

Humanitarian Immigrant Programs in the United States



According to the [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Global Trends](#), in 2021, there were **89.3 million people worldwide who were forced to flee their homes** due to conflicts, violence, fear of persecution and human rights violations. New arrivals often face many challenges when they arrive in a new country, and having access to financial assistance and support services can make a significant difference in their ability to successfully integrate into their new community. Sponsoring a new arrival can be a powerful way to make a difference in someone's life, by providing access to basic necessities while helping to build community in Massachusetts.

Overview of Humanitarian Programs

The United States has several refugee sponsorship programs that allow individuals, organizations, and communities to help refugees resettle in the country. Here are some of the main refugee sponsorship programs in the United States:

- [The U.S. Department of State's Refugee Admissions Program \(USRAP\)](#) works with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to identify and refer refugees for resettlement in the United States. The United States conducts a rigorous vetting process to determine whether to accept a refugee for resettlement. The entire process takes approximately two years. The USRAP also works with resettlement agencies to provide support services to refugees with their initial resettlement needs, such as housing, food, and clothing through the [U.S. Department of State's Reception and Placement \(R&P\) Program](#)
- [Parole Program for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans](#): As of January 2023, nationals of Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, and their immediate family members, may request to come to the United States in a safe and orderly way. Qualified beneficiaries who are outside the United States and lack U.S. entry documents may be considered, on a case-by-case basis, for advanced authorization to travel and a temporary period of parole for up to two years for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit.
- [Uniting for Ukraine Program](#): As of April 2022, this program provides a pathway for Ukrainian citizens and their immediate family members who are outside the U.S., to come to the U.S., and stay temporarily in a 2 year period of parole. Ukrainians participating in Uniting for Ukraine must have a financial sponsor in the U.S. who agrees to provide them with financial support for the duration of their stay.

How You Can Get Involved

Sponsoring a new arrival typically refers to providing financial sponsorship or providing other types of support such as helping with language skills, cultural orientation, employment assistance, education, and other types of social integration services. Support can also involve providing emotional support and a sense of community.

Individual sponsorship refers to a process in which a citizen or permanent resident of the U.S. assumes financial, emotional, and sometimes legal obligations to ensure the successful integration of the foreign individual or family to the United States.

Community sponsorship, also known as group sponsorship, is when a group of community members or organizations takes on the responsibility of supporting the sponsored individuals or families by providing assistance and resources. This can include providing financial assistance and language support, and finding housing, healthcare, educational, and employment opportunities. The community sponsors often work closely with resettlement agencies, non-profit organizations, and government authorities to ensure a smooth and successful resettlement process.

How You Can Get Involved



There are numerous opportunities to sponsor newly arrived individuals, including:

- **Sponsoring an individual or family to be eligible to travel to the US through an existing humanitarian program:**
 - **Parole Program for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans:** Launched in January 2023, nationals of Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, and their immediate family members, may request to come to the United States for a period of parole for up to two years for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit. Sponsors must be willing and able to receive, maintain, and support the individual or family for the duration of their parole. Support includes transporting to initial housing and ensuring basic necessities such as housing, health care, educational, and employment needs are met.
 - **Uniting for Ukraine Program:** Launched in April 2022, this program provides a pathway for Ukrainian citizens and their immediate family members who are outside the U.S., to come to the U.S., and stay temporarily in a 2 year period of parole. Ukrainians participating in Uniting for Ukraine must have a financial sponsor in the U.S. who agrees to provide them with financial support for the duration of their stay.
- **Welcome Corps**, created by the US government, allows individuals or groups of private citizens to welcome refugees arriving through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) and support their resettlement and integration. The Department of State will roll out the Welcome Corps in two phases. In the first phase, private sponsors participating in the Welcome Corps will be matched with refugees whose cases are already approved for resettlement under the USRAP. The [Department of State](#) will begin facilitating matches between private sponsors and refugees arriving within the first six months of 2023.

In the second phase of the program, which is expected to launch in mid-2023, private sponsors will be able to identify refugees to refer to the USRAP for resettlement and support the refugees they have identified. In the first year of Welcome Corps, the Department of State will **seek to mobilize 10,000 Americans to step forward as private sponsors and offer a welcoming hand to at least 5,000 refugees**. The Department of State is funding a consortium of non-profit organizations with expertise in welcoming, resettling, and integrating refugees into U.S. communities to support the Welcome Corps. This consortium is being led by the Community Sponsorship Hub, and includes Church World Service, IRIS – Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services, the International Refugee Assistance Project, the International Rescue Committee, and Welcome.US. This consortium will offer expert guidance and support to Americans joining the Welcome Corps. Groups of at least five individual American citizens or permanent resident adults will be able to apply to the Welcome Corps to privately sponsor the resettlement of refugees in the United States.

- **Non-Governmental Refugee Sponsorship Programs:** Private sponsorship programs allow individuals, organizations, and communities to sponsor refugees and provide them with support as they resettle in the United States. Private sponsorship programs are typically run by non-profit organizations and may require sponsors to provide financial support, housing, and other support services. There are several organizations with private refugee sponsorship programs in the United States, including:
 - **Church World Service:** Church World Service is a faith-based organization that provides support to refugees, immigrants, and other vulnerable populations.
 - **HIAS:** HIAS is a non-profit organization that provides support to refugees, asylum seekers, and other displaced people around the world.
 - **World Relief:** World Relief is a Christian humanitarian organization that provides support to refugees and other vulnerable populations around the world.

How You Can Get Involved (cont.)



- **Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service**: Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service is a non-profit organization that provides support to refugees, immigrants, and other vulnerable populations.
- **International Rescue Committee**: The International Rescue Committee is a global humanitarian organization that provides support to refugees and other displaced people around the world.
- **Asylum Seeker Sponsorship Programs**: Nationally, some organizations and communities sponsor asylum seekers who are already in the United States and are awaiting a decision on their asylum claim, such as:
 - **The Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES)** offers a Family Reunification and Bond Fund program that provides financial assistance to help reunite families who have been separated at the U.S.-Mexico border.
 - **The International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)** provides legal assistance to refugees and asylum seekers, as well as resettlement services and advocacy on their behalf.
 - **The National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC)** provides legal services and advocacy to immigrants and refugees, including those who are seeking asylum in the United States.
 - **The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)** offers resettlement and integration services to refugees and asylum seekers, as well as advocacy on their behalf.

There are two primary ways to sponsor a refugee:

Private Sponsorship: Private sponsorship involves individuals or groups taking on the responsibility of sponsoring a refugee or refugee family. This typically includes providing financial support, accommodation, and assistance with settlement and integration. Private sponsorship programs vary by country, but they often require sponsors to demonstrate their ability to support the refugee financially and to meet specific eligibility criteria set by the government or sponsoring organization.

Government-Assisted Sponsorship: Government-assisted sponsorship programs are typically facilitated by the government or authorized organizations. Under this type of sponsorship, the government provides financial support and assistance to refugees, while sponsors contribute by offering support services such as housing, language training, and social integration. Sponsors may also help refugees access healthcare, education, and employment opportunities.

Newest Community Sponsorship Programs:

- **Parole Program for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans**: As of January 2023, nationals of Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, and their immediate family members, may request to come to the United States in a safe and orderly way. Qualified beneficiaries who are outside the United States and lack U.S. entry documents may be considered, on a case-by-case basis, for advanced authorization to travel and a temporary period of parole for up to two years for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit.
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How You Can Get Involved (cont.)

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- **Asylum Seeker Sponsorship Programs:** Some organizations and communities also sponsor asylum seekers who are already in the United States and are awaiting a decision on their asylum claim. These programs provide support services and may also help asylum seekers with legal representation. Nationally, there are several nonprofit organizations that offer asylum seeker sponsorship programs, such as:
 - **The Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES):** This organization offers a Family Reunification and Bond Fund program that provides financial assistance to help reunite families who have been separated at the U.S.-Mexico border.
 - **The International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP):** This organization provides legal assistance to refugees and asylum seekers, as well as resettlement services and advocacy on their behalf.
 - **The National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC):** This organization provides legal services and advocacy to immigrants and refugees, including those who are seeking asylum in the United States.
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There are several organizations here in Massachusetts continually seeking volunteers to support immigrant and refugee communities.

- **International Institute of New England** utilizes **community sponsorship** as a collaborative effort between groups of people, refugees and resettlement staff to welcome refugees to their community.
- **Ascentria Care Alliance** welcomes **Neighborhood Support Teams** to work alongside case managers to help refugee families and individuals access resources.
- **Catholic Charities Boston** is one of six agencies nationwide participating in **Welcome Circles for Ukrainians**, a pilot program developed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Migration and Refugee Services.
- **Catholic Charities Agency - Diocese of Springfield Massachusetts** seeks volunteers to provide **Afghan Humanitarian Support**.

You can also support refugees that are already in the United States by:

- Volunteering your time and skills with a non-profit organization that works with refugees to help with language tutoring, job readiness training, cultural orientation, or transportation.
- Assisting refugees in navigating healthcare systems, enrolling in schools or language programs, finding affordable housing, or connecting them with social services.
- Assisting with resume writing, job search, interview preparation, and networking.
- Fostering cultural understanding and integration by organizing cultural celebrations, language exchange programs, and shared meals.
- Writing to elected officials and participating in advocacy campaigns.
- Donating to organizations that provide direct assistance to refugees or by organizing fundraising events.