



FACT SHEET



Voluntary Resettlement Agencies (VOLAGs)

What are VOLAGs?

Voluntary resettlement agencies, or VOLAGs, are one of the key partners in the refugee resettlement process. VOLAGs maintain cooperative and consultative relationships with the other main entities in the refugee resettlement process: federal, state and local governments, Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs), and other service providers. VOLAGs are non-profit organizations that provide sponsorship and initial resettlement services for refugees entering the United States (U.S.). The U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), is the agency responsible for overseeing programs abroad to prepare refugees for their arrival in the U.S. The PRM contracts with and provides partial funding to VOLAGs to provide reception and placement services for refugees upon their arrival in the U.S. The national VOLAGs work through a network of local affiliates throughout the country to ensure that refugees' immediate needs, such as limited-term financial assistance, housing and basic health services, are met. VOLAGS are responsible for providing assistance and services to refugees for the first 30 days after their arrival in the U.S.

What Services Do VOLAGs Provide?

In addition to providing for refugees' immediate basic needs, VOLAGs assist refugees in securing services that enable them to achieve financial self-sufficiency as rapidly as possible. These services may include: cultural orientation, counseling, English language training, job skills training and placement, etc. VOLAGs either provide these services directly or arrange for them to be provided by local government agencies or other social service organizations, such as MAAs, or faith- or community-based organizations.

Some VOLAGs also participate in the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement's (ORR's) Matching Grant Program, and/or the Wilson/Fish Alternative Program. These programs are

alternatives to public assistance designed to provide interim financial assistance, medical assistance, social services, and case management for refugees.

Two lead VOLAGS – Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) – assist ORR with the administration of the Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) Program. The objective of URM is to assist unaccompanied minor refugees and entrants in developing appropriate skills to enter adulthood and to achieve economic and social self-sufficiency.

Which Organizations Are VOLAGs?

The following humanitarian and religious affiliated organizations are designated by PRM as VOLAGs:

- Church World Service (CWS)
- Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM)
- Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC)
- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- LIRS
- U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)
- USCCB
- World Relief Corporation (WR)

Some VOLAGS may have a higher capacity to resettle certain refugee groups because of their community-based resources and linkages to ethnic groups in the United States.

For a listing of California affiliates of the national VOLAGs, please visit the VOLAG page on the Refugee Programs Bureau web site at:

www.cdss.ca.gov/refugeeprogram/PG1529.htm