

Sponsor a Refugee through Welcome Corps

January 31, 2024

What is Welcome Corps and How Can I Sponsor Someone?

The [Welcome Corps](#) is a program under the U.S. Department of State where groups of five or more Americans, who live in the same area, can sponsor a refugee/refugee household to resettle permanently in the United States through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).

2 ways to SPONSOR A REFUGEE through Welcome Corps

1

You can be matched:

Private sponsor groups can be matched with a refugee/refugee household who is already in the process of being resettled to the United States.

You can indicate your preference to sponsor a a refugee/family with specific characteristics like:

- Spoken language
- Nationality; and/or
- Household composition (the number of refugees in a family and children)

2

You can sponsor someone you know:

Private sponsor groups can apply to support someone they already know who meets the legal definition of a refugee.

Use the [Refugee Eligibility Tool](#) to check if the individuals you would like to sponsor may be eligible for consideration for resettlement in the United States.

Other things to note:

1. You can only sponsor one individual or family at a time. You will have to wait 3 months after the refugees arrive in the U.S. to apply again.
2. You can sponsor a household of up to 10 people. The first refugee you enter in your application is the "Primary Contact." The Primary Contact must be at least 18 years old and be able to answer questions about the entire group. Everyone must currently live in the **same country** as the Primary Contact.
3. If you choose to sponsor someone you know, they **MUST** meet eligibility criteria.

[VIEW ELIGIBILITY TOOL HERE](#)

Please note, when sponsoring someone you know, it is the Sponsor Group that applies on behalf of the overseas refugee. Refugees overseas do NOT apply on their end. The application to sponsor someone you know is currently open.

Who Can Form a Sponsor Group and What Must They Do?

All sponsors must meet the same minimum eligibility requirements to form a Sponsor Group. To qualify, groups must have a **minimum of five members** who:

- are American citizens or permanent residents,
- who are over the age of 18 and who live in or near the same community.
- private sponsor groups can be formed with family members, friends, neighbors, work colleagues, members of faith groups, book club members—any group of adults who together meet the requirements.
- collectively, sponsor group members must demonstrate that they have the capacity to provide the **core minimum requirements** for sponsorship.

A sponsor group commits to supporting a sponsored refugee/refugee household by providing **core sponsorship services** for a minimum of three months. This responsibility is to be taken seriously; as part of their application, every member of a sponsor group must sign a **Commitment Form** agreeing to the program requirements and responsibilities. Once a refugee/refugee household arrives in the United States, the sponsor group will be required to submit 30-day and 90-day reports via an established online submission process.

What is the Financial Commitment to Sponsor Someone?

A sponsor group is responsible for raising **\$2,425 per refugee they want to sponsor**. This money is to be used to assist with setting a refugee up with housing, food, and other essential needs for the first three months until they have secured employment and can begin generating their income. To apply, you must upload a document that shows you have already raised 60 percent of this amount (\$1,455 per refugee).

Refugees NEVER HAVE TO PAY to apply for the Welcome Corps. If someone asks a refugee for money to apply for them to come to the U.S. this is fraud and can be reported to the following email: fraud@welcomecorps.org

I Know a Refugee Currently Living in Country XX. Can I Sponsor Them?

The Welcome Corps is unable to accept referrals for refugees located in certain countries. There are several **reasons** for this, including two primary reasons that are outside the control of Welcome Corps:

1. For example, Welcome Corps cannot accept applications for refugees in countries with which the United States does not have diplomatic relations. In some countries, host government policies limit the U.S. government's ability to interview refugees (i.e., Russia, Syria, North Korea, Venezuela, and others)
2. Other countries already provide safety and security to refugees (i.e., Belgium, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and others)

As of January 30, 2024, the following are restricted countries. Please note that restricted countries can change, so be sure to check the [Refugee Eligibility Tool](#) regularly.

Current Restricted Countries		
Africa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eritrea • Libya • Somalia • Sudan • Syria 	Asia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afghanistan • Burma • Iran • Japan • North Korea • Russia • Turkiye • Turkmenistan • South Korea • Yemen 	Europe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austria • Belarus • Belgium • Bulgaria • Croatia • Czech Republic • Denmark • Estonia • Finland • France • Germany • Hungary • Iceland • Ireland • Italy • Latvia • Lichtenstein • Lithuania • Luxembourg • Malta • Monaco • Netherlands • Norway • Poland • Portugal • Romania • Russia • San Marino • Slovakia • Slovenia • Spain • Sweden • Switzerland • Turkiye • Ukraine • United Kingdom
North and South America <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canada • Haiti • Venezuela 	Oceania <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia • New Zealand 	
<p>As of January 30, 2024, the following are restricted countries. Please note that restricted countries can change, so be sure to check the Refugee Eligibility Tool regularly.</p>		

I am Interested in Sponsoring Afghans. How Can I Do This?

If you are specifically interested in sponsoring an Afghana refugee, there are several ways that you can support Afghans through the Welcome Corps [per the website](#).

1. Match with Afghan refugees you don't know: You can form a sponsor group of five Americans and/or permanent residents and apply to be matched with Afghan refugees approved for resettlement to the United States. On your application, indicate a preference for being matched with Afghan nationals and/or Dari or Pashto speakers. The Welcome Corps will match your sponsor group with Afghans who are completing their refugee processing overseas.

2. Sponsor Afghans you know who already have a case with the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program or the Special Immigrant Visa program: You can form a sponsor group of five Americans and/or permanent residents and apply to sponsor Afghans you know who already have a case pending with the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program or Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program.

- The Afghan SIV applicant must first have received Chief of Mission approval and have their Immigrant Visa case number to be eligible for Welcome Corps.
- You will be asked to include their Immigrant Visa case number (also known as the CEAC or KBL number) as part of the Welcome Corps application. The Immigrant Visa case number starts with 3 letters followed by 10 numbers. For example, KBL1234567890. This is not the NVC SIV Case Number.
- Once the Afghans are ready for travel, they will be assigned to your sponsor group instead of a resettlement agency.
- **This is available for Afghans regardless of their current location, including in Afghanistan.**
- For more information on eligibility for U.S. government relocation assistance for those remaining in Afghanistan, please visit: <https://www.state.gov/afghanistan-inquiries/>.

3. Sponsor Afghan refugees you know who are outside of Afghanistan but do not already have a U.S. Refugee Admissions Program or Special Immigrant Visa Case: You can form a sponsor group of five Americans and/or permanent residents and apply to sponsor Afghan refugees who:

- Are outside of Afghanistan. **NO IN-COUNTRY REFERRALS AT THIS TIME.**
- Do not already have a case with the USRAP or Special Immigrant Visa program.
- Meet all of the program's [eligibility requirements](#).
- You will submit a referral on their behalf through the Welcome Corps Application.

Do Refugees Themselves Need to Do Anything? What Do They Need?

Please note, when sponsoring someone you know, it is the Sponsor Group that applies on behalf of the overseas refugee. Refugees overseas do NOT apply on their end. However, you must communicate with the refugee(s) you wish to sponsor. They will help the Sponsor Group throughout the application process by working with them to provide information such as the following:

- First and last name; date and place of birth
- USRAP case number if applicable, or for Afghans, SIV case number if applicable
- Country where the primary contact is located and City.
- Legal sex, marital status, religion, ethnicity, native language, nationality
- Proof of registration photo. **Exemptions for registration proof may be allowed on an extremely limited basis after a case-specific review. [Learn how to request an exemption here.](#)**
- Photo of the refugee
- Refugee Claim. **In the application, they recommend you collect this information and the above information directly from the refugee. You might choose to seek the counsel of an immigration attorney. This information will be used by the U.S. Government to decide their refugee case.**
- Refugee phone number and email address

Note: Referring someone does **NOT** guarantee they will be approved for resettlement to the U.S. They must still undergo security screening and vetting to make sure they meet the definition of a refugee under U.S. law. They must also be able to meet the exit visa requirements of the host country.

What Does “Registered” Mean in the Eligibility Criteria?

One of the eligibility criteria to sponsor a refugee you know says:

A refugee must already be registered on or before September 30, 2023, as a refugee by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) or by the government of the country where they live;

OR refugees of Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan, or Venezuelan nationality must have a Form I-134 or I-134A already filed on their behalf before September 30, 2023. They must have been outside their country of nationality by the time the form was filed.

Depending on the country and context, UNHCR may have a local office that “registers” refugees and/or conducts “refugee status determination” (RSD). **“Registered” with the UNHCR is NOT the same as RSD.**

Registration is an identity management tool. If registered, refugees will have completed a form for themselves and/or their household. The form collects a standard set of information from all persons of concern and serves as the basis of a unique registration record. It is completed prior to the distribution of a registration card.

Exemptions for registration proof may be allowed on an extremely limited basis after a case-specific review.

[Learn how to request an exemption here.](#)

I am Ready to Sponsor Someone. Where Do I Start?

- The first step to sponsoring someone through Welcome Corps is to form your private sponsor group. For a sample private sponsor group structure and roles, view the [following resource](#).
- At least one member of your group must complete the [Welcome Corps Essentials Training](#) before submitting your application.
- The group coordinator will create an account and [start an application via this link](#).

View [Getting Started as a Sponsor](#), for a step-by-step guide on what you need to do to sponsor someone. The Guide includes links to additional resources. Please note many of these steps can be completed simultaneously. You can create an account now and log in to begin reviewing the information you will need to submit an application.

How Can I Seek Additional Support During the Application Process?

- Live application support sessions are held on Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. ET. You can sign up here: <https://welcomecorps.org/events/>
- Watch an [On Demand application support session](#) put on by Welcome Corps coaches.
- You can also email the following with questions: application@welcomecorps.org
- Schedule a **15-minute 1:1 online meeting** with Welcome Corps staff who can answer your questions about the application process: <https://calendly.com/welcome-corps-application-support>