the many helpful factsheets and resources on ORR's website.