

Refugees and the Vetting Process: a fact sheet

As part of Redeemer's focus on issues related to refugees in coming months, this article provides some summary information and links to websites for more information.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigrations Services (USCIS) is the government agency responsible for implementing U.S. law and policy for people entering the U.S. and for protecting, monitoring, and assisting them after their arrival. Organizations (e.g., LIRS: Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, in Baltimore and D.C.; USCRI: U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, in Arlington) channel federal grants for resettling refugees to local agencies (e.g., LSSNCA: Lutheran Social Services in the National Capital Area).

"Under United States law, a refugee is someone who:

- Is located outside of the United States
- Is of special humanitarian concern to the United States
- Demonstrates that they were persecuted or fear persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group
- Is not firmly resettled in another country
- Is admissible to the United States

A refugee does **not** include anyone who ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in the persecution of any person on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion." (from:

<https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-asylum/refugees>)

The vetting process is a lengthy process with the following steps as described in a graphic from the USCRI website (more details there: <http://refugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/USCRI-Security-Screening-Process-5.16.16.pdf>)

An individual registers as a refugee with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

1. A refugee who meets one of the criteria for resettlement is referred to the U.S.
2. Resettlement support centers interview the refugee.
3. The Department of State checks the refugee's name against the U.S. watch list through its consular lookout and support system.
4. Certain refugees undergo an additional security review called the Security Advisory Opinion.
5. The National Counterterrorism Center conducts an inter-agency check on the applicant within a designated age range.
6. Syrian refugees referred to the U.S. for resettlement are flagged for additional security screen.
7. USCIS conducts an in-person interview with the refugee abroad at their location.
8. If the necessary criteria are met, the USCIS officer conditionally approve the refugee's application for resettlement and submits it to Department of State for final processing.
9. USCIS coordinates 3 biometric checks: FBI screening, Department of Homeland Security screening, Department of Defense screening.
10. The International Organization for Migration or a physician designated by the U.S. Embassy conduct applicant medical screenings.

Once all the security checks/medical screening have cleared, the refugee is approved for resettlement and is matched with a sponsor agency (e.g., USCRI or LIRS) who places the person with a local partner agency (e.g., LCCNCA). A refugee receives cultural orientation while waiting for travel to the U.S. When the refugee arrives at a U.S.

airport, a Customs and Border Protection officer reviews the documents and performs additional security checks to confirm that the refugee is the person who was screen and approved for entry into the U.S.

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