



Refugee Student Support and the International Rescue Committee Collaborative Webinar Series

Session 1: Foundational Knowledge for Serving Refugee
and Other Newcomer Students and Families

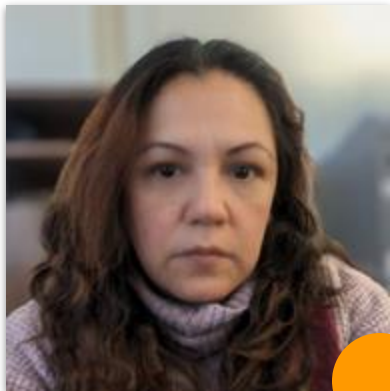
March 2026

Introductions



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Youth Program Coordinator
International Rescue Committee

Refugee Student Support



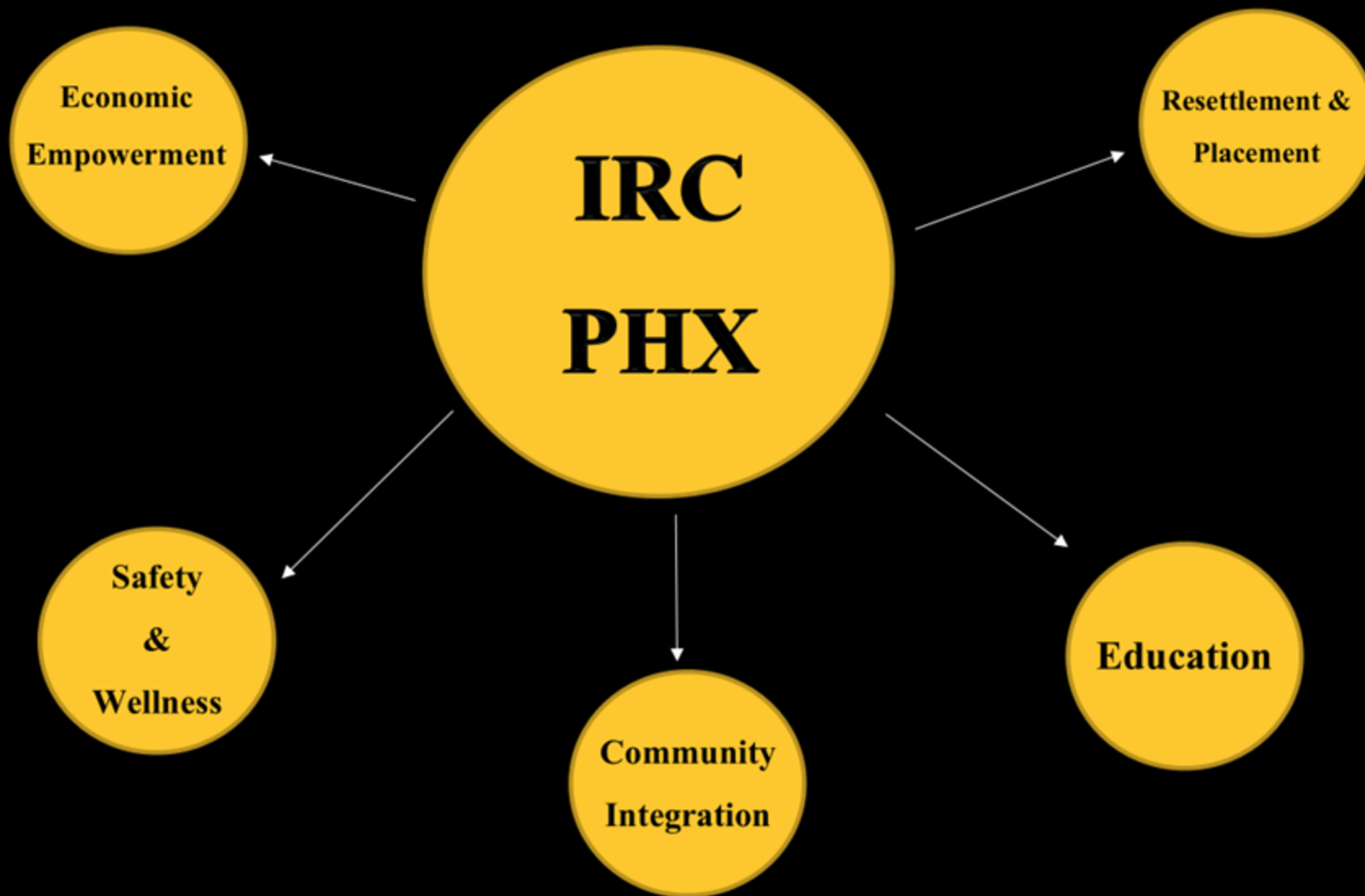
Refugee Student Support (RSS) serves **local education agencies** (LEAs), **community-based organizations**, **students**, and **families** to ensure that newcomer students are **enrolled without delay or discriminatory practice** and have **access** to educational and wrap-around services.



RSS provides **guidance** as well as **direct technical assistance** to ensure awareness and consistency among all stakeholders.



Through **collaborations** with LEAs, resettlement agencies, external (state and national) partners, and other community-based organizations, RSS aims to **facilitate connections** between newcomers and those who may support them.





Where We Work Around the World



Where We Work

The IRC helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster, including the climate crisis, to survive, recover and gain control over their future. Founded in 1933 at the call of Albert Einstein, we work in over 40 countries worldwide.

Together with our supporters, we help people in some of the toughest places on Earth, including Venezuela, Myanmar, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Syria. In the U.S., we are leaders in resettling refugees, and worldwide, we help families integrate into their new communities.

LEGEND

◆ Partner Support Programs

Common Acronyms and Terms

Education-Based

- **ADE** - Arizona Department of Education
- **RSS** – Refugee Student Support
- **HEP** - Homeless Education Program
- **LEA** - Local education agency
- **EL** - English Learner (student)
- **LEP** - Limited English Proficiency (parent)
- **SIS** - Student Information System
- **MOU** - Memorandum of Understanding
- **TA** - Technical Assistance

Immigration-Based

- **IRC** - International Rescue Committee
- **ORR** – U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement
- **DES** - Department of Economic Security
- **Arizona RRP** - Refugee Resettlement Program
- **R&P** - Reception and Placement (First 90-days Program)
- **RSIG** - Refugee School Impact Grant
- **LSS** – Lutheran Social Services



Objective

Attendees will understand...

- the different **classifications** of immigrants and the **processes** by which they arrive in the United States,
- the **refugee resettlement** process, common **experiences** of refugees, and **services** available to ORR-Eligible individuals, and
- core **educational rights** for immigrant students and their families to support academic achievement.



Introductions

What is your **role** in your school or district?

What part of **Arizona** do you serve?

Do you serve **refugee or other newcomer students** in your community?

Share your
answers in
the pop-up
poll!

Foundations of Immigration

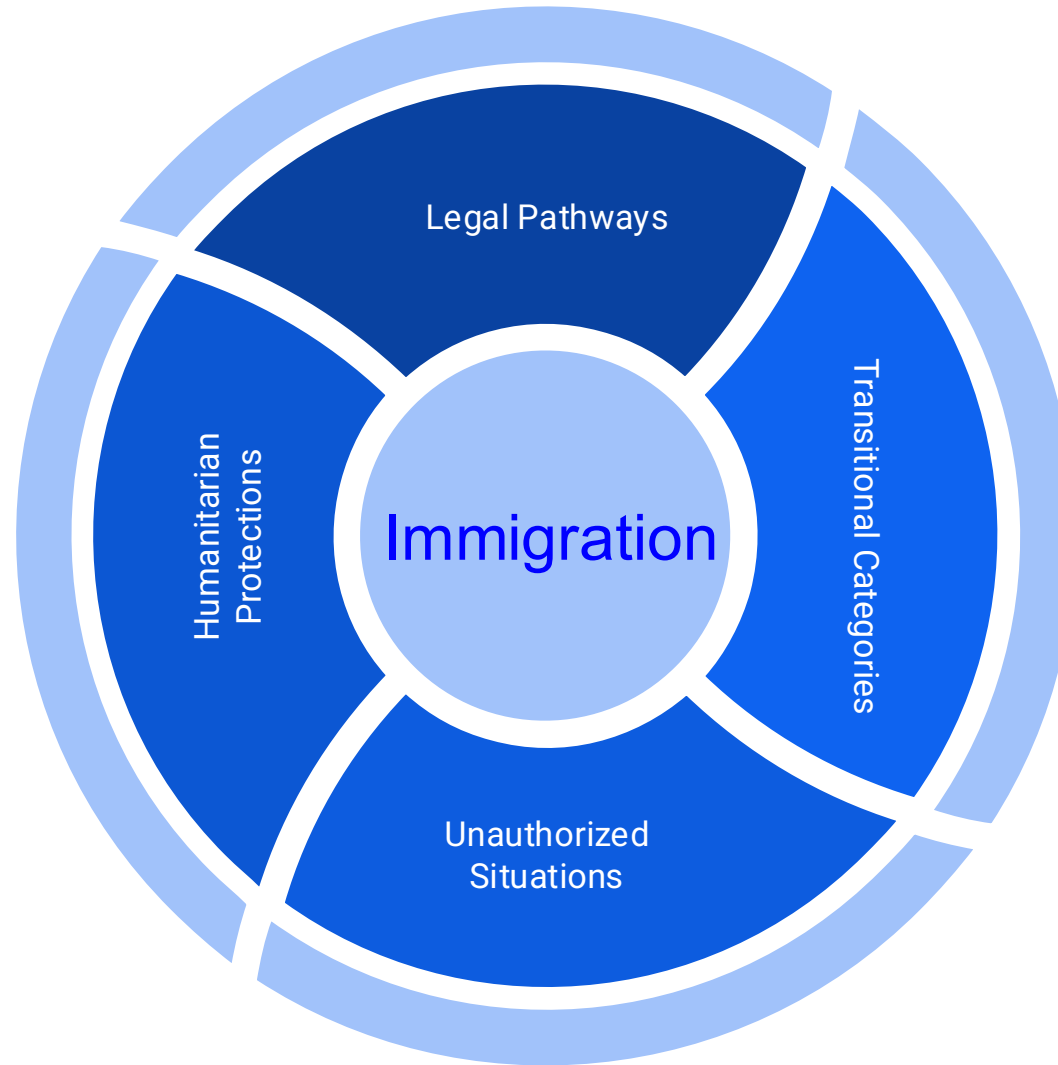
- What is Immigration?
 - Legal
 - Humanitarian
 - Unauthorized
- Paths to Citizenship
- Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Eligibility and Available Services

What Is Immigration?

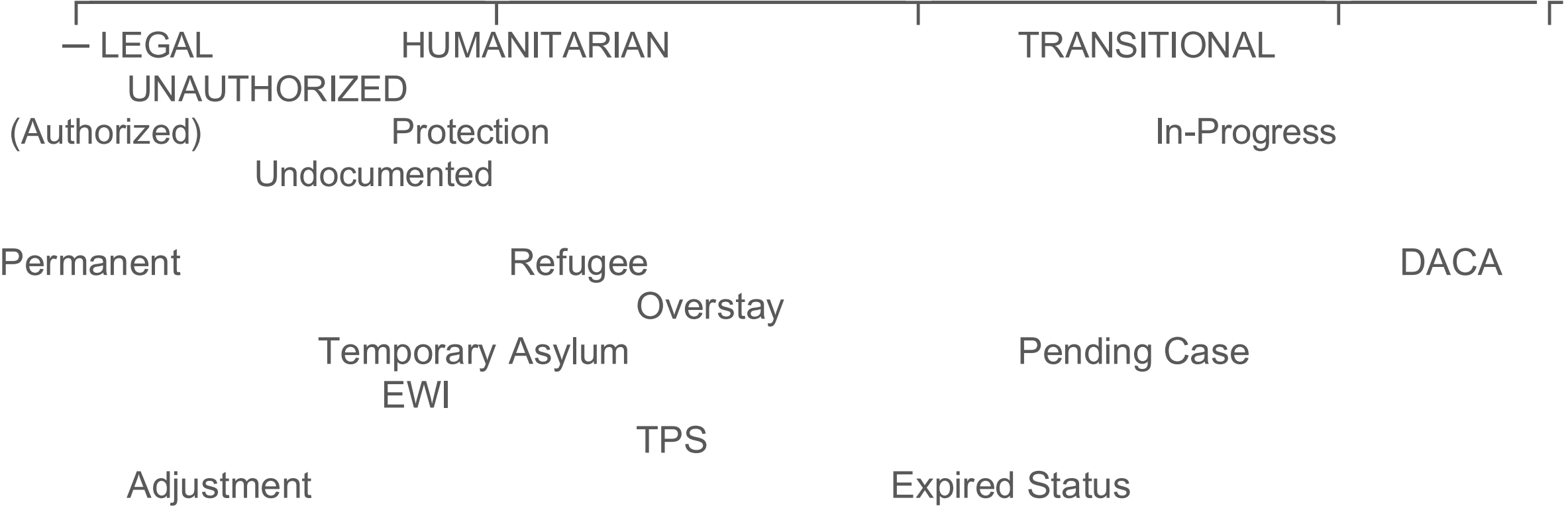
- Movement of people to another country
- Temporary or permanent
- Authorized or unauthorized
- Governed by federal law



Immigration is complex and multi-layered...



IMMIGRATION



Permanent Immigration (Green Card)

- Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs)
- Live and work permanently
- Path to citizenship

Main Categories:

- Family-based
- Employment-based
- Diversity Visa
- Special Immigrant



Family-Based Immigration

- Immediate relatives
- Spouses
- Children
- Parents
- Siblings



Employment-Based Immigration

- **Skilled workers**
- **Professionals**
- **Investors (EB-5)**
- **Extraordinary ability**



Diversity Visa Lottery

- Random selection program
- For countries with low immigration rates

Official Program Name:

Diversity Immigrant Visa Program



Temporary (Nonimmigrant) Visas

- **Specific purpose**
- **Limited duration**
- **Must follow visa terms**

Categories:

- **Work**
- **Study**
- **Tourism**
- **Family**



Work Visa

- H-1B
- H-2A
- H-2B
- L-1



Student and Exchange Visa

- F-1
- M-1
- J-1



Family & Visitor Visa

- K-1 (Fiancé)
- K-3 (Spouse)
- B-1 (Business)
- B-2 (Tourism)



Humanitarian Immigration

Protection for individuals fleeing danger.

Includes:

- **Refugees**
- **Asylees**
- **TPS**
- **Victim protection**



Refugees

- **Apply outside of the U.S.**
- **Must show persecution**

Work with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees





Who is a Refugee?

1. Individuals who cross an **international border**
2. **Cannot return** to country of origin
3. Unable to return due to...

race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion



15 YEARS

(ON AVERAGE)



There are 22.5 million refugees...

What percentage of refugees resettle to a third country?

Less than 1%

Common Countries of Refugee Origins

Democratic
Republic of Congo



Ukraine



Burma/Myanmar



Syria



Afghanistan



Asylum

- **Apply inside the U.S.**
- **Must prove fear of persecution**

Protected Grounds:

- **Race**
- **Religion**
- **Nationality**
- **Political opinion**
- **Social group**



Temporary Protected Status (TPS)

For countries experiencing:

- War
- Natural disasters
- Extraordinary conditions

***Temporary but renewable**



Victim Protection Visa

- U Visa
- T Visa
- VAWA protections



Unauthorized / Undocumented Status

Common Situations:

- Visa overstay
- Entry without inspection
- Expired status
- Denied but remained



Path to Citizenship

- **Permanent Resident**
- **Continuous residence**
- **Naturalization**
- **Oath of Allegiance**



Many Different Legal Statuses – ORR Eligible

Refugee, SIV, Amerasian

- Processed overseas, permanent legal status upon arrival
- Eligible for resettlement services for **5 years after arrival date**

Humanitarian Parolee (APA, U4U, Cuban/Haitian Entrants)

- Temporarily allowed in US, typically 2 years, must apply for asylum to receive permanent status
- Eligible for resettlement services for the **period of the HP status**

Asylee

- Processed after arrival, permanent legal status as of asylum date
- 90 days to apply for resettlement services after the date of asylum
- Eligible for resettlement services for **5 years from date of asylum**

Victims of Trafficking

- U or T Visa
- Eligible for services for **4 years from date granted status**
- May apply for permanent status (Green Card)

Many Different Legal Statuses – NOT ORR Eligible

Asylum-Seeker

- In the process of applying for asylum, has not received permanent legal status yet

TPS – Temporary Protected Status

- Eligible foreign nationals unable to return home safely due to conditions or circumstances preventing their country from adequately handling the return
- El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nepal, Nicaragua, Sudan, Venezuela, and many more

Nicaraguan & Venezuelan Parole/Entrant

- Similar process as Cuban/Haitian Parolees/Entrants

Other immigrants

- Diversity Lottery
- Temporary work visa
- Other documented or undocumented migrants



Share your Knowledge

What **piece of information** from the presentation so far was **new, surprising, or interesting** to you?

Share your
answers in
the chat!

Refugee Resettlement and Common Experiences of Refugees

- Who is a refugee?
- Reception & Placement
- Common Experiences of Refugees
 - Triple Trauma Paradigm
 - Educational Experiences
 - Cultural Considerations



Who is a Refugee?

1. Individuals who cross an **international border**
2. **Cannot return** to country of origin
3. Unable to return due to...

race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion

U.S. Refugee Admissions Process

The President annually determines refugee admission levels to the U.S. by world region.

FFY 2025 – 125,000

Jan 20, 2025 - EO 14163 stopped arrivals

Jan 27, 2025 – stop work order issued

Overseas processing also stopped

FFY 2026 – 7,500



REFUGEE VETTING PROCESS

Stage 1.



Stage 2.



Stage 3.



Stage 5.



Medical Screening
Recurrent Vetting

Stage 4.



Stage 6.

Cultural Orientation Classes and
Resettlement Location Chosen



U.S. Arrival



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

Refugees are subject to the highest level of security checks of any category of traveler to the United States.





Upon arrival in the U.S., refugees are provided essential services by resettlement agencies within the **first 90 days.**

- limited cash assistance
- medical assistance
- housing
- English as a Foreign Language classes
- employment services
- **enrollment in school**

From Harm to Home | Rescue.org



The First 90 Days of Refugee Resettlement





Ongoing Adjustment Services Up to 5 Years After Arrival



Agency Specific:

- Case management
- Employment services
- Intensive case management

Any Agency:

- Refugee school impact
- English classes
- Women's Empowerment

A young woman wearing a black hijab is looking down at a document she is holding. The document has Persian text, including the words "فرهنگ و فن" (Culture and Art) and "مکتب دینی" (Religious School). The background is a dark, textured wall with faint chalk markings. A solid yellow rectangle is in the top right corner, and a solid yellow circle is in the bottom left corner.

The Refugee Experience



Struggles Facing Refugee Students

- Trauma
 - Limited Formal Education, Interrupted Education
- Cultural Adjustments



The Triple Trauma Paradigm



Pre-Flight



Flight



Post-Flight



Refugee Children's Experience

It is critical to consider these aspects when assessing a refugee child's emotional/behavioral issues:

- Culture shock: Adapting to a new culture
- Survivor guilt: Why did I make it and they didn't
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): 50-90% of refugee children under 18 years of age have symptoms matching PTSD (ORR, 2015)
- Memories of home country and family/friends left behind
- Shifting family dynamics: Children learn English faster, women going to work, etc.



Educational Background of Refugee Children





Refugee Education Experience

- Gaps in Education
- Limited Access
- Lack of Structure
- Gender Dynamics





New concepts may include...

- Sitting in one place the entire class
- Raising one's hand to speak
- Girls attending school
- Co-ed classrooms
- Standing in single-file lines
- Homework
- Discipline methods
- The role of the parent in the U.S. school system

It is important to note that ***all situations are different.***



Special Considerations for Refugee Girls



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1 in 5 girls are not in school
(63 million worldwide)



Lack of Access to Education

Some reasons why girls may be kept home from school include:

- Heavy workload at home
- Acts as role of caretaker
- Cost of education
- Safety concerns
- Access to menstruation care



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Culture and Religion

- Avoid touching or shaking hands with unrelated people of opposite gender
- Holidays
 - Muslims observe Ramadan for one month every year □ abstain from eating and drinking between sunrise and sunset
 - Eid al Adha: Festival of Sacrifice
 - Eid al Fitr: End of Ramadan



Family and Community

- Families tend to be large and live in multigenerational homes
- Somalia is a clan-based society
 - Marriage is considered a relationship between two families/clans □ typically do not discuss outside of culture
- Gender roles
 - Women finding employment
 - Females may be expected to do housework or childcare, and less freedom



School and Education

- Concept of parents being a child's "first teacher" or to be active in current education is new
- Some parents may show teachers respect by not getting involved
- American values such as independence and self-reliance contradict with their community world-view



Mental Health

- Mental health is typically viewed as either being “crazy” or “sane”



Check-In

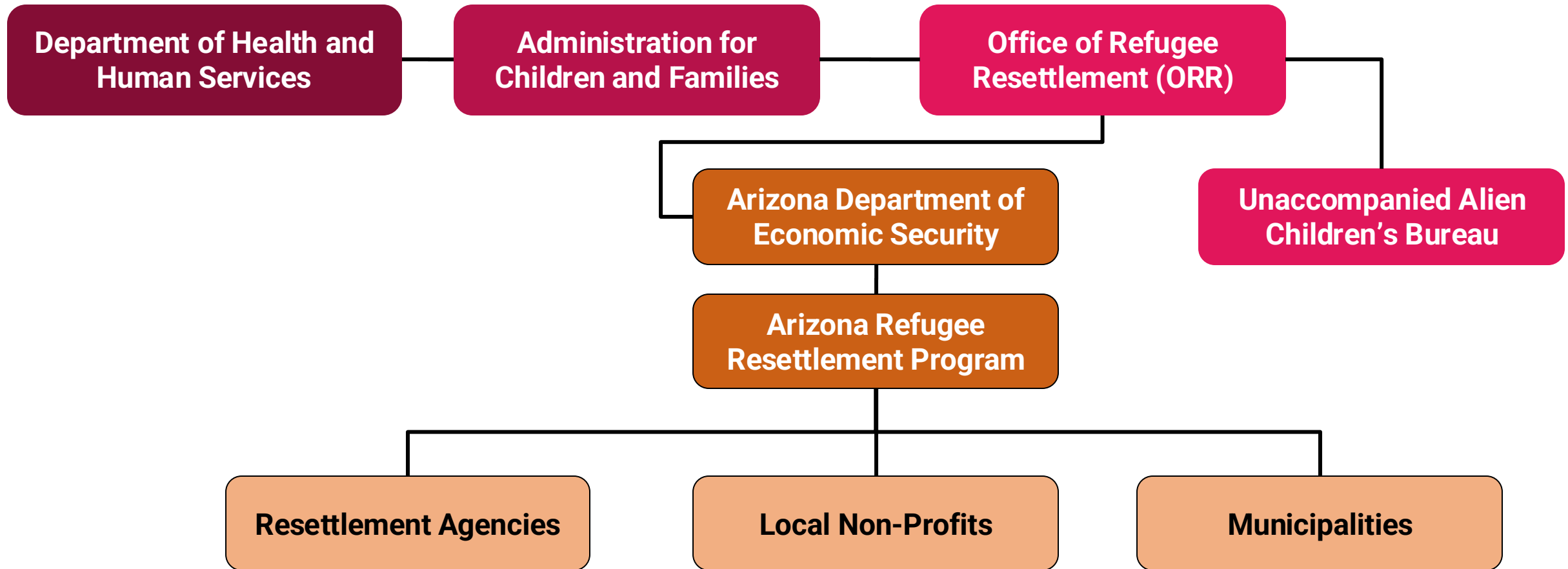
What **thoughts** or **first-hand experiences** do you have about how this information may **impact** your school or district's **students and families**?

Share your
thoughts in
the chat!

Refugee Resettlement in Arizona

- Refugee Resettlement Organizational Chart
 - Resettlement Agencies in Arizona
- Arizona Refugee Resettlement Data
- Potentially ORR-Eligible Individuals in Arizona

Refugee Resettlement Organizational Chart





Resettlement Agencies in Arizona

In addition to the International Rescue Committee, Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of the Southwest currently provide reception & placement (R&P) services to refugees in Arizona.



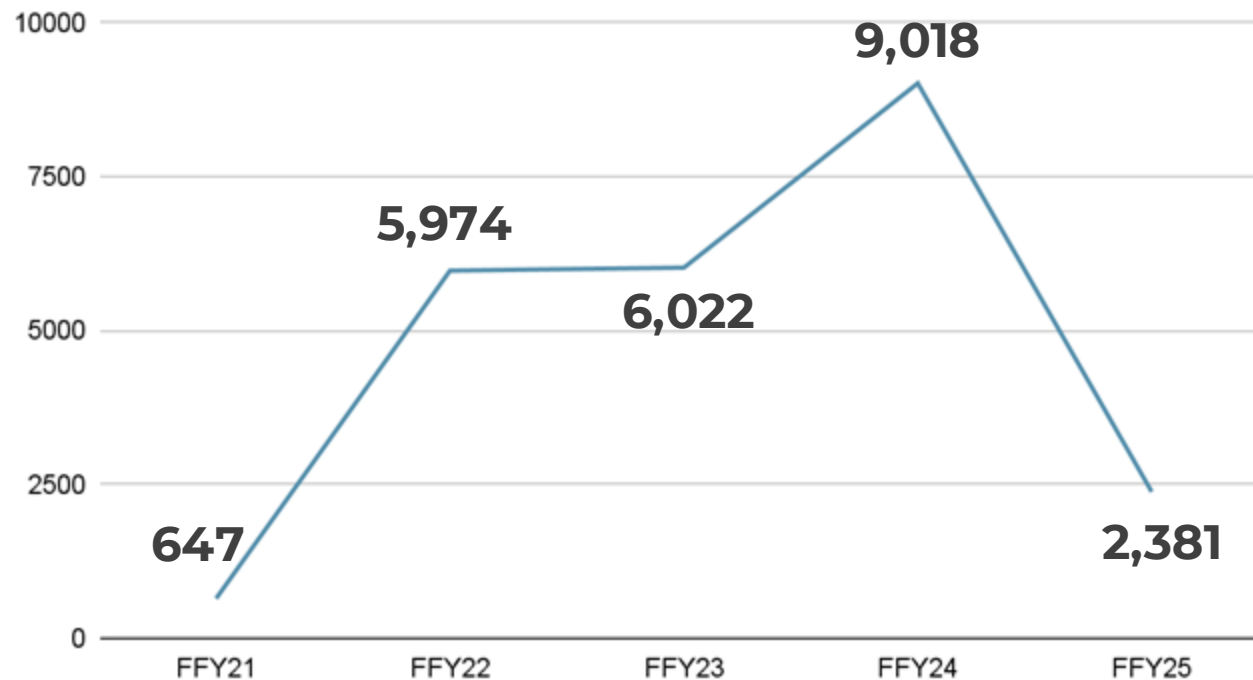
The R&P program provides initial 90-day support through items such as housing, food, cultural orientation, and employment.

Families can be eligible to receive continued support for up to 5 years through elements such as case management, English classes, medical assistance, employment, etc.

Arizona Refugee Resettlement Data

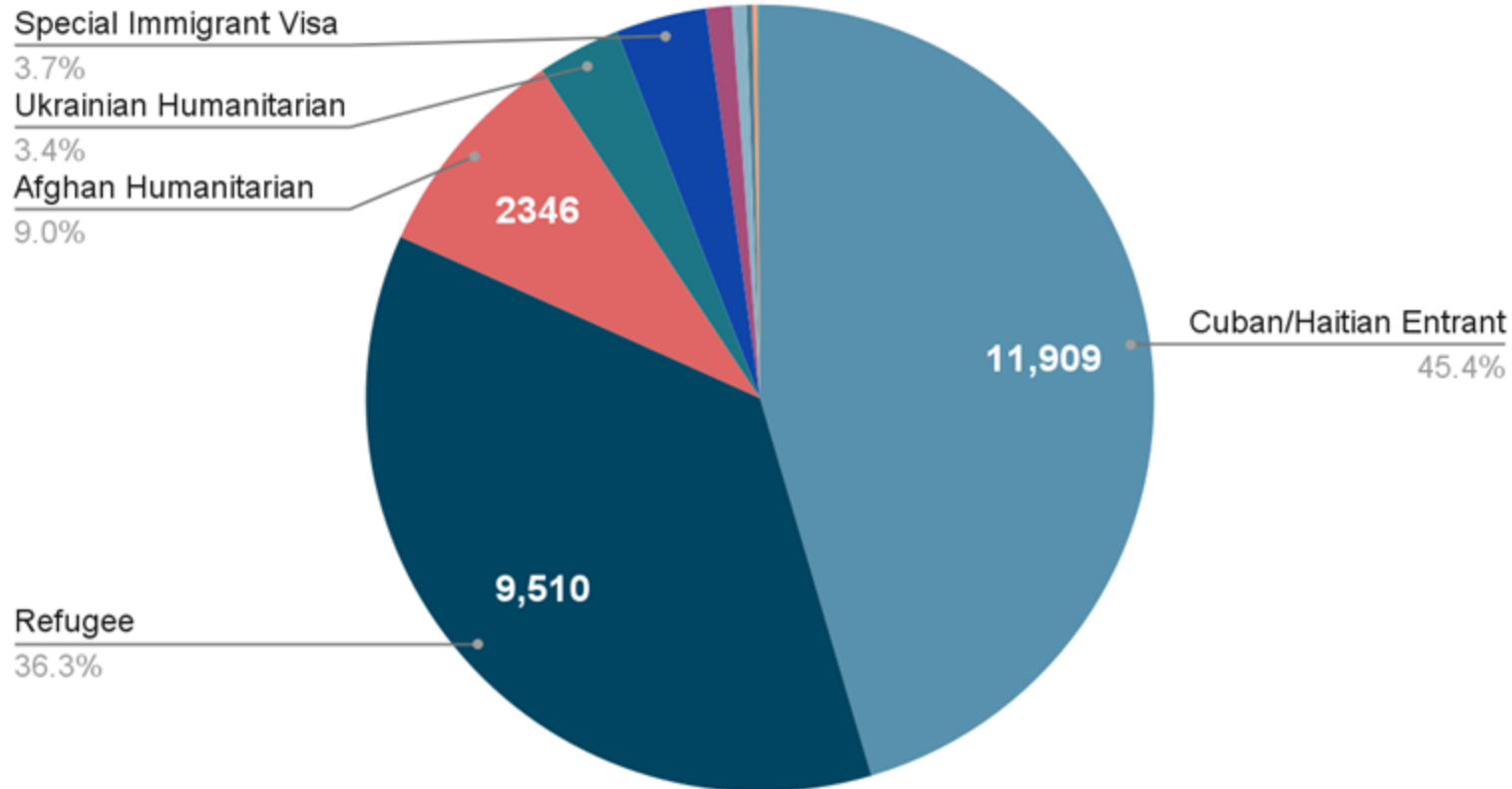
This data reflects Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) eligible individuals resettled and supported in Arizona.

Refugee Resettlement in Arizona



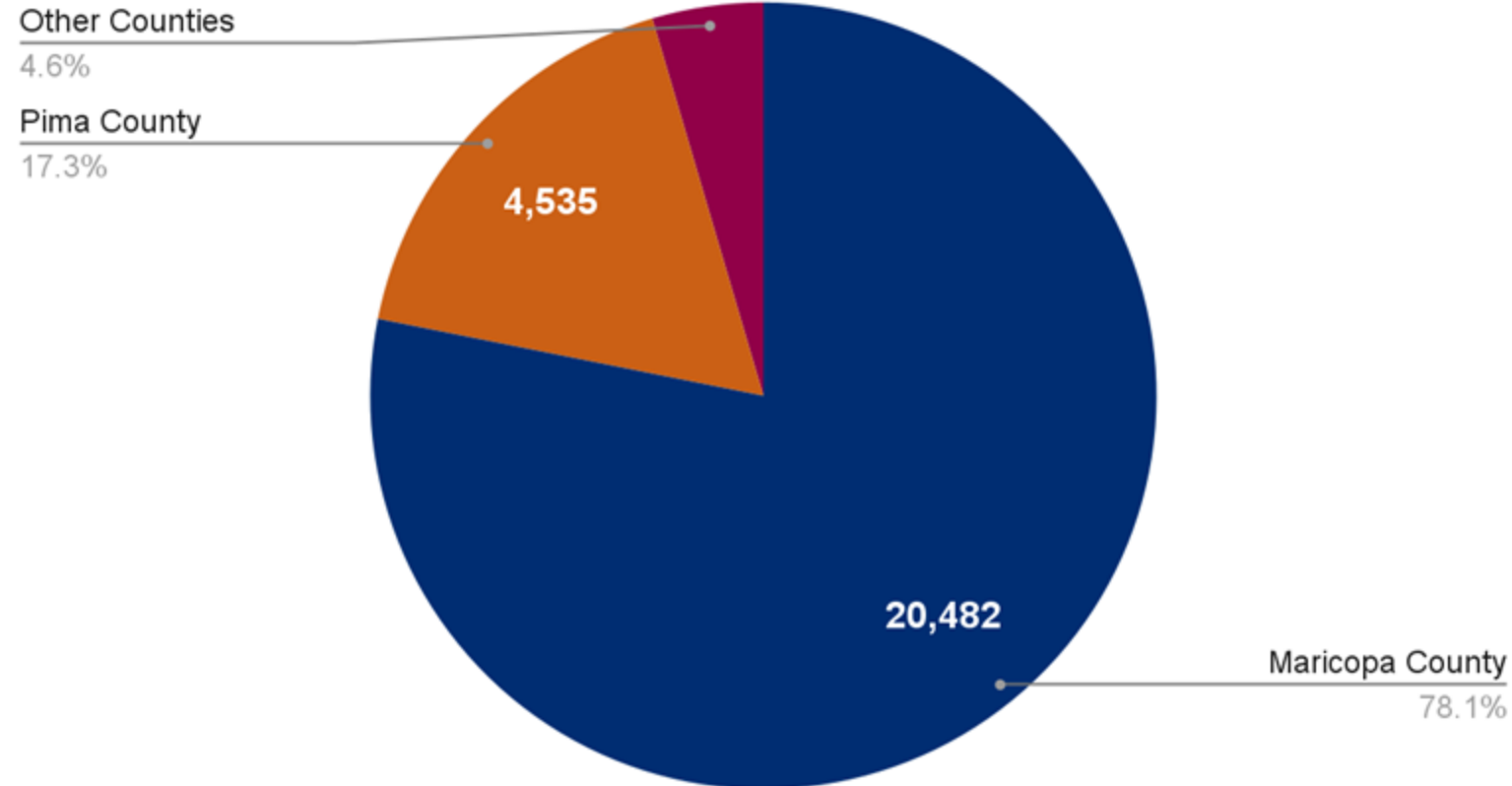
- Arizona consistently ranks among the **top ten** states welcoming refugees annually.
- Potentially Eligible Refugees in Arizona (Arrivals over the past 5 years): **26,185**
 - Roughly 30% ages 0-17: **7,855**
- Presidential determination of admission for the U.S. in FFY 2026:
 - **7,500**

Potentially ORR-Eligible Individuals in Arizona



**Potentially
ORR-Eligible
Individuals in
Arizona, 2021-
2026**

Arrivals in Arizona by County



**ORR-Eligible
Individuals:
Arrivals in
Arizona by
County 2021-
2026**

Educational Rights of Refugee and Other Newcomer Students

- Educational Rights of Refugee and Other Newcomer Students
- Ensuring Access to Programs and Services for Qualifying Students
- Considerations for Enrollment
- Translation and Interpretation Requirements

Educational Rights of Refugee and Other Newcomer Students

Refugee Student Support considers a **“newcomer”** student to be **any immigrant student that has recently arrived in the United States.**

A newcomer student may be a(n):

- Refugee/Asylee
- Humanitarian Parolee/Entrant
- Asylum-seeker
- Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Holder
- Survivor of Torture or Victim of Trafficking
- Humanitarian Migrant

All newcomer students are entitled to a free, accessible, and appropriate public education, regardless of their actual or perceived immigration status.

Ensuring Access and Success for Newcomer Students

Newcomer students may qualify for a variety of programs, services, and activities such as:

- English language learner programs
 - Title IV interpretation and translation services for parents and guardians
- Special Education Services
- Preschool / HeadStart Programs
- Homeless Education Program (McKinney-Vento)
 - Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (UHY)
- Foster Care Education Program
- Migrant Education Program
- before and after school programming
- extracurricular programming

It is important to ensure **accurate coding** and data collection for students! Many students will be provided **multiple identifiers** and AzEDS **need codes!**

Housing and School Enrollment Trends Among Refugees in Arizona

- **Initial Arrival**

- Most likely supported by a resettlement agency
- Can develop “pockets” of resettlement in certain neighborhoods
- Housing availability and patterns

- **Movement After Arrival**

- Goal of self-sustainability and family autonomy
- Families move due to a variety of reasons, such as housing affordability, seeking community, family, and language
- Some families move to Arizona from different U.S. states

Enrollment Processes

Enrollment of refugee students may occur in a variety of processes.

- **Enrollment supported by a resettlement agency** (refugees only)
 - Occurs within 30 days of arrival to the U.S.
 - Typically supported by a translator familiar with the process
 - If possible, preparations should be made by the school enrolling the student(s):
 - prepare enrollment packet in advance
 - welcoming procedures
 - translation services
- **Enrollment not supported by a resettlement agency** (may be any newcomer or refugee)
 - May occur at any point after arrival, sometimes within first 30 days
 - May need immediate translation services and support with the process
 - When possible, schools should be prepared

Refugee and Other Newcomer Student Enrollment

LEAs may **not** maintain enrollment practices which may “**chill or discourage**” enrollment based on “**actual or perceived immigration status**” (Plyler v. Doe, 1982).

*Since immigration status **cannot** be a factor in enrollment, the **goal** of collecting student information is to **support the student's success and connect them with services and resources.***

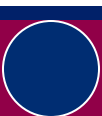
ORR-Eligibility and Enrollment

When enrolling newcomer children and youth, it is important that LEAs ensure use of the correct coding for students.

The student need code **“refugee”** (code **16**) is to be applied only to students who have been granted **refugee status** in accordance with all applicable laws of the United States.

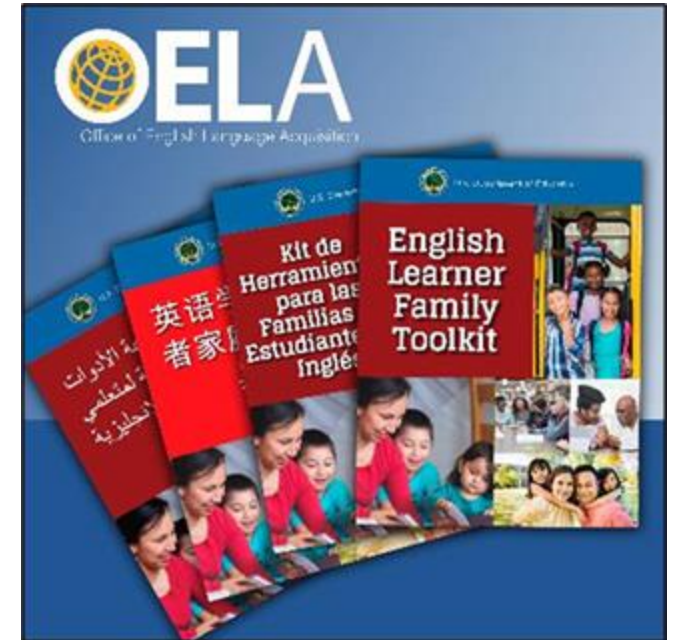
This includes all **ORR-eligible** populations. This definition is based on definitions provided within [45 C.F.R. § 400](#) and [A.R.S § 15-1803](#).

Please note that refugee and other newcomer students may also qualify for the student need code **“immigrant”** (code **8**). This code has a time-limit limit that does not align with the time-limit of the **“refugee”** code.



Translation and Interpretation

- **LEAs are responsible for providing translation and interpretation services for parents and guardians of students** when necessary.
- According to the [U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education](#), “Schools must communicate information to limited English proficient parents in a language they can understand about any program, service, or activity that is called to the attention of parents who are proficient in English.”
- This guidance is in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, as well as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).



Resources available at
ncela.ed.gov/educator-support/toolkits

Closing and Next Steps

- Webinar Series Sessions 2 and 3
- Get Connected!
- Questions?

On the Horizon

Thank you for joining today's session! To build upon what you learned today, join us at the next two sessions in this webinar series:

- Ensuring Educational Access for Refugee and Other Newcomer Students
 - Tuesday, March 31st, 2026 from 11:30am-1pm
 - [Register Here!](#)
- Supporting the Academic Achievement of Refugee and Other Newcomer Students in the Classroom and Beyond
 - Thursday, April 16th, 2026 from 11:30am-1pm
 - [Register Here!](#)



Refugee School Impact Grant (RSIG)

International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Lutheran Social Services (LSS) are eager to serve students and families as well as district and school staff with RSIG programming.



Phoenix: Claudia Shepherd at Claudia.Shepherd@rescue.org

Tucson: Michelle Buttrum at Michelle.Buttrum@rescue.org



Phoenix: Francisca Gil at FGil@lss-sw.org

Tucson: Daniel Zizovic at dzizovic@lss-sw.org

Contacts and Resources

Contact Marisa at ADE
Refugee Student Support at
RefugeeStudentSupport@azed.gov

Contact Claudia at the IRC at
Claudia.Shepherd@rescue.org or
(602)214-3635



Visit the ADE Refugee Student
Support website for resources and
upcoming learning opportunities!



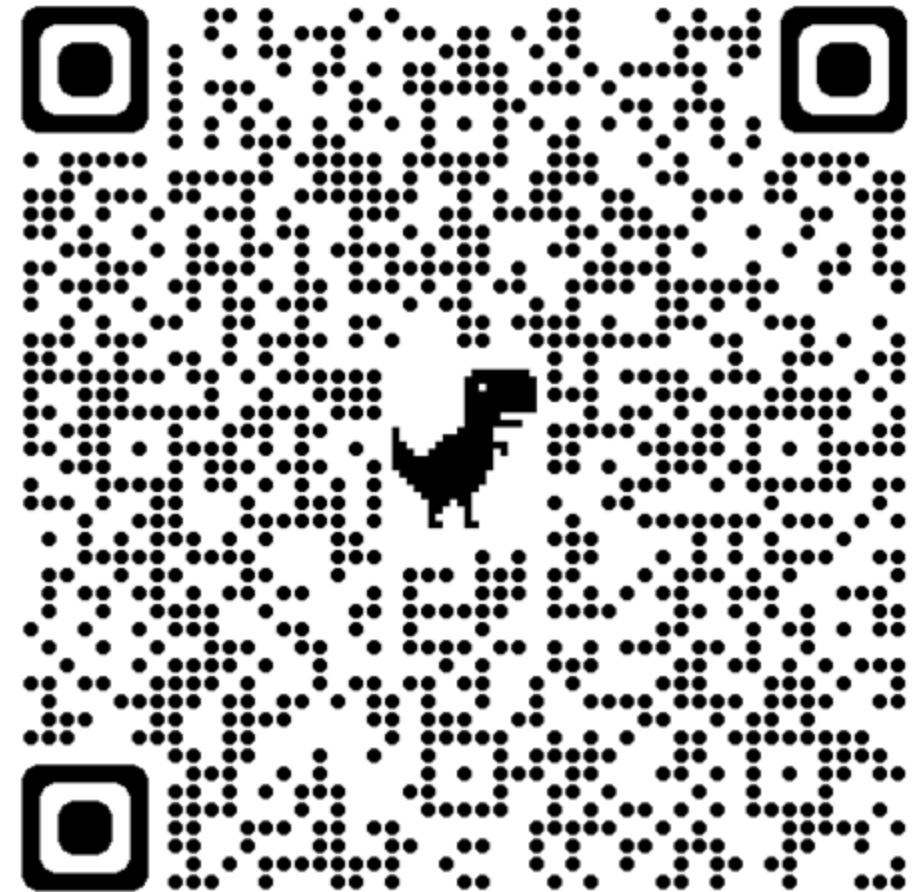
Sign-Up for the Refugee Student Support Mailing List!

Interested in receiving updates on **resources** and **opportunities** available through ADE Refugee Student Support and partnering organizations?

Sign-up for our mailing list by scanning the QR code or by visiting our website at

www.azed.gov/welcome-refugee-student-support

and clicking the sign-up link at the bottom of the home page!





Questions?

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