



Asylees

Background

Asylees are individuals who have been granted asylum under the federal Immigration and Nationality Act. Asylum may be granted to persons who are arriving or already physically present in the United States (U.S.), and are unable or unwilling to return to their home country because of persecution, or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

A person must apply for asylum at a U.S. port of entry (border crossing, airport, or seaport) or, within one year of arrival in the U.S., through the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Additionally, individuals may apply for asylum regardless of whether they are in the U.S. legally or without documents.

Before asylum can be granted, each person must go through a federal immigration hearing or other court process. Once asylum is granted, the immigration status of "asylee" will allow the person to remain in the U.S. and may also qualify the person for certain public assistance benefits or services.

Persons applying for asylum may also request asylum for their spouse and unmarried children under age 21 ("derivative" asylee status), whether their family members are accompanying or later joining the applicant. Family members granted "derivative" asylee status may also be eligible for public assistance benefits or services.

To apply for benefits or services, an asylee must show documentation that asylum has been granted by one of the following: the USCIS Asylum Office, an Immigration Judge, the Board of Immigration Appeals, or a federal court.

Program Services

Under the provisions of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Refugee Resettlement Program, asylees and/or their family members may receive Refugee Cash Assistance and

Refugee Medical Assistance for up to eight months, and other social services for up to 60 months, from the date asylum has been granted.

Other services asylees may receive include:

- Refugee Social Services
- California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), Food Stamps, and other social services
- Health assessments and physical examinations using trained, culturally sensitive licensed medical providers and interpreters
- Blood and skin tests
- Referrals for identified health conditions
- Preventive health care, including dental screenings, pap smears, and mammograms
- Immunizations that will assist in obtaining "Lawful Permanent Resident" ("green card") status, and meeting school enrollment requirements for asylee children
- Culturally and linguistically appropriate health education materials and counseling

How to Apply

To apply for benefits and/or services, contact your local county social services or health department. For the telephone number and location of the social services or health department in your county, contact the Refugee Programs Bureau (RPB) at (916) 654-4356 or via e-mail at RPB@dss.ca.gov.

Additional Information

If you would like more information on services that asylees may be eligible to receive, call the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) **Asylee Hotline: 1-800-354-0365** (available in 17 languages), Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. (EST), or visit the ORR web site at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/hotlines/asylee.htm.