



AN OVERVIEW OF OUR WORK IN MAINE

What we do:

As the primary federal contract holder for **refugee resettlement** in the state of Maine since 1975, Catholic Charities Maine (CCM) provides:

- case management services, including medical screening coordination;
- employment services,
- and cultural integration services.

Eligibility for our services is determined by the U.S. Office for Refugee Resettlement and/or the U.S. Department of State.

Most individuals we serve are primary refugees, secondary migrants, or persons who have been granted asylum. In 2021, we began assisting people coming to Maine from Afghanistan and Haiti. We also serve people who are victims of trafficking or hold Special Immigrant Visas.

In the fall of 2022, our RIS program expanded to the greater Bangor region. This new office expects to resettle approximately 100 refugees through 2024.

Who are the New Mainers?

In 2023, we resettled or provided services to more than 400 individuals, including Afghanistan Parolees, Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees, and refugees from Syria, Somalia, Sudan, and Iraq, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, among other countries.

Humanitarian Parole

The U.S. Department of State created the Afghan Placement and Assistance Program (APA) to assist Afghan evacuees and their families, who were at risk when the Afghan government fell. Granted Humanitarian Parole, they were immediately eligible for all the same services we provide refugees. They receive expedited work permits and were eligible for expedited review of asylum applications.

Cuban/Haitian Entrants and Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees

Some people from Cuba, Haiti, and Ukraine are also admitted to the United States based on a special federal designation by the Office of Refugee Resettlement and are eligible for many of the same services described above.

Who is a refugee?

As defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a refugee is any person who is outside their country of origin and unable or unwilling to return there or to avail themselves of its protection on account of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular group, or political opinion.

What does it mean to be a primary refugee?

A primary refugee is a refugee who arrives directly from a country of asylum or host country (refugee camp) to Maine.

What does it mean to be a secondary migrant?

A secondary migrant is a person who entered the United States as a refugee and was resettled in one state, but then chose to move to another state. For example, a refugee who was resettled in Chicago, IL, but then chose to move to Portland, Maine, would be considered a secondary migrant when arriving in Maine.

“I was a stranger, and you welcomed me . . .”

– Matthew 25

How are refugees screened before entering the United States?

The United States decides which refugees to resettle within our borders. The State Department oversees the admission of each refugee to the states after they have been granted refugee status following individual interviews by Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials. Refugees must pass extensive inter-agency security background checks with multiple national security and intelligence agencies and pass health screenings. According to national security experts, refugees are the most thoroughly vetted, rigorously screened people to come to the United States. Security screenings involve the State Department, DHS, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Defense, the National Counterterrorism Center, and multiple intelligence agencies. The entire process typically takes 18-24 months, and sometimes longer, before a refugee even steps foot on U.S. soil.

What is the difference between an asylee and an asylum seeker?

An **asylee** is an individual who has sought and received protection from fear of persecution by submitting an asylum application to the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) and asking to be granted political asylum to reside in the United States.

Asylees enter the United States on student or work visas, or as undocumented individuals, then petition for asylum, and are granted legal status by the U.S. government.

An **asylum seeker** is anyone who has fled persecution in their home country and is seeking a safe haven in a new country but has not yet been granted asylum (sanctuary). Asylum seekers wishing to remain in the United States must file applications within a year of arrival. Under current federal law, an asylum seeker can receive permission to work in the United States 150 days after an asylum application is submitted.

What services does CCM provide to refugees and immigrants?

Our RIS program provides case management services, employment services, and cultural adjustment services to primary refugees, secondary migrants and asylees, and people admitted through the APA or Cuban/Haitian programs.

Services we are required to provide to primary refugees:

- Airport reception
- Assurance of basic needs – housing, food, and clothing
- Community, cultural, and employment orientation
- Referral/enrollment for education and vocational training
- Referring adults for English as a second language tutoring
- Employment support
- Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medical Screening
- Medical and mental health referrals

Services available to primary refugees, asylees, secondary migrants, and people admitted under the APA program:

- Limited Case Management
- Employment Services and Immigration Legal Services
- Mentorship and American Friends Program
- Referrals to other service providers
- Elder Services

How can I support New Mainers locally?

Volunteering! Typically, our RIS team gets very little advance notice before refugee families arrive here in Maine. To ensure our readiness to welcome them, we rely on volunteers to help prepare for new arrivals in the Portland, Lewiston, and Augusta area. Tasks include shopping for and creating welcome kits (hygiene kits, bedding kits, kitchen and bathroom essentials - see more at ccmaine.org/RIS/donate) needed for setting up a new home. We also need help cleaning and preparing apartments, and finding and moving furniture.

For those interested in longer-term volunteer opportunities, our Welcome Teams can help newcomers get settled by providing rides to appointments and making connections to resources and services in their area. Please visit ccmaine.org/RIS for more information about supporting New Mainers.

Donate! Financial contributions are also appreciated! Donate online and be sure to designate your donation to Refugee and Immigration Services in the drop-down menu. Checks and gift cards to local grocery and department stores may be mailed to Catholic Charities Maine Central Office at P.O. Box 10660, Portland, ME 04104-6060, with Refugee and Immigration Services (RIS) noted in the check's memo line.

Make In-Kind Donations!

Please use this QR code to refer to our Amazon "Wish List" for the specific items we need:



Hire a Refugee! Employers can support refugees with job training, job shadowing, and hiring.

For more information:

Please visit www.RefugeeImmigrationServicesCCM.org. Our Frequently Asked Questions page is a great resource for learning more.

Locations

80 Sherman Street
Portland, ME 04101
(207) 871-7437

270 Minot Avenue
Auburn, ME 04210
(207) 344-6615

St. Michael's Center
436 South Main St.
Brewer, ME 04112
(207) 523-1168

