



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Office of the Commissioner

James Hunter Williams
Commissioner

January 20, 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor of Virginia

The Honorable L. Louise Lucas
Chair, Senate Finance & Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Luke E. Torian
Chair, House Appropriations Committee

Michael Maul
Director, Virginia Department of Planning & Budget

FROM: James H. Williams *James Williams*

SUBJECT: Annual Report on Refugee Assistance

The attached report is submitted pursuant to Item 330.B. of the 2024 Appropriation Act, which provides:

B. Out of this appropriation, \$55,522,000 the first year and \$55,522,000 the second year from nongeneral funds shall be used for the refugee assistance program. The department shall report annually on the number of refugees served and types of services provided, along with how much funding was provided for each type of service. The report shall be submitted to the Governor, Chairs of House Appropriations and Senate Finance and

Appropriations by December 1 each year.

Please contact me if you have questions.

JW:kc

Attachment



2024 Refugee Service Programs

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2024 REFUGEE SERVICE PROGRAMS

A Report for the Virginia General Assembly

December 1, 2024

REPORT MANDATE

[2024 Appropriation Act, Item 330.B](#)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of New Americans (ONA) serves as a pass-through agency for eight federally funded refugee programs, contracting with sub-recipient resettlement agencies and other state partners to deliver services to the refugee population in Virginia.

A snapshot of funding for State Fiscal Year 2024 (SFY24):

Program	Funds Contractually Obligated	Funds Dispersed
MYVA	\$1,284,654.70	\$1,040,389.98
RCA	N/A*	\$3,385,076.00
RHEO	\$3,450,584.57	\$2,305,224.11
RMA	\$3,581,743.14	\$1,176,221.21
RSSEP	\$28,359,069.49	\$21,510,766.70
SOR	\$305,848.03	\$214,768.96
URM	\$3,945,068.08	\$3,089,262.47
VRSAP	\$1,284,654.70	\$1,040,389.98
TOTAL	\$42,211,622.71	\$33,762,099.41



In SFY24 these programs together offered services to 14,295 participants

About VDSS and ONA

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) partners with local departments of social services and community organizations, to promote the well-being of children and families across the Commonwealth. We proudly serve alongside nearly 13,000 state and local human services professionals throughout the Social Services System, who ensure that thousands of Virginia's most vulnerable citizens have access to the best services and benefits available to them.

Together, we work each day to serve, empower, and create opportunities for brighter futures.

The Office of New Americans (ONA) promotes the economic and civic success of Virginia's diverse immigrant communities. ONA is responsible for the implementation of a statewide strategy to provide immigrants with comprehensive assistance related to employment, housing, healthcare, education, citizenship and other services for which they may be eligible.

DEFINITIONS

Resettlement

Permanent relocation of refugees in a place outside their country of origin to allow them to establish residence and become productive members of society there.

Refugee

Someone who is outside of their country of nationality and is unable or unwilling to return due to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution.

Parolees

A noncitizen who is temporarily allowed to enter or remain in the United States for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Office of New Americans (ONA) administers eight federally funded refugee programs, as the pass-through agency. ONA contracts sub-recipient resettlement agencies, and other state partners, to provide the services which are available to eligible individuals throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

CONTACTS

AUTHOR

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2024 Refugee Service Programs

SECTION 1 BACKGROUND

The Office of New Americans (ONA) is a pass-through agency who administers eight federally funded refugee programs. ONA contracts with sub-recipient resettlement agencies and other state partners to provide the services reviewed in this report. Available throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia contracted refugee service providers are located in key resettlement sites:

- Arlington
- Charlottesville
- Fairfax
- Falls Church
- Fredericksburg
- Harrisonburg
- Leesburg
- Loudoun
- Manassas
- Newport News
- Prince William
- Richmond
- Roanoke
- Winchester

Individuals who are eligible for refugee services must be legally present in the United States and have one of the following immigration statuses:

- Refugees
- Asylees
- Individuals Paroled as a Refugee or Asylee
- Cuban and Haitian Entrants
- Amerasians
- Lawful Permanent Residents
- Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrants
- Afghan Humanitarian Parolees
- Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees
- Unaccompanied Refugee Minors
- Victims of Human Trafficking

SECTION 2 PROGRAMS

The table below provides a list of the Refugee programs, their FY24 contracted expenses and disbursements, alongside the number of clients each program has served.

REFUGEE PROGRAMS EXPENSES, DISBURSEMENTS & CLIENTS SERVED

Program	Funds Contractually Obligated	Funds Dispersed	Clients Served
MYVA	\$1,284,654.70	\$1,040,389.98	259
RCA	N/A*	\$3,385,076.00	994
RHEO	\$3,450,584.57	\$2,305,224.11	3,240
RMA	\$3,581,743.14	\$1,176,221.21	N/A**
RSSEP	\$28,359,069.49	\$21,510,766.70	9,314
SOR	\$305,848.03	\$214,768.96	148
URM	\$3,945,068.08	\$3,089,262.47	81
VRSAP	\$2,101,368.98	\$1,842,666.73	259
TOTAL	\$43,028,336.99	\$34,564,376.16	14,295

*RCA Funds are reimbursed to LDSS upon request.

**RMA client data is retained by Dept. of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) and is inaccessible to ONA.

MENTORING YOUTH IN VIRGINIA (MYVA)

The Mentoring Youth in Virginia (MYVA) program promotes positive civic and social engagement and supports educational and vocational advancement for refugee-eligible youth between the ages of 15 and 24 years old. Eligible youth are selected for the mentorship program based on an initial assessment of needs and goals and are matched with trained, adult mentors for a period of six months to one year. Youth selected for enrollment in MYVA will:

- Strengthen interpersonal and leadership skills and self-esteem.
- Become engaged members of their communities through participation in civic and community service activities.
- Attend workshops with relevant topics.
- Receive academic support, including college application and achievement support.
- Enhance career development and financial literacy skills.

Youth in the mentoring program will demonstrate enhanced self-esteem, communication skills, educational and vocational outcomes. Refugee youth enrolled in the MYVA are engaged members of their communities demonstrating strong relationships with peers, family, and community members. Youth are eligible for the MYVA program within the first five years of arrival in the United States.

REFUGEE CASH ASSISTANCE (RCA)

The Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) Program provides time limited cash assistance to eligible refugee populations who meet the financial criteria of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF), but do not meet non-financial requirements for a period of 12 months from United States date of entry or date of eligibility. RCA payment amounts are the same as TANF program standard of assistance payment amounts for eligible recipients. Applicants can apply online, via mail or in person at one of the Local Department of Social Services agencies.

REFUGEE HEALTH EDUCATION AND OUTREACH (RHEO)

The Refugee Health Education and Outreach (RHEO) program focuses on education and outreach to empower refugees to address their mental and physical healthcare needs while developing a network of healthcare providers with a greater understanding of the unique needs of diverse refugee populations. RHEO offers eligible refugee-populations education to help navigate and access the United States healthcare system. The program also promotes the improvement of refugee wellbeing through education related to health resources and good health practices. Activities in this program include workshops on health and mental health, adjustment/support groups, health fairs, resources and training to local healthcare providers and other community stakeholders.

REFUGEE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE (RMA)

The Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) Program provides short-term health care coverage to newly arrived refugees and other eligible populations who are determined ineligible for the Virginia Cardinal Care Medicaid Program. Recipients are eligible to receive RMA up to a period of 12 months from the date of United States entry or date of eligibility. In addition to accessibility to healthcare, RMA enables refugees to receive a Medical Screening upon arrival in the United States. Applicants can apply online, by mail, or in person at any Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) agency. RMA's goal is to protect the public health of resettling communities while also promoting self-sufficiency. RMA applications are processed by LDSS through the Virginia Case Management System (VaCMS).

Unlike many of the programs in this report, RMA is supported by LDSS across the Commonwealth. As a result, funding requests are submitted by each LDSS to ONA for reimbursement.

REFUGEE SOCIAL SERVICES EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (RSSEP)

Refugee Social Services Employment Program (RSSEP) is a pillar of the refugee resettlement program. RSSEP provides eligible adults with a pathway to long term self-sufficiency. This program funds vocational training, job placement services, job retention support, and career advancement assistance for up to 5 years from the date of eligibility.

Specific services provided include:

- Cultural and workforce orientation
- Resume and interview preparation
- Job search and retention support
- Job readiness training
- Employment counseling
- Transportation support
- Budgeting assistance
- Referrals for other services based on need
- Comprehensive resettlement plan
- Individual employment plan with short-term and long-term goals
- Career advancement support

Training in vocational and employability areas:

- English – general and vocational
- Certified Nursing Assistant and other medical professions
- Safety enforcement, and loss prevention professions
- IT courses
- Social media and email use for employment networking
- Basic Driving School
- Commercial Driver’s License
- Various trade certifications and recertifications

Most funds allocated to the RSSEP program are spent on direct client services, primarily training. Other allowable expenses include items to aid in employment search and preparedness, such as computers and mobile phones. Staff salaries, equipment, supplies, and space costs are also included for sub-recipients to deliver the required services, as needed. When eligible client numbers increase, additional funds are provided, with the expectation that sub-recipient capacity will scale up accordingly.

SERVICES TO OLDER REFUGEES (SOR)

Services to Older Refugees (SOR) provides agency funding to establish and expand relationships with state and local agencies including, but not limited to, The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services No Wrong Door Program ensuring older refugees have access to aging services and provide older refugees appropriate services not currently available in the community. Refugees aged 60 and above who have been in the United States for up to 5 years are eligible for all program services.

The SOR Program services include:

- Access to senior community centers, supportive services, and intergenerational activities
- Nutrition services and meals delivered to homebound clients
- Transportation
- Interpretation and translation
- Citizenship and naturalization services
- Home care, adult day care, and respite care
- Elder abuse prevention
- Nursing home ombudsman services

Beyond the five-year mark, SOR program offers referral and interpreter services alongside citizenship and naturalization preparation services. These activities, services, and resources support overall physical and emotional health, help integration into new communities, and support independent living.

UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINOR (URM) FOSTER CARE

The Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) foster care program provides foster care placement and services to unaccompanied refugee minors and other special populations of youth living in the United States, ages 0 to 18, with voluntarily participation from ages 18 to 21. Additionally, refugee youth are eligible to receive education and training voucher funds until age 26. Bridging child welfare experience with expertise in refugee resettlement, the program is uniquely designed to provide trauma-informed services for youth who have experienced forced displacement.

Virginia is one of fifteen states in the nation providing this comprehensive program to ensure that individual and diverse needs are met. Through contracts with Commonwealth Catholic Charities (CCC) in Richmond, VA, and Lutheran Social Services (LSS) in Fairfax, VA, eligible youth are provided with access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services which include trauma-informed foster families, culturally sensitive caseworkers, comprehensive medical and mental health care, independent living opportunities and a broad range of educational services. Under the organizational leadership and administrative support of ONA, the URM program is administered and operates in accordance with the standards and requirements that govern the larger framework of Virginia's foster care system. Contracted providers for Virginia's URM Foster Care program have primary responsibility for the welfare of URMs.

These contract agencies assess each URM's needs developing a case plan specific to each youth. Case plans must include the following elements:

- Family tracing and reunification
- Indirect financial support for housing, food, and clothing
- Intensive case management services by social workers
- English language training and education
- Independent living skill development
- Educational Training Vouchers
- Health, dental, and mental health care
- Job training and career development skills
- Cultural orientation and social integration
- Preservation of ethnic and religious heritage
- Safety planning
- Coordination of immigration assistance

VIRGINIA REFUGEE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT PROJECT (VRSAP)

The Virginia Refugee Student Achievement Project (VRSAP) aims to strengthen academic performance and aid the social adjustment of recently arrived refugee youth between the ages of 0 to 18 years old. Youth between the age of 18-21 years may be enrolled in VRSAP if they are still in high school or pursuing a GED.

VRSAP provides support for children and families as they navigate the U.S. education system; working with families and schools to ensure that children have their educational needs met in a linguistically and culturally appropriate way. Coordinate with families and schools to create opportunities for refugee parents to be active participants in their children's educational lives. This project also advances the capacity of school systems and faculty by providing training and professional development opportunities related to refugee resettlement and the potential impact of trauma on refugee youth. By facilitating partnerships between community stakeholders the project ensures refugee youth have access to the wide range of activities, services and supports available to their peers. The VRSAP also seeks to identify opportunities for refugee youth to actively participate in community building through participation in field trips, cultural and extra-curricular activities, and community service.

Priority for enrollment in the VRSAP program is given to youth who have been in the United States for one year or less. However, youth are eligible for VRSAP within the first five years of arrival in the United States. Eligible youth may be co-enrolled in the VRSAP and Mentoring Youth in Virginia (MYVA) programs.

VRSAP – Early Childhood

Through the VRSAP Early Childhood program, Virginia provides services to children and families along the birth-to-kindergarten continuum. VRSAP Early Childhood goals are to promote access to childcare, ensure that eligible youth are prepared to succeed in formal schooling, and holistically serve families of eligible children. These services include:

- Providing specialized services and support for eligible children and youth, such as English as a Second Language classes, tutoring, newcomer, or transitional programs, after school and summer programs, mentoring, behavioral health supports, and programming that supports integration.
- Supporting families learning to navigate the U.S. education system, such as school-specific orientation for both families and students, navigators or cultural brokers, and language access.
- Developing capacity for school staff and systems, through activities and resources such as specialized trainings for school staff around the unique and varied needs of eligible populations, ensuring language access by translating critical documents, interpretation, and specialized staff dedicated to working with children, youth, and families.

APPENDIX A LEGISLATIVE MANDATE ITEM 330.B, 2024 APPROPRIATIONS ACT

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