

Guidance for Connecting to Local and State Services

Sponsors of newcomers may be new to welcoming *and* navigating the often complex world of benefits and services available to new residents facing challenges in their local area, such as economic instability. This guide is intended to help familiarize sponsors with the types of services that may be available for newcomers in their new city or state.

Getting started

Overall, United Way's [2-1-1 service](#) can be a great place to start to learn about community resources in your area. It can help connect you with a variety of services in your area.

Ukrainian humanitarian parolees who arrive under Uniting Ukraine or who were granted humanitarian parole after February 24, 2022, by the Department of Homeland Security are eligible for a broad range of government services. Benefit eligibility expanded as a result of legislation signed by President Biden on May 21, 2022. This includes federal public benefits, like Medicaid, and benefits and services funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement and State Refugee Coordinator offices, including at local resettlement agencies.

As such, you will want to learn more about the programs funded by the [Office of Refugee Resettlement](#) and find out more about programs available for refugees in your state by searching for your state's State Refugee Coordinator Office. In many states, this will be in your Department of Human (or Social) Services, but in some states, it might be at a nonprofit. Find your state refugee coordinator [here](#).

Local resettlement agencies and other partners also provide case management services to eligible newcomers. They can be a great resource alongside other partners and agencies listed in this guide. Your State Refugee Coordinator's office will have information that will be helpful to you or find out where refugee resettlement agencies are by checking out this [map](#).

County or state human services departments, local city offices for immigrants, and statewide offices for new Americans can also be great first stops in your exploration of available services. You can find these partners through a quick internet search!

Local libraries also have a lot to offer in terms of information about local resources and programs. We recommend visiting one of the larger libraries in your area to learn more details about what they offer to the community. You might be surprised by the scope of support offered.

Healthcare

Part of being a sponsor will be to connect individuals to healthcare. Through your work, you will establish connections with organizations and partners in your local community whose missions are to make healthcare accessible. It is likely that there are health accessibility and affordability groups in your state or local community who routinely help individuals navigate healthcare and health insurance. Ask around!

Federally Qualified Health Care Centers (FQHCs)

- Funded by the federal government to offer affordable health care in communities across the United States.
- Cannot turn anyone away for an inability to pay or for lack of insurance.
- FQHCs also often have health insurance enrollment specialists who can help newcomers determine what their insurance options may be.
- Interpretation available, as needed, usually through a language line.

Local public health departments (or agencies)

- Low or no cost resources available to all residents, such as vaccinations or health screenings (including tuberculosis) and connection to treatment for diseases of public health concern.

Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP)

- Low cost health insurance for low-income households.
- Eligibility will differ by state. In states that did not expand Medicaid, the income eligibility threshold is lower and commonly, adults without dependent children are not eligible.
- CHIP is a federal health insurance plan for children who are a part of low income households who are yet over-income for Medicaid.

Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA)

- Time-limited (12 months from eligibility) with a higher income threshold than Medicaid or CHIP.
- In most states, the Medicaid application will determine whether or not someone is eligible for Medicaid or RMA.

Affordable Care Act (ACA) Healthcare Marketplace

- As part of the ACA health plan application, in most states, the newcomer will also be screened for other low and no cost health insurance programs, including Medicaid. Available plans will vary based on your area of residence.
- ACA plans do not have income restrictions.
- Some states have their own health exchanges or marketplaces where you can shop for healthcare. Residents of other states may access ACA plans through the federal marketplace.
- There may be health exchange staff that can walk the newcomer through the enrollment process.

Emergency Medicaid

- Available in all states.
- Covers low-income individuals of any immigration status, including those in humanitarian parole, in life-threatening situations.
- Emergency Medicaid also covers labor and delivery (but does not cover pre or post natal care).
- A physician must supply a letter on behalf of the patient that the situation was life-threatening, and the hospital can usually help their patients navigate the enrollment.
- In some states, Emergency Medicaid also covers additional life-threatening conditions, such as kidney conditions that require dialysis, and pregnant women.

Healthcare Through an Employer.

- Most newcomers, like most Americans, access healthcare through their employer.
- Newcomers will be able to transition to employer-sponsored healthcare plans; benefits such as health insurance are always an additional consideration when seeking employment.

Other Public Health Insurance Plans

- Available public health plans will vary by state.
- Some states have their own health care plans, such as through a public option, for low-cost insurance.

In complex medical situations, many hospitals have social workers or other positions who help those with challenges outside the hospital setting, such as with housing or health insurance.

Confused about health insurance? You are not alone. Connecting with resettlement agencies and nonprofits that help community members navigate these complexities or with enrollment staff at FQHCs are great places to start.

Education

Every resident, regardless of immigration status, can enroll in the United States' public school system for Kindergarten through high school (Grade 12). Some school districts may have newcomer centers or community school programs that help students transition to a new learning environment. Many school districts offer school choice, which means newcomer families can explore what learning environment may be best suited for their student's strengths and interests. The local school district (often offices of family or community engagement can be a good step) will be able to provide more information.

Free and Reduced Lunch

- Offered by some schools.

- Provided to students in the school based on household income; there is no immigration status requirement. Should this be a benefit provided for a newcomer's student, school staff can assist the family with enrollment.

Community Colleges

- Often serve first generation students and in many communities, first generation students are also immigrants or the children of immigrants.
- Often have college-level classes that train individuals for careers and community classes, such as English as a Second Language, that do not require college enrollment.
- Often also have services that help evaluate foreign transcripts. These services can help ensure students do not have to retake classes and can help professionals navigate recertification processes or apply for occupational licenses as well as tailor job searches to be in line with their career goals.

Refugee School Impact providers

- Serve refugee newcomers in areas such as cultural adjustment and English learning
- Help parents engage in school
- Learn more from your [state refugee coordinator's](#) office

English as a Second Language classes (ESL)

- Funded by federal and state governments.
- Visit your state's adult education program online (commonly in Departments of Education) to get a list of providers in your area.
- Learn more from your [state refugee coordinator's](#) office.

Employment and Career Training

Community Colleges

- Great place to learn about career training opportunities.
- Depending on the program, a newcomer may be able to take advantage of career training before they have their Employment Authorization Document (EAD).
- Offer skills training to assist their students in reskilling and upskilling for in-demand jobs and industries. These programs often attract both youth and adult learners.
- Oftentimes hold job fairs open to the public.

Local Workforce Centers/American Job Centers

- Offer employment and career training services.
- Some services, such as resume writing and interview assistance, can be accessed even if a newcomer has yet to receive their work authorization.
- Other services may be available after a newcomer has their EAD, including enrollment into programs that can help pay for job training, such as for a commercial's driver's license (CDL).

Apprenticeship Opportunities

- May provide newcomers to earn income while they learn on the job.
- Many states have recently increased investments in these types of programs and are expanding their portfolios of apprenticeable occupations.
- Some states also have a state office of apprenticeships, so be sure to check your state's department of labor (or workforce services) to learn more.

Refugee employment providers

- Offer employment assistance to newcomers, including Ukrainian beneficiaries without work authorization
- Providers vary by state but can be resettlement agencies, community colleges, and employment-focused nonprofits.
- Learn more from your [state refugee coordinator's](#) office.
- Find out where refugee resettlement agencies are by checking out this [map](#).

Childcare

Finding high-quality and affordable childcare is a challenge. Many state and county human service agencies can help newcomer families understand options.

Some newcomers may be eligible for childcare financial assistance. Find more information about this assistance, and options for childcare, [here](#).

Head Start and Early Head Start

- Provide low-income families with free learning and development services for their children from birth to age 5.

Public Benefits

Like health insurance, public benefits can be hard to navigate. Many states, however, have developed online application systems that determine eligibility for a variety of programs. State and county human services (or social services) offices have eligibility specialists, and there are often non profit organizations that assist residents in navigating the complexities. There are many reasons that someone may not ultimately be eligible for a program, such as household composition or income levels, and yet, people apply all the time. You do not need to know whether the newcomer your group is supporting will be eligible for a program to apply!

Federal Public Benefits Programs

- Administered by the state (or the county).
- Each federal public benefit program has its own eligibility rules. For example, in some states, SNAP (or food stamps) income eligibility is at 200% of the federal poverty level, while Medicaid in the same state is at 138%.

- Many states require as part of an application newcomers submit evidence of submission of an application to the Social Security Administration for a Social Security number. Keep this handy after the newcomer applies for a Social Security Number.
- There are many federal public benefits that are less known but which provide important supports such as:
 - Low-Income Heat and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps households meet their energy needs during the winter months. Importantly, this program determines eligibility for the household based on just one household member's eligibility.
 - Womens, Infant and Children (WIC) supports nutritional needs of pregnant and postpartum women as well as their young children.

States may also have state-funded benefit programs, some of which mirror or expand federal benefits for different populations, including newcomers.

Refugee Benefits

- Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) is a time-limited (12 months from date of eligibility) program that supports eligible newcomers.
- In some states, it is administered by state or county human or social services offices. In others, refugee resettlement agencies distribute the funds.
- Learn more from your [state refugee coordinator's](#) office.

Other Services

State IDs

- To apply for a State ID, go to your local Department of Motor Vehicles office. Many DMVs have modernized recently that allow for some services (like scheduling appointments) to be completed online. Check their websites first!
- State IDs do not require testing.
- Most newcomers will want to apply for a State ID quickly so that they have a form of identification widely recognized in local communities.

Drivers License

- To apply for a driver's license, newcomers should visit the local Department of Motor Vehicles office. Require applicants to pass written and driving tests; these tests, and any learning permit requirements, will vary state to state. Many states allow for interpretation of the written exam.
- Some states allow individuals without social security numbers to apply for driver's licenses, and some do not. If the newcomer resides in a state which requires a social security number, they may need to receive one before applying for a drivers license. Immigrant rights groups operating in your state will know whether or not you reside in a state where drivers licenses are available for all.

Banking

- Some large banks require a Social Security number before they will allow a newcomer to open an account. Credit unions are often more flexible and can be a great choice.

Refugee Services

- The Office of Refugee Resettlement funds resettlement agencies and other partners, like workforce training programs, across the nation.
- States also have federal funds from the Office of Refugee Resettlement to support services, including services for older adults, health promotion activities, mental health supports, legal services, and much more.
- Learn more from your [state refugee coordinator's](#) office.