Mission
To address the needs and rights of persons in forced or voluntary migration worldwide by advancing fair and humane public policy, facilitating and providing direct professional services, and promoting the full participation of migrants in community life.

From promoting refugee rights abroad to guiding and supporting newcomers as they build new lives in America, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants recognizes the courage and will behind each step in a journey to freedom. USCRI maintains responsive and flexible programs to meet the dynamic and evolving needs of refugees, immigrants, and newcomers seeking opportunity, self-sufficiency and dignity.
NATIONAL PROGRAMS

Working with its network of partner agencies across the country, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrant’s (USCRI) National Programs is comprised of projects to help refugees and other newcomers achieve self-sufficiency and becoming contributing members of American society. Services include training, technical assistance, and referrals in the areas of citizenship, refugee health, mental health, family development, employment, legal status adjustment issues, and organizational development.

Reception & Placement Program

In 2007 USCRI assisted over 4500 refugees, from across the globe, in beginning new lives in cities and towns across the U.S. through the Department of State’s Reception and Placement (R&P) program. The R&P program seeks to help refugees find affordable housing, full-time employment, and achieve self-sufficiency as quickly as possible. Skilled R&P case workers also help refugees apply for a Social Security card, navigate the U.S. health care system, and place their children in local schools. The R&P funding covers services for a refugee’s initial placement period (30 to 90 days), but refugees often seek the help of their original resettlement agency, especially when they are eventually able to apply for citizenship.

Matching Grant Early Employment Program

USCRI recognized that the key to any newcomer’s success in the U.S. is his/her ability to achieve and sustain self-sufficiency. Through the Matching Grant program, funded by the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement, USCRI aims to equip refugees, asylees, Cuban/Haitian entrants, and trafficking victims to become economically self-sufficient within their first four months in the U.S. The Matching Grant program gives local employers additional support and resources to help eligible newcomers find employment and reduce access to public assistance programs. Refugees enrolled in the program also benefit from a modest financial incentive that helps them to locate affordable housing and begin their new lives.

Preferred Communities Program

A refugee’s placement within the U.S. is determined by the presence of family members, the availability and capacity of agencies to assist them, or programs designed to enhance refugees’ chances for success outside the traditional “gateway” cities. The Preferred Communities program helps divert refugees from large metropolitan areas, where social service systems are often overburdened, to smaller cities with strong community support for diversity and growth. USCRI looks for communities that can offer quality, affordable housing for arriving families, good employment opportunities, a positive environment for new refugees, and access to special programs (job training, English classes, etc.) that can help refugees make their transition a successful one.
Refugee and Immigrant Health Program

Refugees and immigrants are typically overlooked in discussions about the disparities in access to healthcare in the U.S. As the American healthcare system grows ever more complex, costly, and difficult to navigate, this population faces significant barriers to getting the information, education, and services they need to live healthy, productive lives in the U.S. With funding from the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement, USCRI has launched two overarching and related initiatives: the Healthy Refugees, Healthy Families Initiative and the Food and Nutrition Outreach Program. The Healthy Families initiative seeks to help recently arrived refugees overcome barriers to healthcare and the Food and Nutrition Outreach Program seeks to increase the level of nutrition knowledge among new arrivals, enabling refugees to establish positive nutritional habits and prevent serious long-term health problems.

Disabled Refugee Program

Among the tens of thousands of refugees who resettle in the U.S. each year, many have lived in poorer regions of the world where there is a high rate of disabilities, and many have fled situations where armed conflict and related injuries are common. Many of the refugees resettled in the U.S. have one or more disabilities. In the U.S. communities where refugees resettle, local organizations serving the disabled may not be aware of refugees’ presence or of their specialized needs. Local resettlement agencies that serve refugees often lack the capacity to assist disabled refugees in understanding their rights and in accessing support services available for disabled individuals in the U.S. USCRI builds resettlement communities’ capacity to better serve disabled refugees by researching, producing and disseminating information and materials and by providing technical assistance to help refugee service providers enhance orientation and case management services for disabled refugees.

Refugee Healthy Marriage Program

As refugees acculturate to their new communities in the U.S., they experience many challenges that can significantly impact their lives and the success of their resettlement. Many refugees have gone through traumatic experiences, such as persecution, torture, and displacement, prior to immigration. Integration into the American culture can be overwhelming for refugees coming from different cultural backgrounds. To better support the ongoing resettlement experience, USCRI and its partner agencies work to strengthen refugee families and communities by addressing their unmet emotional and social needs and focusing on strengthening marriages. USCRI partners with the Institute for the Development of Emotional and Life Skills (IDEALS) and its subsidiary organization, the National Institute for Relationship Enhancement (NIRE), to provide relationship enhancement education. IDEALS/NIRE is a national nonprofit organization that provides marriage education and developed the internationally recognized, Relationship Enhancement© program.
Financial Literacy Program
With few exceptions, refugees and immigrants aspire to building a better future in the U.S. by working hard, saving money, and owning a car, a home, even a business. As they often come from countries with very different financial systems, many need assistance in developing sound financial management practices in the U.S. Through its Financial Literacy Program, launched through a grant from the Center for Financial Services Innovation and advanced through a partnership with the Citi Foundation, USCRI works to ensure that clients achieve and maintain financial success and security. USCRI educates clients to begin, soon after their arrival, to learn to navigate the complexity of mainstream financial services in the U.S., and to make informed choices that enable them to save, establish good credit, and invest in their future.

National Center for Refugee and Immigrant Children
Each year about 8000 undocumented immigrant children arrive in the U.S. without an adult guardian, are detained by immigration authorities and placed in immigration court deportation proceedings. These children come primarily from Central America and Mexico, but also from Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East. To make their journey they have traveled hundreds of miles. They speak little if any English. Few have completed grade school because they were too poor to afford school and worked to support themselves and their families. They need basic health care or mental health services to enable them to cope with the trauma they have experienced prior to or during the journey.

With the support of Angelina Jolie and the American Immigration Lawyers Association, USCRI launched the National Center for Refugee and Immigrant Children to meet the legal service needs of these unaccompanied immigrant children who are released from federal detention facilities. The Center recruits and trains pro bono attorneys who provide free legal services to unaccompanied children nationwide who would otherwise have difficulties finding and paying for attorneys. The National Center matches these children with trained attorneys who are able to represent them in their immigration hearings. By the end of 2007, the Center had recruited and trained over 1200 lawyers; placed over 670 children with attorneys nationwide; provided over 2000 children with brief legal services; and referred 110 children to social service providers.
FIELD OFFICES
Colchester, Vermont; Albany, New York; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Dearborn, Michigan
USCRI’s field offices provide direct refugee resettlement and case management services, including employment services; English as a Second Language (ESL) classes; professional interpreter and translation services; social adjustment and mental health services; citizenship outreach and education; immigration assistance and family reunification; and community education services.

The Vermont field office manages over 200 volunteers who assist clients with learning English and navigating daily life in a new country. The Vermont field office has also greatly expanded its interpretive services to include interpretation services from trained, confidential interpreters in over 30 languages, available any time, in person or by phone, with the most frequently requested languages available 24-hours.

In the past two years, USCRI opened field offices in Albany, New York and Raleigh, North Carolina. The latter to service a fast-growing immigrant population and established refugee community. During 2007 USCRI opened a field office in Dearborn, Michigan to support the influx of Iraqi refugees.

Policy and Research
Policy and Research is the public information and advocacy program of USCRI working to defend the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons worldwide. USCRI promotes their protection by translating information into action. Through research, USCRI identifies the gaps between the treatment of the displaced and international standards, and the parties responsible, and brings it to the attention of the media, policymakers, and citizens around the world.

Funded through grants from individuals and private sources, USCRI acts on the guiding principles of the 1951 Refugee Convention, including its all-too-often forgotten provisions for refugees to live a decent life even while they remain in exile—the rights to work, to practice professions, to run businesses, to own property, and to move about freely and choose their place of residence. This is the foundation of USCRI’s path-breaking campaign to end the “warehousing” of refugees.

Promoting Refugee Rights in Thailand
In 2006 with seed funding through UNHCR, USCRI initiated a pilot project working with Thai civil society groups to advance the policy environment in Thailand toward refugees’ rights to work, practice professions, run businesses, freedom of movement and residence. During 2007 USCRI secured additional funding from the Oak Foundation to continue this work. The project aims to benefit the almost half million Burmese refugees and migrants who live in the country.
Public and Information Advocacy

USCRI advocates at the national and international level through briefings for U.S. and foreign officials, the United Nations and its humanitarian agencies, the media, relief groups, the general public, and other influential actors. USCRI presents testimony to Congress, issues domestic and international press releases, and responds to worldwide invitations to address high-profile briefings, seminars, policy forums, and other events, including the annual meetings of UNHCR’s Executive Committee in Geneva. USCRI has mobilized over 500 NGOs and notable individuals, from around the world, to endorse the Statement Calling for Solutions to End the Warehousing of Refugees and to take action on refugee rights issues. USCRI remains committed to refugee populations long after the press and governments have turned their attention elsewhere, and advocates for long-term, humane solutions to issues such as warehousing.

Publications

USCRI publishes the annual World Refugee Survey, widely considered the world’s definitive report on the statistics, conditions, and treatment of uprooted populations.

The Survey presents comprehensive statistics on the global population of refugees and asylum seekers and qualitative analysis and evaluation of protection gaps in each major refugee-hosting country. USCRI collects this information from extensive research drawing from a variety of sources – UN agencies, governments, and a network of over 40 human rights groups across the globe. The latter are often advocating for refugee protection in their countries and USCRI is working to build the capacity of these local groups.

Since 2005, the World Refugee Survey has included country updates and a grading system that rates governments on refugee rights and protection. The Survey also has cutting-edge commentary, articles covering new trends, and analysis of policies affecting the world’s uprooted people.

USCRI’s website, www.refugees.org, features a country-by-country index of reports and statistics, as well as field notes, background reports, and articles in response to current news and hosts the website of the international campaign against refugee warehousing. The email Bulletin of the campaign against refugee warehousing reaches thousands with topical information on refugee rights activities around the world.