Refugees flee their country seeking safety and protection. In most cases, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) determines that the individual qualifies as a refugee under international law. A refugee is defined as someone who has fled his or her home country and cannot return because he or she has a well-founded fear of persecution based on religion, race, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

A refugee that meets one of the criteria for resettlement in the United States could be referred to the U.S. Government by UNHCR, a U.S. Embassy, or trained Non-Governmental Organizations. Less than one percent of refugees worldwide gain access to the program.

The Resettlement Support Center (RSC) meets with refugees to compile their personal data and background information for the security clearance process and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s in-person interview.

All refugees must undergo an interview with a refugee officer from the DHS’ United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). A trained refugee officer travels to the host country to conduct a detailed, face-to-face interview with each refugee being considered for resettlement.

An approved refugee undergoes a medical screening, is offered cultural orientation, and supplied with a travel loan that must be repaid. The refugee may also undergo final security checks.

Every refugee is assigned to a Voluntary Agency in the United States, such as the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI). USCRI places refugees with a local partner agency or office that will assist refugees upon their arrival to the U.S.

Upon arrival to the U.S. at a designated airport, a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer reviews the refugee documentation. Refugees are met by local resettlement staff and/or family to start a new life in America.