



Fact Sheet on Renting to Refugees and Other Eligible Newcomers

The U.S. federal government assists refugees and other eligible newcomer populations with resettlement support services as they begin to rebuild their lives in the United States. This fact sheet answers questions that landlords and property managers may have as they consider renting to refugees and other eligible newcomers.

About Refugees and Other Eligible Newcomers

A **refugee** is a person who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of nationality because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is managed by the U.S. Department of State, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Refugee resettlement in the United States represents the opportunity to start anew and pursue a life of safety and dignity without fear of violence or persecution.

Other newcomer populations are also eligible for resettlement support services. Eligible newcomer populations include **asylees** (individuals granted asylum in the United States), **Cubans and Haitians** granted entry to the United States, **Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa holders** who supported the U.S. mission in Afghanistan and Iraq, **victims of human trafficking**, certain **Afghan humanitarian parolees**, and certain **Ukrainian humanitarian parolees**.

All refugees and eligible newcomers are **lawfully present** in the United States.

The U.S. Government provides significant support to refugees and other eligible newcomers:

All refugees and eligible newcomers are eligible for federally funded support and assistance from the U.S. Department of State and/or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). These services include, but are not limited to:

- Financial assistance
- Job readiness and employment placement services
- Orientation that includes home maintenance and budgeting
- Interpretation services and English language instruction
- Support from federal agencies, state and local agencies, resettlement staff, volunteers and/or community groups to help mitigate issues or communication challenges

The U.S. Government partners with ten national resettlement agencies, which have more than 340 affiliates across the country, to support refugees and other eligible newcomers. When you rent to refugees and other eligible newcomers, you get tenants who receive these services and assistance from local resettlement agencies and other community-based and faith-based organizations. Partnerships with these local agencies create a mutually beneficial relationship that provides housing to refugees and other eligible newcomers and supports your community's economic and cultural vitality.

A promissory note and/or letter of support from a resettlement agency may outline the financial support a housing applicant will receive from the local resettlement organization and state or federal agencies. In addition, all refugees and eligible newcomers are eligible to receive rental assistance funds and/or cash assistance for basic needs.



Scan for more information.

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Refugees and other eligible newcomers are able to work:

Refugees are authorized to work immediately upon their arrival in the United States, though they may not have a job as soon as they arrive. Many other eligible newcomers are also authorized to work (either immediately or after a certain period). All refugees and eligible newcomers are eligible for job readiness and employment placement services.

Refugees and other eligible newcomers have documentation of their legal status:

All refugees and other eligible newcomers are lawfully present in the United States and receive documentation of their legal status from the U.S. Government. For example, refugees receive a Form I-94, Arrival/Departure Record, which does not expire. This is evidence that they are legally in the United States and are eligible to work.

It takes time for refugees and other eligible newcomers to receive other forms of documentation, and they may not have them at the time they are seeking housing. For example, while refugees are eligible immediately for a Social Security number, the Social Security Administration needs to create a Social Security card and deliver it to the refugee. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) also creates and delivers an Employment Authorization Document. Many arrive without a passport as they fled without one from their home country, and may still lack an identification card from the U.S. state in which they reside.

Refugees and eligible newcomers receive background checks from the U.S. Government:

Many refugees and other eligible newcomers may not have a state ID or a Social Security number immediately after arrival, which means a landlord may not be able to run a background check. However, all refugees and other eligible newcomers are screened and vetted by various U.S. Government agencies. For example, refugees undergo mandatory and rigorous security vetting by the U.S. Government, including biometric and biographic security checks, medical exams, and interviews with USCIS.

Credit Checks

If a landlord or property manager requires credit checks at admission, they may generally forgo credit checks for refugees and other eligible newcomers:

Landlords and property managers may generally forgo credit checks for any potential resident as long as they do not violate the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits discrimination in housing-related transactions on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), familial status, and disability.* For example, if a credit check exception is made because of immigration status (like refugee status), the exception must apply equally to all those in the immigration status and not only to those of a certain national origin.

It is a best practice for landlords and property managers to review their credit check policies (and other background check policies) to ensure that they do not discriminate unlawfully against any protected class under the Fair Housing Act. Landlords and property owners may use alternate forms of verification to assess the ability of a prospective tenant to pay rent without traditional credit, whether refugee, parolee, or otherwise. For example, if a refugee resettlement agency will provide full rent payments for the refugee family, other verification of ability to pay would appear unnecessary since the purpose of the credit check would be to provide a reasonable basis for believing that a tenant's rent will be paid.

For more information from the Department of Housing and Urban Development on refugees and other eligible newcomers, including fair housing issues and credit requirements, please see:

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/field_policy_mgt/refugees
<https://www.hud.gov/fairhousing>

* One exception to this general rule is in the public housing context. Depending on the circumstances, public housing authorities may not have complete discretion in forgoing a general policy of performing credit checks. Visit [hud.gov](https://www.hud.gov) for more information.

