



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Office of the Commissioner

Kevin Erskine
Commissioner

December 4, 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: Kevin Erskine *Kevin Erskine*

SUBJECT: Annual Report on Refugee Assistance

The attached report is submitted pursuant to Item 330.B. of the 2025 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, and Director, Department of Planning and Budget by December 1 each year.

Please contact me if you have questions.

KE:kc

Attachment

cc: The Honorable Janet V. Kelly, Secretary of Health and Human Services



Refugee Assistance Programs in Virginia

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REFUGEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN VIRGINIA

A Report for the Virginia General Assembly

December 1, 2025

REPORT MANDATE

2025 Appropriation Act – Item 330.B

Out of this appropriation, \$55,522,000 the first year and \$55,522,000 the second year from non-general 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, and Director, Department of Planning and Budget by December 1 each year.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Virginia Department of Social Services' Office of New Americans (ONA) administers eight federally funded refugee assistance programs that provide comprehensive support to help eligible individuals achieve stability, self-sufficiency, and community integration.

During State Fiscal Year 2025, these programs collectively served thousands of clients statewide, providing a wide range of services including employment and vocational training, youth mentorship, educational support, health education, and financial and medical assistance. Service delivery was achieved through partnerships with local resettlement agencies, school divisions, and community organizations located in key resettlement areas across Virginia. Through these collaborative efforts, ONA ensured equitable access to services that promote economic independence, civic engagement, and overall well-being among refugee and immigrant populations.

About VDSS and Refugee Services

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) was established in 2020 to promote the economic and civic success of Virginia's diverse immigrant communities.

The Office 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.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Office of New Americans (ONA), administers and serves as the pass-through agency for eight federally funded refugee programs. ONA partners with sub-recipient resettlement agencies and other State Partners to deliver refugee services across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Services funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) through ONA are available to all eligible individuals statewide. Refugee service providers operate in key resettlement locations, including Northern Virginia (Fairfax, Falls Church, Arlington, Loudoun, Prince William, Manassas, Leesburg, and surrounding areas), as well as Fredericksburg, Winchester, Harrisonburg, Charlottesville, Roanoke, Newport News, and Richmond.

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

CONTACTS

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Refugee Assistance Programs in Virginia

OVERVIEW

In accordance with legislative requirements, this report fulfills the directive outlined in the Appropriation Act, which designates \$55,522,000 in each year of the biennium from non-general funds to support the Refugee Assistance Program. The Act requires the Department to report annually on the number of refugees served, the types of services provided, and the funding allocated to each service category. This section describes the eight federally funded refugee programs administered by the Office of New Americans. A chart summarizing the budget, expenditures, and number of clients served across the eight programs is provided in the subsequent section.

REFUGEE SOCIAL SERVICES EMPLOYMENT

The ONA's Refugee Social Services Employment Program (RSSEP) is the cornerstone of the refugee resettlement program and assists all adults to gain training and employment in order to become self-sufficient but also to exceed basic self-sufficiency through longer term services. Specific funding for these services is also provided for Ukrainians on a temporary basis. ONA 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 the following:

- Cultural and workforce orientation
- Resume preparation
- Job counseling
- Job readiness training
- Interview preparation
- Job search support
- Transportation support
- Budgeting assistance
- Referrals to other services (internal and external based on need)
- Comprehensive Resettlement Plan
- Individual Employment Plan with short-term and long-term goals
- Job retention follow up.
- Career advancement support (job upgrades or second jobs)
- Training in vocational and employability areas:
 - English – general or vocational
 - Certified Nursing Assistant and other medical
 - IT courses
 - Social media and email use training for employment networking
 - Basic Driving School
 - Commercial Driver's License
 - Various trade certifications
 - Recertification
 - Security Guard
 - Others based on specific client needs assessment

The bulk of funds allocated to the RSSEP program are spent on direct services to clients, primarily training; however, other costs are allowable, including the provision of certain items to assist with employment search and preparedness, which would include computers, and/or mobile phones. Also, staff salaries, equipment, supplies, and space costs are allowable as needed for sub recipients to be able to provide the required services. All eligible clients are served and whenever there is an influx of clients, the associated funds increase, and sub recipients are expected to ramp up capacity to meet the needs of the current client load.

Under Afghan and specific funding, resettlement agencies provided legal housing access support. Additionally, through the employment program, eligible clients could receive emergency rental support when compliant with program requirements. Through financial literacy workshops, clients were also educated on home-buying and long-term saving.

MENTORING YOUTH IN VIRGINIA

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 mentorship program will be engaged members of their communities who demonstrate strong relationships with peers, family members and community members. Youth are eligible for the MYVA program within the first five years of arrival in the United States.

Sub-recipients must ensure that youth are matched with trained mentors who have undergone appropriate background checks and are prepared to help youth meet their educational, vocational, and social goals.

MYVA staff will:

- Thoroughly complete MYVA Intake forms with youth (and their guardians, if the youth is under 18 years old).
- Actively participate in quarterly calls with the Office of New Americans.
- Thoroughly and accurately record quarterly achievements, challenges, and client success stories in the Quarterly Narrative Report (QNR).

- Provide updates and answer questions related to the program during the Mid-Year and Annual Reviews with ONA.
- Complete an annual outcome report using the format provided by ONA.
- Administer client funds based on youth's needs and goals. Use of client funds must be justified using the MYVA Client Fund Request form and approved by ONA. All invoices must be kept in the youth's physical file.
- Provide all MYVA services using appropriate interpretation services.

VIRGINIA REFUGEE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT PROJECT

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. (*Note: Youth between the age of 18-21 years may be enrolled in VRSAP if they are still in high school or pursuing a GED.*)

The VRSAP program:

- Provides support for children and families as they navigate the U.S. education system and works with families and schools to ensure that children have their educational needs met in a linguistically and culturally appropriate way.
- Works with families and schools to create opportunities for refugee parents to be active participants in their children's educational lives.
- Develops 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.
- Facilitates partnerships between community stakeholders to ensure that refugee youth have access to the wide range of activities, services and supports available to their peers.
- Provides opportunities for refugee youth to actively participate in community building through participation in community service, extra-curricular activities, field trips and cultural activities.
- 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.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Sub-recipients must create direct linkages between schools and eligible clients to support children's academic and social adjustment.

Sub-recipients will:

- Complete a VRSAP Intake form for all eligible youth who enroll in the VRSAP program. Maintain Intake forms in physical files in the resettlement office.

- Provide a thorough School Orientation to VRSAP families on the American school system. Administer pre- and post-tests to guardians. Guardians who score 80 or above on the pre-test are not required to take a post-test.
- In locations with multiple resettlement offices, coordinate and collaborate with agencies who are not VRSAP funded to ensure that all interested youth and families are enrolled in VRSAP.
- Ensure that all required VRSAP data is entered into the Virginia Newcomer Information System.
- Actively participate in quarterly School Liaison calls with the Office of New Americans.
- Thoroughly and accurately record quarterly achievements, challenges, and client success stories in the Quarterly Narrative Report (QNR).
- Provide updates and answer questions related to the program during the Mid-Year and Annual Reviews with ONA.
- VRSAP staff are required to participate in Quarterly Calls with the Office of New Americans.
- Host an annual Student Recognition Event to honor and celebrate the achievements of refugee students and their families. Inform ONA staff of the date and time of the event and provide names of up to five students to receive ONA certificates.
- Provide all VRSAP services using appropriate interpretation services.

VRSAP – EARLY CHILDHOOD

Through the VRSAP Early childhood program, Virginia provides program services to children and families across 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 by:

- 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.

UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINOR PROGRAM

The Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) program is a unique foster care program that 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, and voluntarily from age 18 to 21. Youth are eligible to receive (Education and Training Voucher) ETV 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 a comprehensive set of services to URM youth to ensure that their individual and diverse needs are met. Through contracts with two Licensed Child Placing Agencies (LCPAs), Commonwealth Catholic Charities (CCC) in Richmond, VA, and Lutheran Social Services in Fairfax (LSS), VA, the state of Virginia provides eligible youth with access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services including trauma-informed foster families, culturally sensitive caseworkers, comprehensive medical and mental health care, independent living opportunities and a broad range of educational services. Virginia administers the URM Program in accordance with 45 CFR Parts 400.110 through 400.120 and operates under the standards and requirements that govern the larger framework of Virginia's foster care system, including:

- Foster care maintenance payments
- Medical assistance
- Support services
- Services identified as allowable in the Title IV-B State Plan (Foster Care Services).

These guidelines are outlined in the Code of Virginia, Chapter 10: *Child Welfare, Homes, Agencies and Institutions* and the foster care regulations established by the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS Policy Manual, V.7, sect. 3, Ch. B). The Virginia Department of Social Services issues licenses to provider agencies and conducts regular audits to ensure that agencies are in compliance with state foster care licensing standards. The Virginia Office of New Americans (ONA) provides organizational leadership and administrative support for the URM program and coordinates culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services for URM through contracts with CCC and LSS. Contracted providers for Virginia's URM program have primary responsibility for the welfare of URM. Placement options for youth in Virginia's URM Program include:

- **Foster Family Home:** Traditional foster home placement.
- **Therapeutic Foster Home:** Therapeutic foster placements for youth who require elevated levels of support.
- **Supervised Independent Living (IL):** Community-based placements in which youth live independently but continue to receive a monthly living stipend and regular case-work services.

- **Group Home:** Placements for youth who require a high level of supervision, support, and services. Placement in Group Homes is reserved for youth who require a more restrictive or therapeutic level of care than can be provided in a foster home.
- **Residential Treatment:** When determined to be in the child's best interests, URM may be placed into a residential treatment facility for specialized care and stabilization.

URM contract agencies assess each URM's needs and develop a case plan based on that assessment. 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 including:
 - 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

SERVICES TO OLDER REFUGEES

Services to Older Refugees Program funds state and alternative programs to ensure that refugees aged 60 and older have access to applicable services for the aging and to provide qualifying refugees with 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. Referral services, interpreter services, and citizenship and naturalization preparation services for these refugees are available beyond the five-year mark. Services to Older Refugees 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, to ensure older refugees have access to aging services and to provide them with appropriate services not currently available in the community.

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

These activities, services, and resources support overall physical and emotional health, help integration into new communities, and support independent living.

REFUGEE HEALTH EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

The Refugee Health Education and Outreach RHEO program provides health education to refugee-eligible populations that helps them to navigate the United States healthcare system and access health and mental health services that will improve their wellbeing. The program provides education on navigating the United States healthcare system, health resources and good health practices. The RHEO program also aims to increase healthcare providers' understanding of the unique healthcare needs of diverse refugee populations. The focus of the RHEO program is not on individual case management but on education and outreach that empowers clients to address their own healthcare needs and that creates a network of healthcare providers who provide care that aligns with the linguistic and cultural needs of refugees. Activities may include workshops on health and mental health, adjustment/support groups, health fairs, providing resources and training to local healthcare providers and other community stakeholders.

ONA Immigrant Services organized several community health fairs and resource fairs, which allowed immigrants and service providers to meet and support one another, as well as receive vital services such as Covid-19 vaccines, health and dental screenings, legal support, and other services.

The Refugee Health Education and Outreach Program (RHEO) program provides health education to refugee-eligible populations that helps them to navigate the United States healthcare system and access the health and mental health services that will improve their wellbeing. The program provides education on navigating the United States healthcare system, health resources and good health practices. The RHEO program also aims to increase healthcare providers' understanding of the unique healthcare needs of diverse refugee populations. The focus of the RHEO program is not on individual case management but on education and outreach that empowers clients to address their own healthcare needs and that creates a network of healthcare providers who provide care that aligns with the linguistic and cultural needs of refugees. Activities may include Workshops on health and mental health, adjustment/support groups, health fairs, providing resources and training to local healthcare providers and other community stakeholders.

REFUGEE CASH ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Refugee Cash Assistance Program (RCA) provides time limited cash assistance to eligible refugee populations that meet the financial criteria of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF), but do not meet non-financial requirements for a period of 4 months from United States date of entry or date of eligibility. Refugee Cash Assistance (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 (LDSS) agencies.

**Funds are not obligated, but rather, they are reimbursed to Local Departments of Social Services upon request.*

REFUGEE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

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 who meet the RMA program requirements. 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 providing access to healthcare, RMA also enables refugees to receive a Medical Screening upon arrival in the United States. Applicants can apply online, via mail or in person at one of the LDSS agencies. The goal is to protect the public health of resettling communities and to promote self-sufficiency. RMA is processed by the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) through the Virginia Case Management System (VaCMS). The Office of New Americans continually works with LDSS regarding RMA and VaCMS to improve the system functionality overall when processing applications.

SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR AFGHAN STUDENTS

School divisions across Virginia expanded their capacity to serve eligible youth through the School Support for Afghan Students (SSAS) program. Funding was allocated to divisions with high concentrations of eligible students who arrived during or after Operation Allies Welcome in 2021. Priorities of the program included implementation of summer and after-school programming, the hiring of school-based counselors and multilingual family liaisons, enhancement of English Language Learner supports, provision of parent engagement opportunities, and staff training on best practices for supporting newcomer youth. Staff reported success in several areas, including reducing absenteeism, collaborating with teachers to address academic challenges, promoting healthy conflict resolution among students, and increasing parent participation in school events and parent-teacher conferences.

PROGRAM EXPENSES, NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED IN SFY25

The chart below summarizes the budget, expenditures, and number of clients served across the eight federally funded refugee programs administered by the Office of New Americans.

Program	Total Funds Obligated	Total Funds Liquidated	Total Individuals Served	Cost per Individual
RSSEP	\$30,754,019.48	\$20,083,905.07	11,032	\$1,820.51
MYVA	\$1,563,960.75	\$1,184,375.93	223	\$5,311.10
VRSAP	\$3,266,573.69	\$2,476,913.65	7,151	\$346.37
URM	\$4,862,906.12	\$4,185,329.81	82	\$51,040.61
SOR	\$284,061.46	\$234,219.92	148	\$1,582.57
RHEO	\$4,221,114.07	\$3,135,582.26	4,417	\$709.89
RCA	\$7,113,855.00	\$3,937,813.18	745	\$5,285.66
RMA	\$5,158,969.34	\$1,107,717.72	ONA does not have access to client data. Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) tracks this data.	
SSAS	\$5,666,862.58	\$1,719,723.29	ONA does not have access to client data. We serve all Afghan children in 10 school divisions through these funds.	

CONCLUSION

The Commonwealth of Virginia continues to demonstrate its commitment to welcoming and supporting refugees through coordinated, culturally responsive programming administered by the Office of New Americans. The refugee assistance programs funded through the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement are vital to helping newcomers rebuild their lives, contribute to local communities, and participate fully in Virginia’s economic and social life. ONA and its partners remain focused on expanding service capacity, improving program outcomes, and ensuring accountability in the use of public funds. Continued investment in these programs will strengthen Virginia’s ability to respond effectively to future humanitarian arrivals while fostering resilience, inclusion, and opportunity for all who call the Commonwealth home.

APPENDIX A 2025 APPROPRIATION ACT – ITEM 330.B

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