



FACT SHEET

FROM: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement
SUBJECT: A Brief History of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)

United States policy allows refugees of special humanitarian concern entrance into our country, reflecting our core values and our tradition of being a safe haven for the oppressed. The U.S. Congress enacted the first refugee legislation in 1948 following the admission of more than 250,000 displaced Europeans. This legislation provided for the admission of an additional 400,000 displaced Europeans. Later laws provided for admission of persons fleeing Communist regimes, largely from Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, Korea and China, and in the 1960s Cubans fleeing Fidel Castro arrived en masse. Most of these waves of refugees were assisted by private ethnic and religious organizations in the U.S., which formed the base for the public-private roles in U.S. resettlement efforts today.

With the fall of Vietnam in April of 1975, the U.S. faced the challenge of resettling hundreds of thousands of Indochinese using a Refugee Task Force and temporary funding. As a result, Congress realized the need for refugee resettlement services and passed The Refugee Act of 1980, standardizing resettlement services for all refugees admitted to the United States. This Act incorporates the definition of "refugee" used in the U.N. Protocol, providing for regular and emergency admission of refugees and authorizing federal assistance for the resettlement of refugees. The Refugee Act of 1980 provides the legal basis for The Office of Refugee Resettlement.

However, ORR's mission has evolved in significant waves over time, expanding its responsibilities and increasing its caseload, irrespective of the ebb and flow of overseas arrivals. In 2000, ORR expanded its service provision to cover three new categories of eligible recipients: persons granted asylum; Survivors of Torture, and Certified adult Victims of Human Trafficking. Three years later, following the breakup of the Department of Justice's Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), authority over services to Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) is transferred to ORR. Then, in 2008, the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 granted ORR the authority to confer Eligibility and services to trafficked children.

The result is that the Office of Refugee Resettlement is not just about refugees, and certainly not just about resettlement. In fact, refugees make up about 60% of ORR's caseload, and an even smaller percentage of the current budget.

Who Does ORR Serve?

- **Refugees:** more than 3 million to date
- **Asylees:** average 24,000 per year
- **Cuban/Haitian Entrants:** average of 20,000 per year
- **Victims of Trafficking:** more than 3,000 Certifications and Eligibility letters to date
- **Special Immigrant Visa Holders (SIV):** more than 6,000 arrivals to date from Iraq and Afghanistan
- **Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC):** more than 85,000 children served so far
- **Survivors of Torture:** also allows US citizens to access services
- **Repatriated U.S. Citizens and their dependents:** Lebanon 2006 = 12,400 repatriates assisted in 17 days; Haiti 2010 = 28,000 in 38 days