



Refugee Student Support and the International Rescue Committee Collaborative Webinar Series

Session 2: Ensuring Educational Access for Refugee and
Other Newcomer Students

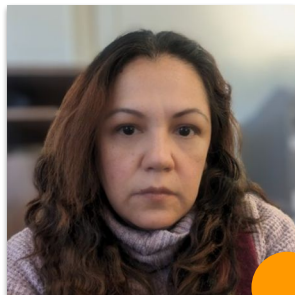
March 2026

Introductions



Marisa Peña

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Youth Program Coordinator
International Rescue Committee

Refugee Student Support



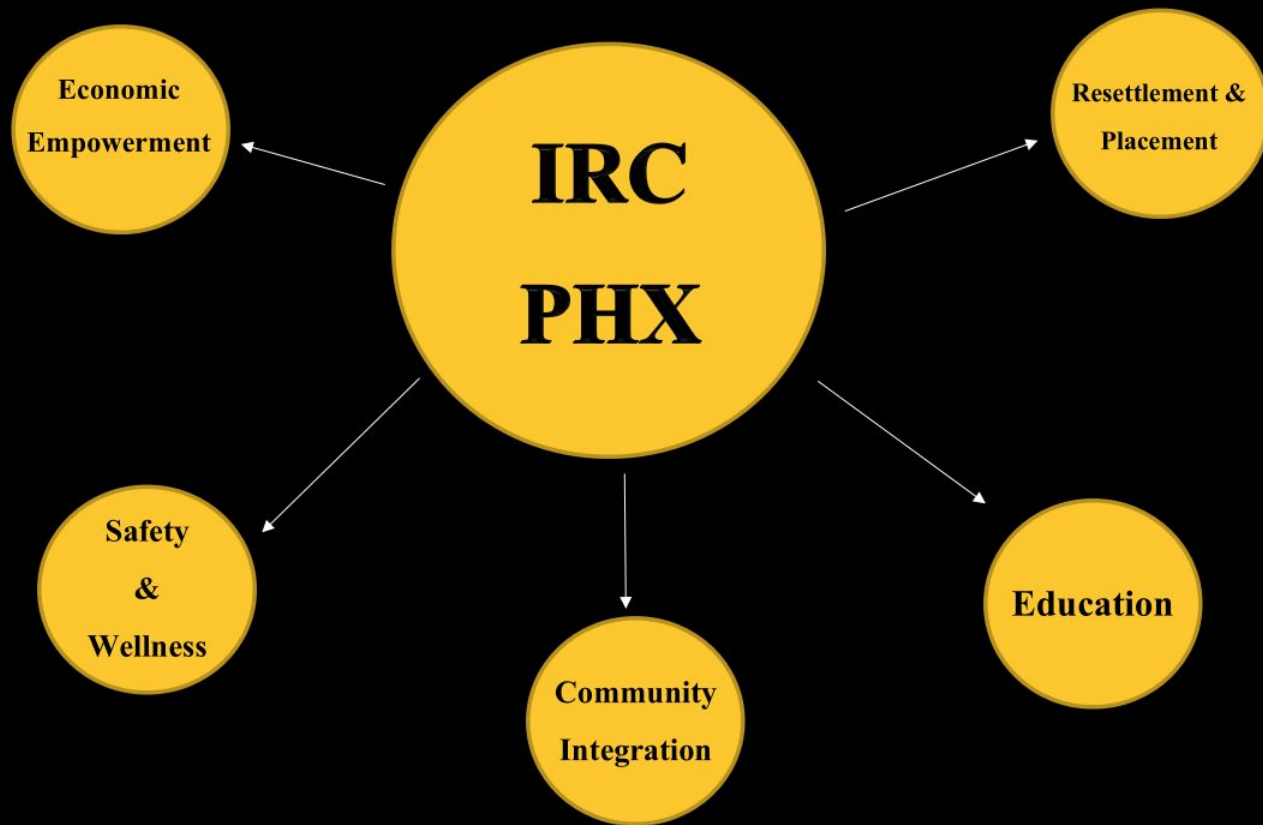
Refugee Student Support (RSS) serves **local education agencies** (LEAs), **community-based organizations**, **students**, and **families** to ensure that newcomer students are **enrolled without delay or discriminatory practice** and have **access** to educational and wrap-around services.



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

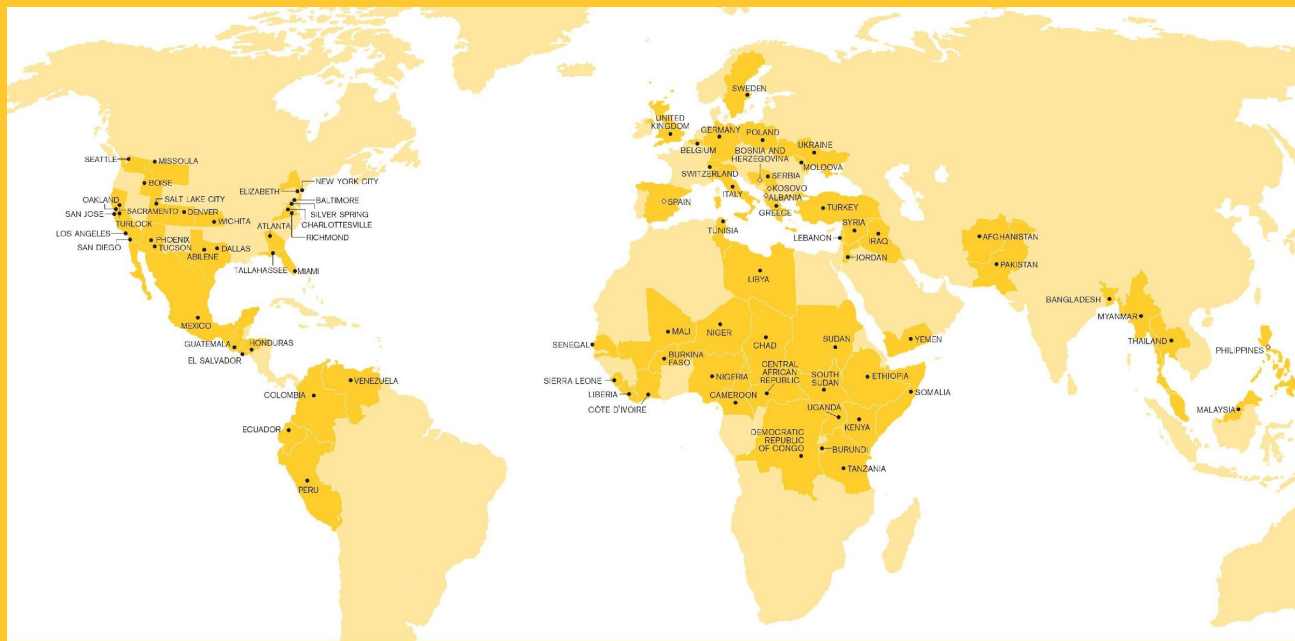


Through **collaborations** with LEAs, resettlement agencies, external (state and national) partners, and other community-based organizations, RSS aims to **facilitate connections** between newcomers and those who may support them.





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...

- Local education agency **responsibilities** to ensure refugee and other newcomer students have **access** to a free, accessible, and public education
- Relevant **context** to ensure newcomer student **access** to all available and applicable educational **services and programming**



Introductions

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

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

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

Were you able to join us for **Session 1**?

Share your
answers in
the pop-up
poll!

Webinar Series Session 1:

Foundational Knowledge for Serving Refugee and Other Newcomer Students and Families



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

Today's session will build upon information shared in session 1, such as:

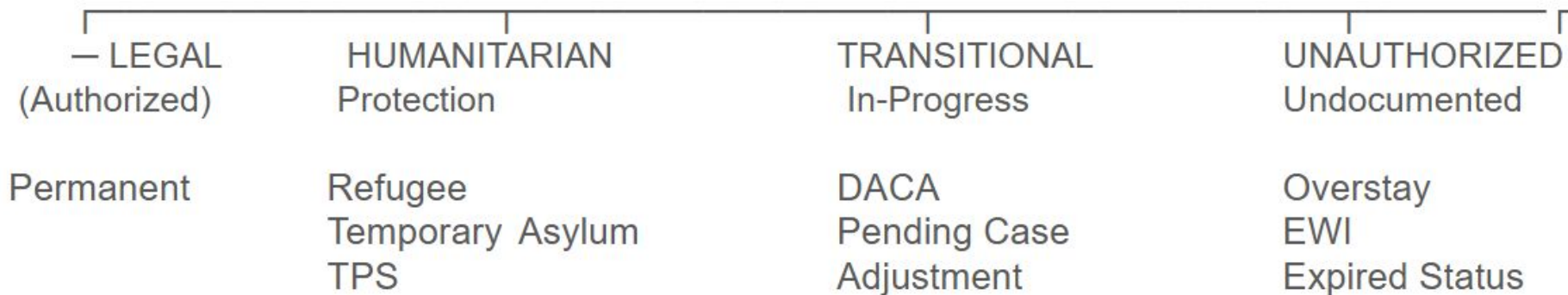
- Immigration classifications and processes
- Refugee resettlement and common experiences
- Core educational rights of immigrant students

In case you missed it, slides and a recording of the session are now available on the [Refugee Student Support webpage!](#)



Session 1 Overview

IMMIGRATION



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**

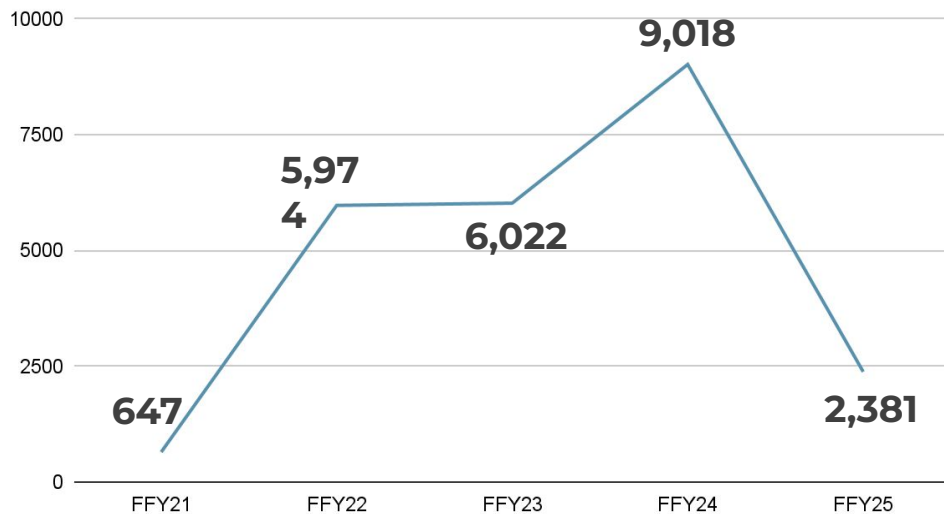
Victims of Trafficking

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

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**

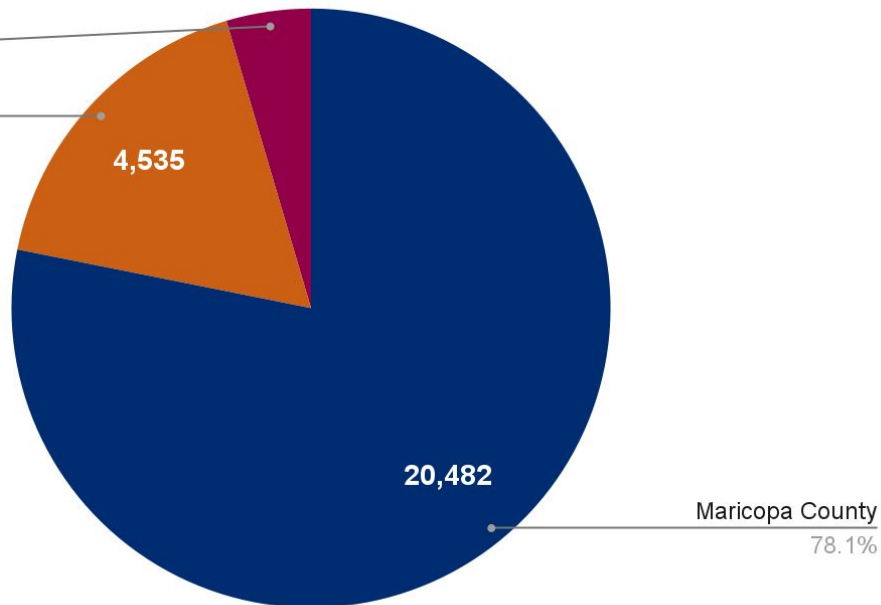
Arrivals in Arizona by County

Other Counties

4.6%

Pima County

17.3%



**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
- Intersectionality of Newcomer Students
- Ensuring Access to Programs and Services
- Translation and Interpretation Requirements

Educational Rights of Refugee and Other Newcomer Students

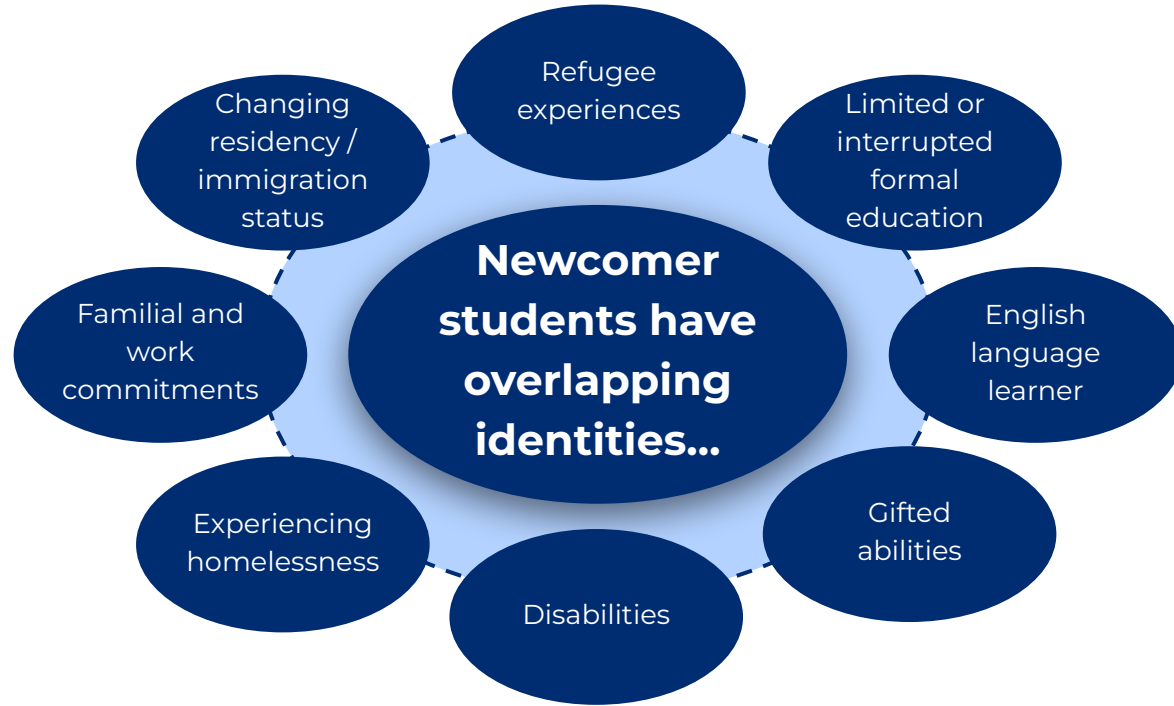
Refugee Student Support considers a “**newcomer**” student to be **any immigrant student that has recently arrived in the United States.**

A newcomer student may be a(n):

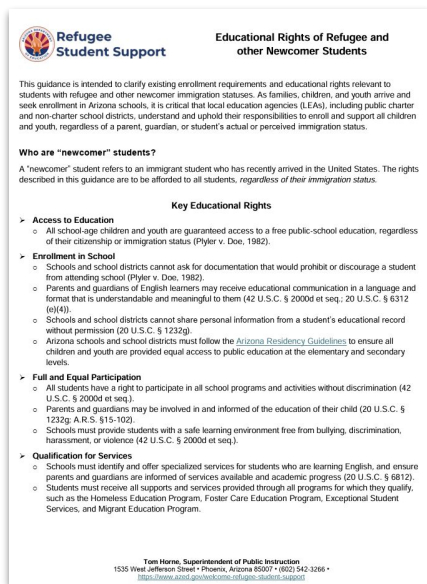
- Refugee/Asylee
- Humanitarian Parolee/Entrant
- Asylum-seeker
- Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Holder
- Survivor of Torture or Victim of Trafficking
- Humanitarian Migrant

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

Intersectionality of Newcomer Students



Key Educational Rights for Newcomer Students



[This resource can be found on the RSS website.](#)

- Access to a free, accessible, and appropriate public education public education, regardless of citizenship or immigration status (Plyler v. Doe, 1982).
- Enrollment in school in accordance with all federal and state laws.
- Full and equal participation without discrimination.
- Access to all services and programs which the student qualifies for.
- Translation and interpretation services for parents and guardians to ensure awareness.

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.***

Ensuring Access and Success for Newcomer Students

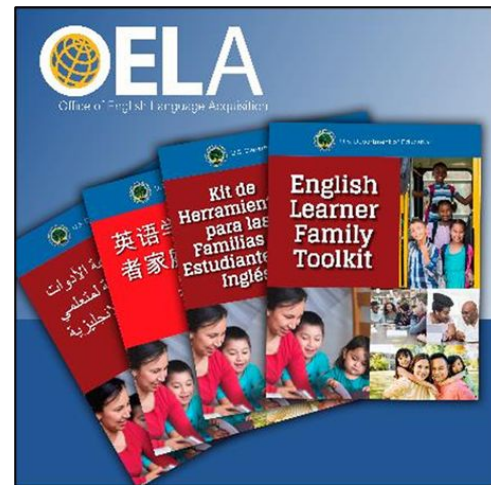
Remember, newcomer students may qualify for a variety of programs, services, and activities such as:

- 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!**

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

Enrolling Refugee and Other Newcomer Students

- Housing and School Enrollment Trends Among Refugees in Arizona
- Enrollment Processes for Refugee and Other Newcomer Students
- Ensuring Accurate and Responsible Determination of ORR Eligibility and Coding
- Enrolling High School-Aged Newcomer Youth

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 of Newcomer Students

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

- **Enrollment supported by a resettlement agency** (ORR-eligible 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** (Any newcomer.)
 - 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

Identification of ORR-Eligible Students

- Individuals who are classified to be [“Office of Refugee Resettlement \(ORR\) Eligible”](#) are **eligible** for select benefits and services, such as **educational supports** provided by ORR-funded programming.
- Therefore, accurately and responsibly identifying ORR-Eligible students can **support their educational progress**.
- **Upon enrollment**, parents or guardians may present a variety of documents to establish identity, the child’s date of birth, and other necessary information for enrollment. LEAs may **interpret these documents** to **connect them to services** they may be eligible for.
- Remember! Since enrollment practices may not chill or discourage students or families from educational participation based on their immigration status, **the goal of collecting information and determining classification is to support the student’s success and connecting them with resources**.

Identification of ORR-Eligible Students

Steps to identify ORR-Eligible students at enrollment:

- **Search for a “class of admission” code** on student documentation provided at enrollment.
 - Documents that may be provided upon enrollment:
 - I-94
 - Travel document
 - Green card
 - “Class of admission” coding found on documentation that indicate a student may be ORR-Eligible:
 - RE6, RE7, RE8, or RE9
 - AS6, AS7, or AS8
- **Search for a date of admission or residence**
 - In general, students must have a date of admission within 5 years of the current date to qualify for ORR-Eligibility.

Identification of ORR-Eligible Students



When viewing a Permanent Resident Card, the following can be found:

- The “Category” section is where an LEA may look to determine a student’s potential ORR-Eligibility status
- The “Resident Since” section will provide the student’s date of admission to determine how long they have been a resident in the U.S.

An U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) I-94 Form can also be used to determine a student's class and date of admission to determine their ORR-Eligibility.



U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Securing America's Borders

Admission (I-94) Record Number : 123456789A0
Most Recent Date of Entry: 2020 January 15
Class of Admission : H-1B
Admit Until Date : 01/14/2023
Details provided on the I-94 Information form:

Last/Surname : SMITH
First (Given) Name : JOHN ADAM
Birth Date : 1972 June 15
Passport Number : 01234567
Country of Issuance : Brazil

An Immigration Inspector at a Port of Entry will issue to all persons arriving except U.S. citizens, immigrants, returning resident aliens, and Canadian citizens visiting or in transit. Beginning in 2013, a copy of the automated I-94 record may be downloaded from www.i94.com. Some people still receive paper records and their records may not be available online.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Securing America's Borders

Most Recent I-94

Admission (I-94) Record Number: 800000000000
Most Recent Dated Entry: 2017 January 15
Class of Admission: **TD**
Arrival Date: 2016
Details provided on the (I-94) information form:

Last Name: VOID
First (Given) Name: VOID
Birth Date: VOID
Place of Birth: VOID
Country of Origin: VOID

Stamp shows Immigration status. Codes RE1, etc. may be handwritten on front or back.

Form I-94 shows:
Identity
Immigration Status
Date of entry
Nationality* (if needed)

Note: USCIS changed to blue ink on stamps effective July 1, 2014. Older documentation may have red or red/blue ink.

Refugee stamp

Asylum stamp

Parole stamp

Identity
Date of Birth
Date of Issuance
Nationality

ORR Eligibility and Enrollment

If ORR-Eligibility cannot be determined by reviewing enrollment documentation, LEAs can consider the following **alternative options** to ensure accurate and responsible identification of ORR-Eligible students:

- **Utilize an intake form** or process that allows a family to share if they are being supported by a refugee resettlement agency or case manager.
- Have a **conversation** with the family in a setting an manner that is private and welcoming. Avoid asking specifically about immigration status. In your conversation, **ask questions and listen** for clues that may help you determine the if a student is a refugee.
- **Analyze student data** to determine what students may by ORR-eligible based on other factors such as immigrant status, country of birth, and date of initial enrollment.
- **Collaborate with local resettlement agencies** to establish data-sharing agreements to identify students with ORR-eligibility.

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. Learn more about this code on the [ADE Title III website](#).

Enrolling High School-Aged Newcomer Youth

- All efforts must be made to ensure students gain **full and/or partial credit** for academic work completed outside of the enrolling LEA, including in **countries outside of the U.S.**
- Necessity for **English-language services** cannot impede a student's access to **grade-level content**.
- Arizona's **mandatory age of K-12 attendance** (6-16 years old) does differ from the state's age of **eligibility to attend** public school (21 years old). This should not impose a **barrier to enrolling** and supporting students with obtaining a diploma.
- Provide **opportunities to obtain credit** to ensure a student will obtain a diploma before "aging-out" of school (turning 22), such as before, after, and summer school programming, expedited courses, and work study credits.



The Reality of Alternative Programming for High School-Aged Newcomer Youth

For high school-aged newcomer youth enrolling in U.S. public school for the first time, it may seem reasonable to suggest that the youth seek **alternatives** to high school enrollment, such as an online high school or GED program. However, the following **realities** face youth entering these programs:

- **English language supports** are not sufficient or are not provided, creating a barrier for students accessing the content
- **Integration, English proficiency, and self-sufficiency** are stronger and more successful for students attending in-person high school than online programming with little to no interaction with others
- **Cost, transportation, class time, and other commitments** (work and familial) can create barriers for student access to programming
- Support and access to **postsecondary options** are less for students not enrolled in in-person high school



Ensuring Access and Success for Refugee and Other Newcomer Students

- Ensuring Access and Success for Newcomer Students with Overlapping Identities
 - Immigrant
 - Homelessness
 - Disabilities
 - Enrichment Programming
 - English Language Learner



Check-In

In your experience, what **educational services** or **programming** provided by your school or district have been most **effective in serving** newcomer students and families?

Share your
answers in
the chat!

Ensuring Access and Success for Newcomer Students

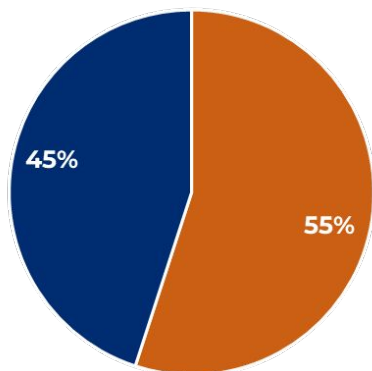
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- Foster Care Education Program
- Migrant Education Program
- before and after school programming
- extracurricular programming

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

Accurate Identification of Immigrant Students

Immigrant



■ Refugee & Immigrant ■ Refugee Only

- In school year 24-25, 53 LEAs reported refugee student enrollment, with **55%** also identified as **immigrant**.
- Section 3201(5) of Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), defines immigrant children and youth as individuals who:
 - (A) are aged 3 through 21;
 - (B) were not born in any State; and
 - (C) have not been attending one or more schools in any one or more States for more than 3 full academic years.
- [Additional guidance can be found on the ADE Title III webpage.](#)

Newcomer Students Experiencing Homelessness

For **any student experiencing homelessness**, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act ensures services to maintain **access and removal of barriers** to a free, accessible, and appropriate public education.

To qualify, students must **lack a fixed, regular, or adequate** primary nighttime residence. This is determined by an LEA's **McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison**.



Fixed: Stationary, permanent, not subject to change.



Regular: Used on a predictable, routine, consistent basis.

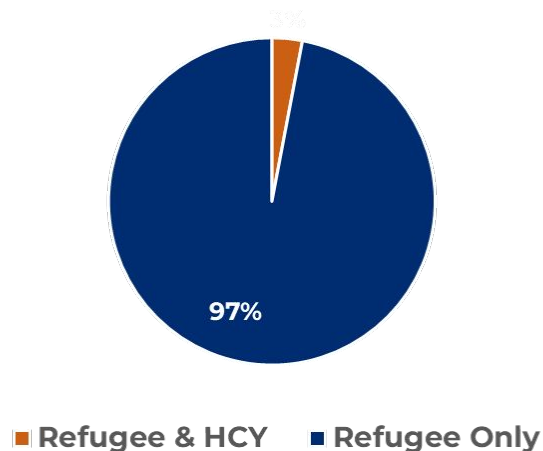


Adequate: Lawfully and reasonably sufficient.

Does it sufficiently meet the physical, psychological, fundamental and structural needs typically met in a home environment?

The McKinney-Vento Act: Key Considerations for Refugee Families

Homeless Children
and Youth (HCY)



- In school year 24-25, 53 LEAs reported refugee student enrollment.
- Roughly **3%** of identified refugee students are also identified as **experiencing homelessness**.
 - Under-identification and over-identification
- Consider “circumstance supported by cultural norms” when supporting newcomer families and determining if they are experiencing homelessness.

The McKinney-Vento Act: Key Considerations for Refugee Families

- **Awareness**
 - Critical to identification, provision of services, and self-advocacy
- **Immediate enrollment & school stability**
 - School of origin or school in the attendance area
 - Open enrollment may not be included in these options, but identification must still occur
- **Student-Centered Decisions**
 - All decisions should be made in consideration of what is in the “best-interest” of the child or youth



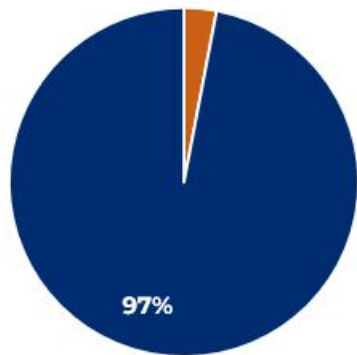
The McKinney-Vento Act: Resources

- [Arizona HEP Website](#)
 - [McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison Contact List](#)
 - [Arizona HEP Newsletter Sign-Up](#)
 - [Guidance, Resources, and So Much More!](#)
 - **4 New** SchoolHouse Connection and Arizona HEP Guidance Documents on the topic of Newcomer Students Experiencing Homelessness



Refugee Students with Disabilities

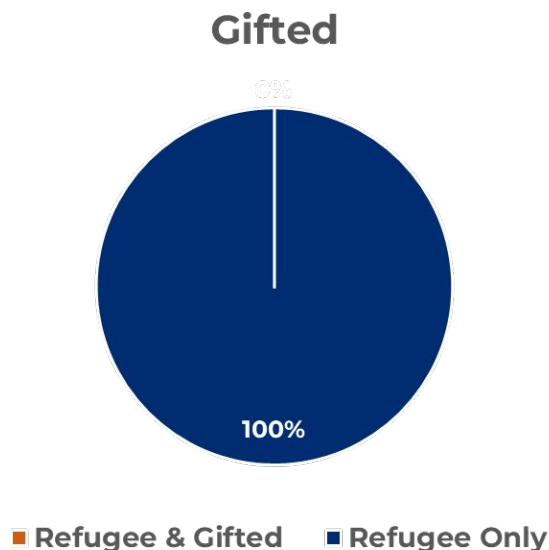
Students with Disabilities



■ Refugee & Disabled ■ Refugee Only

- In school year 24-25, 53 LEAs reported refugee student enrollment, with **3%** also identified as having a **disability**.
- According to IDEA and Arizona state law, the **process to identify, evaluate, and provide services** for children who are new to the country is the same as that for children who are new to Arizona from another state in the US. This includes the following:
 - The request and review process for special education documentation;
 - AZ FIND (Child Find) screening, referral, evaluation, and IEP development process and timeline;
 - The requalification process, when necessary, to review and revise services to ensure appropriateness; and
 - The provision of supports for parents and guardians including translation services, trainings, etc.

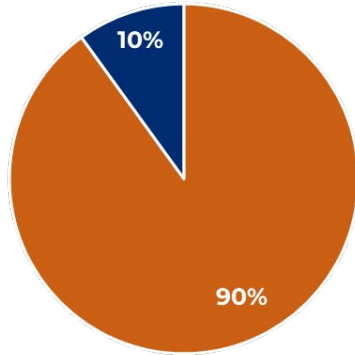
Newcomer Student Access to Extracurricular Programming



- In school year 24-25, 53 LEAs reported refugee student enrollment, with **0%** also identified as **gifted**.
- Newcomer students should have equal access to extracurricular programming, such as:
 - gifted and talented programs
 - early childhood programs
 - before, after, and summer school programming
 - career and technical education
 - advanced placement (AP)

English Learner Student Performance

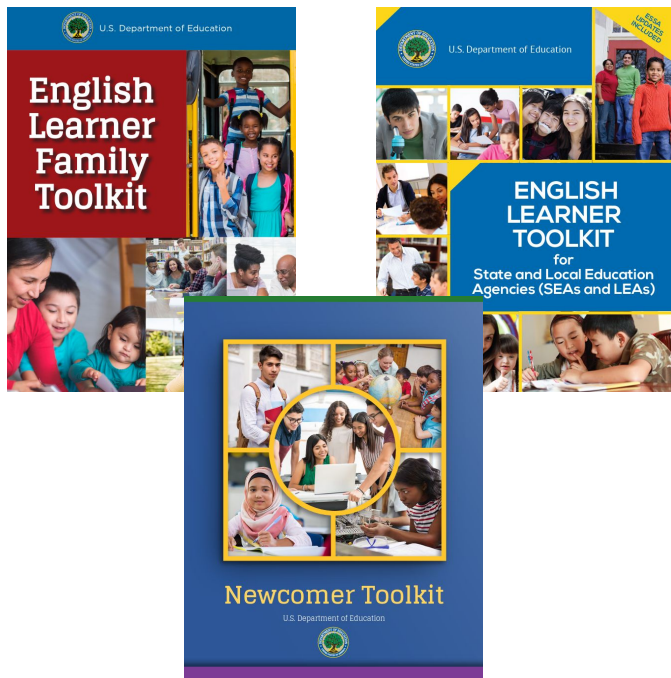
English Learners



■ Refugee & English Learner ■ Refugee Only

- In school year 24-25, 53 LEAs reported refugee student enrollment, with **90%** also identified as **English learners**.
- In school year 2023-2024, **English Learners** in Arizona showed...
 - **17%** proficiency in ELA in the 3rd grade, and **5%** proficiency in ELA in the 11th grade.
 - **25%** proficiency in Math in the 3rd grade, and **8%** proficiency in Math in the 7th grade.
 - A 4-year graduation rate of **59%**, compared to 78% of all students in Arizona.
 - A dropout rate of **7%**, compared to 5% of all students in Arizona.
- **Strong EL programming** must be made available to refugee and other newcomer students who are English learners.

Resources for English Learners and Newcomer Students



The U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition has created three toolkits designed to promote high-quality educational experience for ELs and their families. These toolkits are designed for use by school leaders, educators, and families. Toolkits available include:

- Family Toolkit (available in multiple languages)
- English Learner Toolkit
- Newcomer Toolkit

Additional resources from the Arizona Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition Services can be found on their website.

Impact and Considerations for LEAs

Newcomer students and their families have a variety of complex needs. To provide **support** and ensure a **successful educational experience**, LEAs should:

- **Develop awareness** of newcomers in the community,
- **Prepare** for and **involve** newly-arriving families,
- Ensure student **access** to **educational services**, and
- **Collaborate** with resettlement agencies and other community organizations that serve newcomers.

How can IRC collaborate with your school district?



- Professional development
- Table at your event
- Identify ORR eligible students
- School registration process
- Provide support or answer question about eligibility
- Participate in our monthly school meeting
- (Limited participation at school events)



Check-In

Have you had any experience collaborating with resettlement agencies? Do you have any questions or concerns about establishing an MOU?

**Share your
answers in
the chat!**

Closing and Next Steps

- Webinar Series Session 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 final session in this webinar series:

- 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



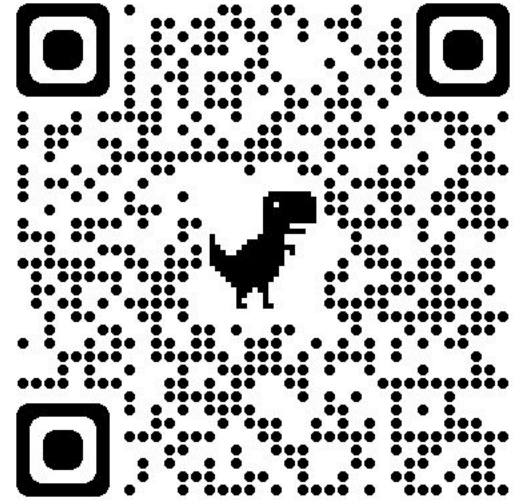
Phoenix: Francisca Gil at FGil@lss-sw.org

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!



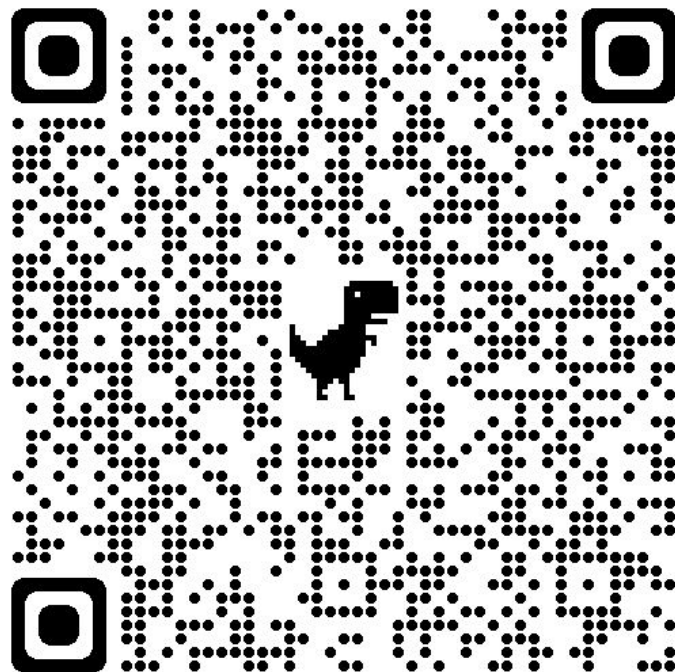
Sign-Up for the Refugee Student Support Mailing List!

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](http://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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