

OVERVIEW OF REFUGEE AGENCIES IN SACRAMENTO – SEPTEMBER, 2021

With the collapse of the U.S. – backed Afghan government in July, 2021, we are now faced with a massive influx of refugees including Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders who assisted the U.S. government in the 20-year Afghan-U.S. war. Census data and media reports state that approximately 9,700 Afghans reside in Sacramento County and another 2000 live in Yolo, Sutter, Placer and El Dorado counties. Sacramento has the most Afghani citizens of any community in the United States. They are generally concentrated in the suburban county district of Arden Arcade. Predictions are that an additional 1,700 – 2000 asylees are now arriving or will be arriving in the next few months.

The refugee resettlement process is quite complicated and thus is subject to misunderstandings and untruths. From my limited knowledge, here is some background from the web with url links. I created this document because I could not find a single web source that listed/summarized all local Sacramento refugee resettlement agencies.

The U.S. Constitution is the guiding document for treatment of foreign nationals. This document states that anyone who sets foot on U.S. soil, be they Americans or not, has certain rights, including the right to due process under the law. Refugees, internally displaced persons (IDP's) and asylum seekers (asylees) are defined differently by law. Refugees fall as one subset within the context of U.S. immigrants generally.

U.S. Department of State – Their role is to manage the overseas part of the refugee resettlement process.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) - With more than 60,000 employees, one of the world's largest law enforcement organizations, charged with keeping terrorists and their weapons out of the U.S. while facilitating lawful international travel and trade. As the United States' first unified border entity, CBP takes a comprehensive approach to border management and control, combining customs, immigration, border security, and agricultural protection into one coordinated and supportive activity. *Vision Statement - Enhancing the nation's security through innovation, intelligence, collaboration and trust. Mission Statement - Protect the American people, safeguard our borders, and enhance the nation's economic prosperity.*

U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) – The specific bureau within the Dept. of State that handles refugee resettlement. Here is the mission of this agency. *“The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) is the humanitarian bureau of the State Department. PRM promotes U.S. interests by providing protection, easing suffering, and resolving the plight of persecuted and forcibly displaced people around the world. We do this by coordinating humanitarian policy and diplomacy, providing life-sustaining assistance, working with multilateral organizations to build global partnerships, and promoting best practices in humanitarian response.”*

Visa Categories - There are numerous distinct categories of immigrants based on U.S. State Department rules. See list of immigrant visa categories here - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/all-visa-categories.html>. There are distinct categories for Afghan and Iraqi immigrants. Dept. of State rules set the number of immigrants in all categories allowed to enter the U.S. in any given fiscal year.

UN High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) – Web site: www.UNrefugees.org, (855) 808-6427. An agency of the United Nations that designates a kind of “refugee status” to persecuted people and then attempts to find countries willing to accept persons into their refugee programs. UNHCR has no enforcement jurisdiction within the United States and cannot set U.S. policy on immigration.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (CIS) - www.uscis.gov/ Approves entries of foreign nationals into the U.S.

Refugee Resettlement Agencies assisting refugees must be recognized by the U.S. Dept. of Justice Recognition and Accreditation Program <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/recognition-and-accreditation-program> to represent clients before the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (CIS), www.uscis.gov/. Many immigrants from the Middle East (Afghanistan and Iraq) who have come to Sacramento have been issued Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for their work as language translators or other workers with the U.S. military or NATO and are under threat of death from the Taliban, ISIS, Al Qaeda or other terrorist groups, if they are deported to or return to their home countries.

U.S. refugee security screening process- See flow chart.

<https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-and-asylum/refugees/refugee-processing-and-security-screening>

U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) – <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr> An agency under federal Dept. of Health and Human Services (DHHS) that provides new populations with the opportunity to achieve their full potential in the United States. These programs provide people in need with critical resources to assist them in becoming integrated members of American society.

Basic statistics on refugees – <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>.

There are 5 agencies in Sacramento certified by the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to assist refugees resettling in the U.S. These agencies coordinate closely and hold quarterly public meetings to network, report statistics and share successes and problems. Each agency is authorized by the federal government to officially sponsor refugees entering the U.S. and assigned to live in Sacramento.

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE (IRC) – <https://www.rescue.org/united-states/sacramento-ca>. One of the largest of several refugee agencies in the region. Works in Oakland (NorCal headquarters), San Jose, Sacramento and Turlock. Lisa Welze is local Resettlement Director Lisa.Welze@Rescue.org, Office phone, (916) 482-0120. In addition to official capacity as a government-sanctioned refugee resettlement agency, conducts seminars for volunteers and the general public on the resettlement process. Runs a gamut of social services including an organic farm for food production and job training.

WORLD RELIEF (WR) – Similar to other agencies but partners directly with local churches and faith groups both in the U.S. and abroad, with “Good Neighbor” Teams. In 2017, they settled 1000 refugees from Afghanistan, Ukraine, Russia and Syria in Sacramento. Web site: <https://www.worldrelief.org/> Locale, email Contact wrsacramento@wr.org, 4616 Roseville Rd. Suite 107, North Highlands, CA 95660. P: 916-978-2650, F: 916-978-2658

OPENING DOORS, INC. (ODI) – Center for New Americans – Refugee resettlement is major task. In addition to resettlement, provides microloans and fights human

trafficking. Web site: www.OpeningDoorsInc.org Contact Jessie Tientchu, local Sacramento CEO, Jessie@openingdoorsinc.org, 1111 Howe Avenue, Suite 125, Sacramento, CA 95825-8521, Contact: info@openingdoorsinc.org, phone (916) 492-2591

SACRAMENTO FOOD BANK AND FAMILY SERVICES (SFBFS) – Refugee Resettlement Services. Primary mission is to provide food and clothing to local residents but has branched into refugee services including immigration legal services. Partners with U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops – Office of Resettlement Services, <http://www.usccb.org/about/resettlement-services/index.cfm> . 3333 3rd Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95817, Phone (916) 456-1980. General web site: <https://www.sacramentofoodbank.org/>

LAO FAMILY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, INC. (LFCD) – <https://lfcd.org/> A regional agency with offices in Oakland, Sacramento and San Pablo. Provides health services, housing services, employer and job support services, income and family support and education. Works in 35 + languages. Currently accepting refugees from Afghanistan. Sacramento North (Arden) office – 3205 Hurley Way, Phone (916) 359-2788

Disclaimer – This information was compiled by John McCormack in July, 2021 and updated August 2021 and I am not speaking on behalf of any agency. Due to the rapidly changing refugee situation, information may not be entirely accurate. Do not rely solely on this general information. Contact each agency specifically for information on the number of refugees currently needing support in Sacramento and how to assist them.