

USCRI

Introduction to Refugee & Newcomer Youth

Refugee Youth Resource Center

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the training, you will be able to...

- ① Understand who refugee and newcomer youth are and the pathways through which they come to the United States
- ② Recognize common trauma, experiences, and stressors newcomer youth may face before and after resettling in the U.S.
- ③ Identify trauma-informed and culturally responsive approaches to best support newcomer youth



Who Are Refugee & Newcomer Youth?

REFLECTION QUESTION



Take a moment and reflect on the question below:

- **What words, images, or experiences come to mind when you hear the term “refugee youth” or “newcomer youth?”**





ORR ELIGIBLE POPULATIONS

Refugee

A person who has fled their country and cannot safely return due to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. Before arriving in the United States, refugee status is granted to individuals who are approved for resettlement from outside the U.S.

Asylee

A person who has fled their home country due to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution and applies for protection after arriving to the U.S. To be granted asylum, they must meet the legal definition of a refugee.

Afghan Humanitarian Parolee

An Afghan national granted temporary permission to enter and remain in the United States in response to their need for rapid evacuation and relocation under Operation Allies Refuge/Operation Allies Welcome.

Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolee

A Ukrainian national granted temporary permission to enter and remain in the U.S. under humanitarian parole due to Russia's war on Ukraine.

** for more information, see [ORR Policy Letter 16-01](#)*



ORR ELIGIBLE POPULATIONS

Cuban & Haitian Entrants

A Cuban or Haitian national who has been granted parole, is in removal proceedings, or has a pending asylum application.

Amerasian

An individual born in East or Southeast Asia to an East or Southeast Asian mother and U.S. military father.

Afghan & Iraqi Special Immigrant

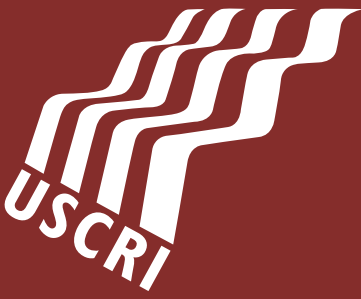
An Afghan or Iraqi national granted lawful permanent resident status in the U.S. due to their previous employment with the U.S. government, U.S. military, or qualifying American contractors in Afghanistan or Iraq.

Victims of Human Trafficking

A foreign national who has experienced a severe form of human trafficking and been issued an eligibility or certification letter by the Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP).

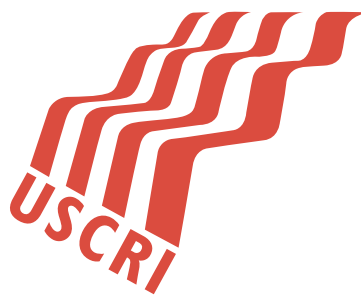
** for more information, see [ORR Policy Letter 16-01](#)*

WHO ARE NEWCOMER YOUTH?



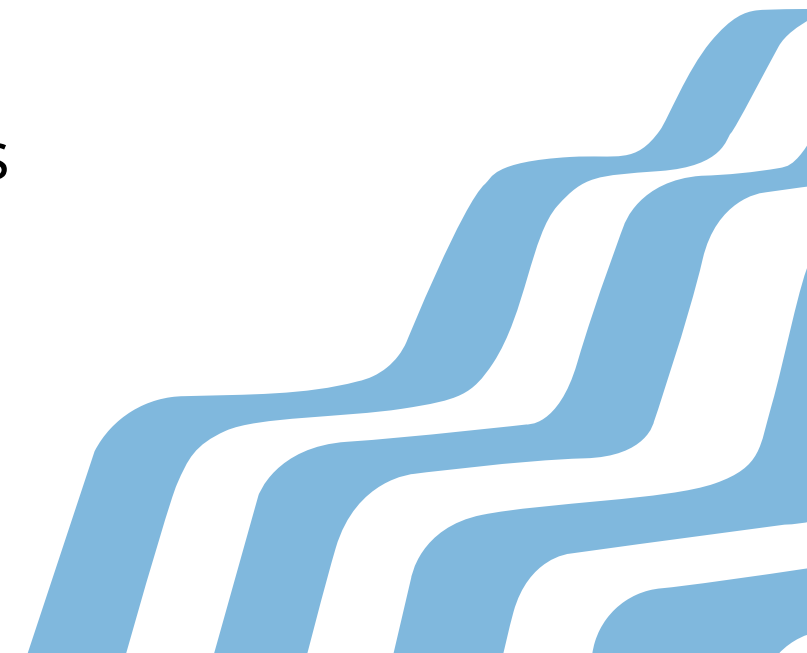
- “Newcomer” is an umbrella term, not a legal status
- A displaced young person between the ages of 0-24 who has recently arrived in the U.S.
- Navigating various cultural, linguistic, and educational transitions, as well as unfamiliar systems in the U.S.





COMMON STRENGTHS OF NEWCOMER YOUTH

- Multilingual Communicators
- Expanded Worldview
- Cross-Cultural Awareness
- High Adaptability & Flexibility
- Strong Observational Skills
- Global Connectedness



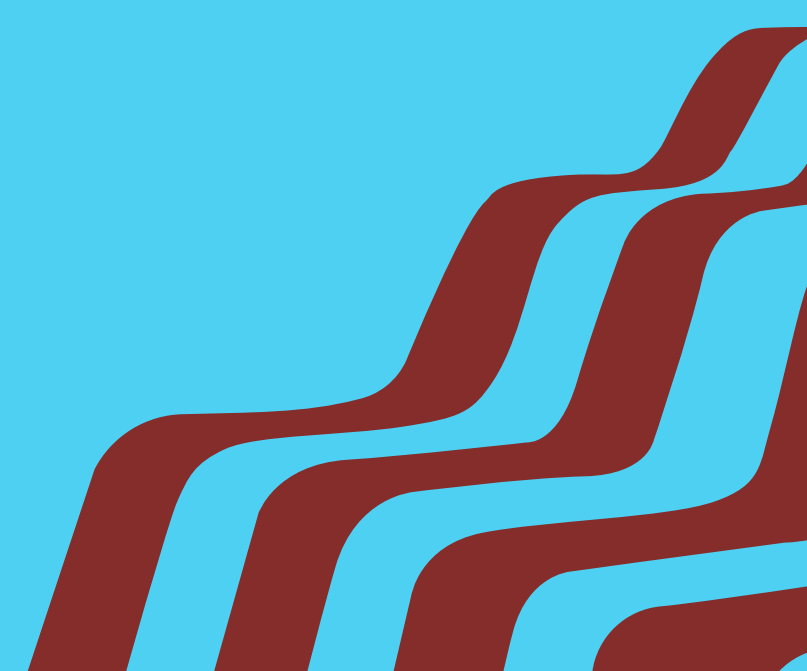
CASE EXAMPLE: SIMA

Sima is a 17-year-old newcomer youth who arrived in the U.S. from the Kurdish region of Syria about two years ago with her family. She speaks three languages with English being the newest language she is learning. When she is not in school, she often helps her parents by watching her younger siblings, translating mail, and attending appointments with them.

Sima is bright, polite, and motivated. She constantly shows interest in learning new skills to help adjust to life in the U.S. and appreciates having a mentor to support her in this.

However, she often arrives late or cancels mentoring sessions because she needs to help her family.

- **What challenges is Sima facing?**
- **What strengths does Sima exhibit?**





Resettlement Process Before & After U.S. Arrival



WHY FAMILIES & YOUTH FLEE THEIR HOME COUNTRIES



Armed
Conflict

Civil
War

Ethnoreligious
Persecution

Political
Instability

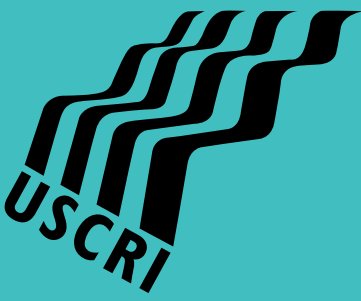
Government
Repression

International
Terrorism

Gangs &
Organized
Crime

Based on data from *Global Conflict Tracker, Council for Foreign Relations*

GLOBAL CONTEXT



- On average, refugees spend between 10-15 years displaced
- The two-fold mandate of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):
 - Protect and provide aid to refugees
 - Seek durable solutions
- Less than 1% of refugees ever get resettled to a third country

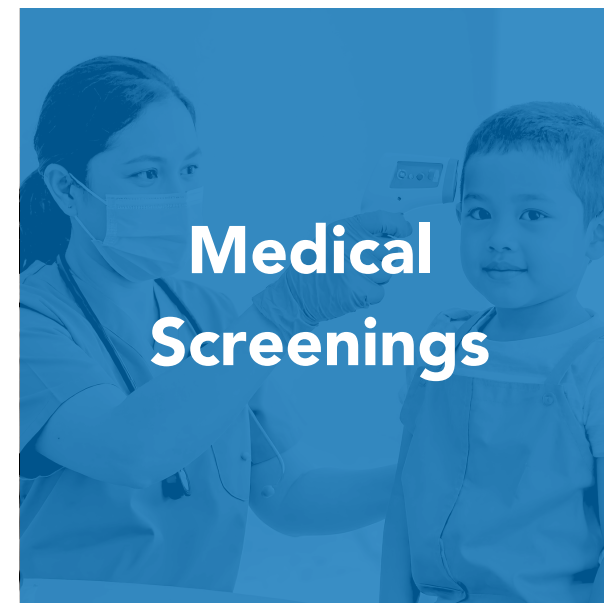
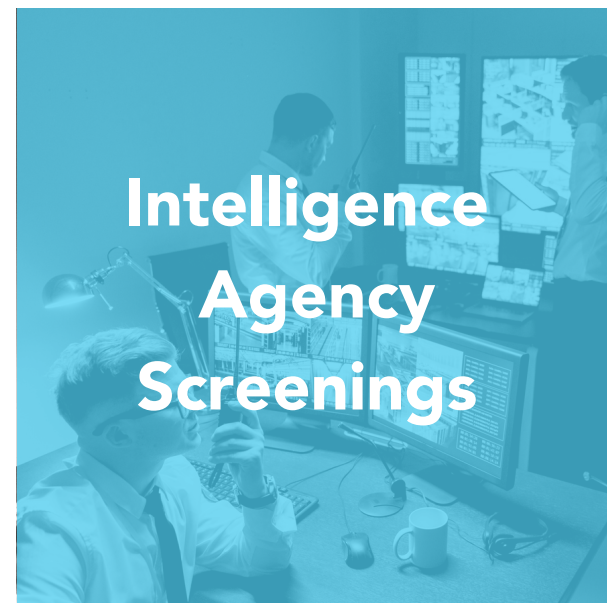
[Source: National Immigration Forum](#)



PATHWAYS TO THE U.S.



Once conditionally approved for resettlement to the United States, there is an extensive, multi-step screening process that can take 18 months or more before refugee youth and families arrive in the U.S.

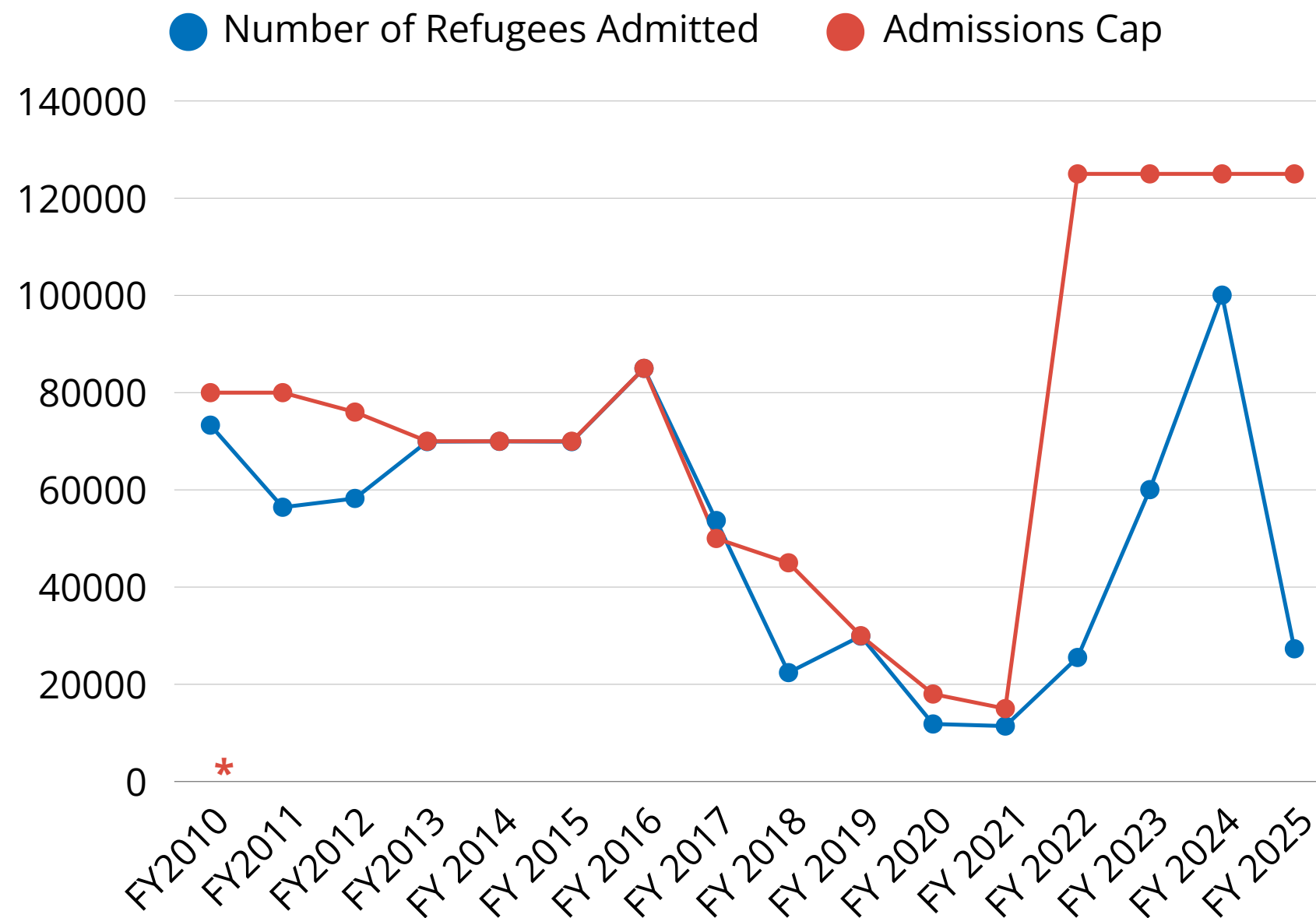


Those being resettled do not get to choose where they will be resettled, although attempts are made to send them where relatives or others of the same culture already reside.

PATHWAYS TO THE U.S.

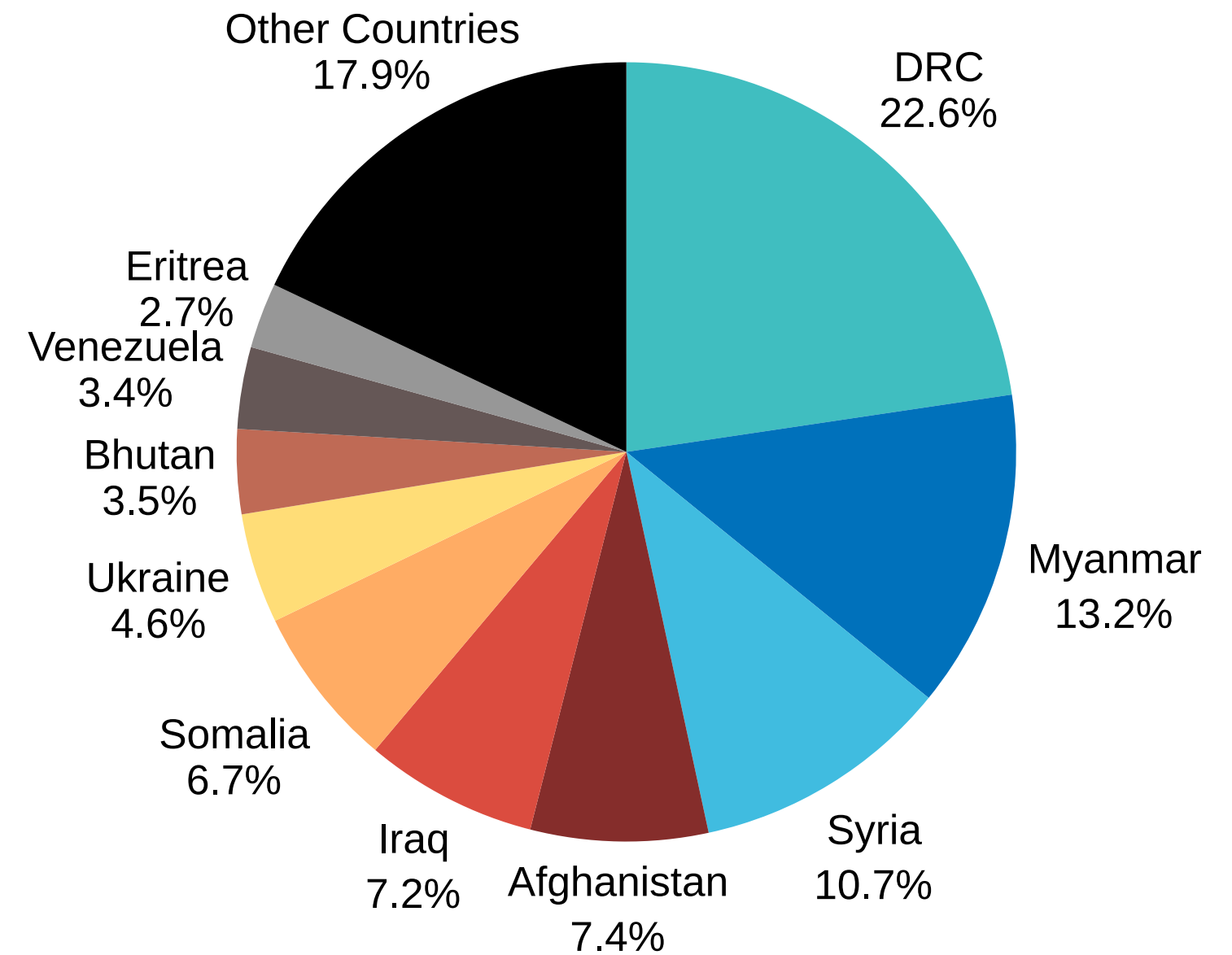


Number of Refugees Admitted to the U.S. between FY2010-FY2025



* A Fiscal Year (FY) ends in September

Countries of Origin for USRAP Admittance FY2015-FY2025



Source: [Refugee Processing Center](#)

RESETTLEMENT AGENCIES



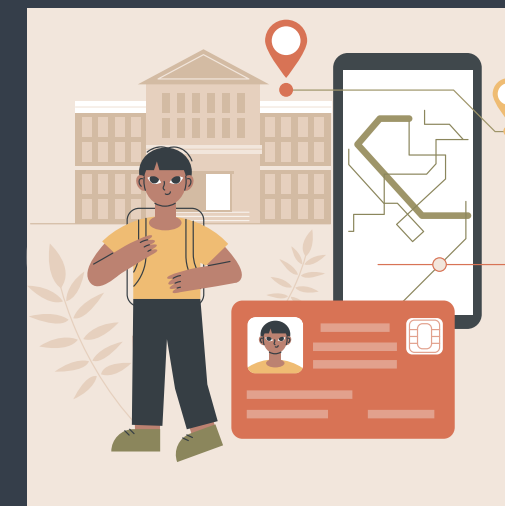
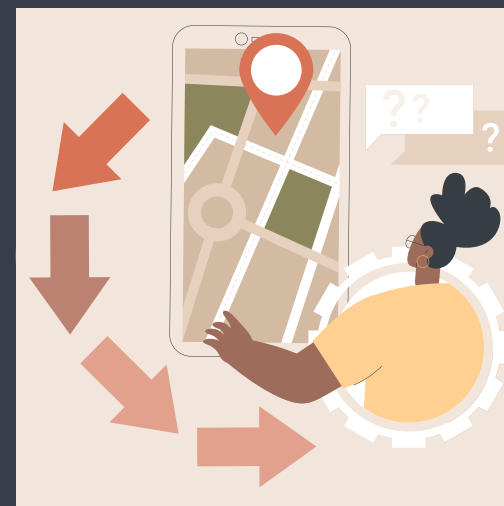
ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES



Ethiopian Community
Development Council, Inc.
Empowering Refugees and Immigrants since 1983



PROGRAM OF INITIAL RESETTLEMENT (PIR)



PIR is an early resettlement program operated by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to support newly arrived refugees during their first months in the United States.

PIR provides core services to help newly arrived refugees and other ORR-eligible populations achieve early self-sufficiency and stability in their new communities.



ORR FUNDED YOUTH PROGRAMS



Refugee School Impact

Helping refugee youth and families:

- Adapt to the U.S. school system
- Succeed academically
- Access childcare
- Aid social adjustment

Youth Mentoring

- Adult or peer mentors
- Individual or group sessions

ADDITIONAL ORR SERVICES FOR REFUGEE & NEWCOMER YOUTH



- **Preferred Communities (PC) Program**
 - Intensive case management for the most vulnerable families, including youth
- **Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)**
 - A cash program that promotes long-term economic security
- **Matching Grant (MG)**
 - An employment self-sufficiency program to help secure a job quickly
- **Temporary Cash Assistance (TANF)**
- **Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA)**



Understanding Trauma and Common Stressors Experienced by Refugee & Newcomer Youth

THE THREE E'S OF TRAUMA



Event(s)

The event or events that cause or threaten physical or psychological harm



Experience

How the event(s) are experienced (i.e. feelings of helplessness or terror)



Effect

The effects of the event(s) immediately following or developing later

TRIPLE TRAUMA PARADIGM



PRE-MIGRATION

In one's country of origin

- Persecution & violence
- Loss of home & community
- Prolonged lack of safety
- Witnessing death
- Food insecurity



MIGRATION

En route to safety

- Dangerous journeys
- Separation or loss of family
- Lack of shelter
- Assault or abuse
- Trafficking or exploitation

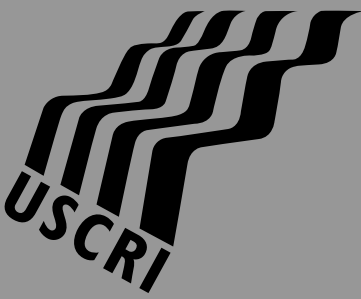


POST-MIGRATION

Resettlement

- Shock of a new environment
- Language & cultural barriers
- Isolation
- Discrimination
- Immigration uncertainty

HOW TRAUMA MAY AFFECT REFUGEE & NEWCOMER YOUTH



PHYSICAL

- Bodily pain
- Nausea
- Stimuli sensitivity
- Coordination challenges
- Bladder issues
- Appetite changes
- Sleep apnea
- Nightmares



COGNITIVE

- Impaired learning
- Concentration difficulties
- Impeded speech
- Stalled creativity
- Problem-solving challenges
- Poor recall and reflection
- Negative self-talk



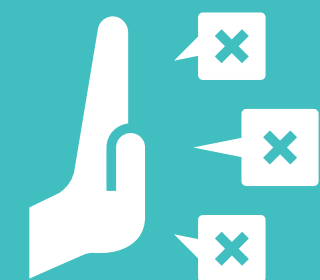
EMOTIONAL

- Guilt
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Weepiness
- Sensitivity
- Diminished motivation
- Reflective challenges



SOCIAL

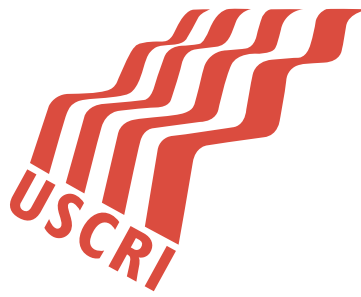
- Clinginess
- Lack of trust
- Inability to maintain healthy relationships



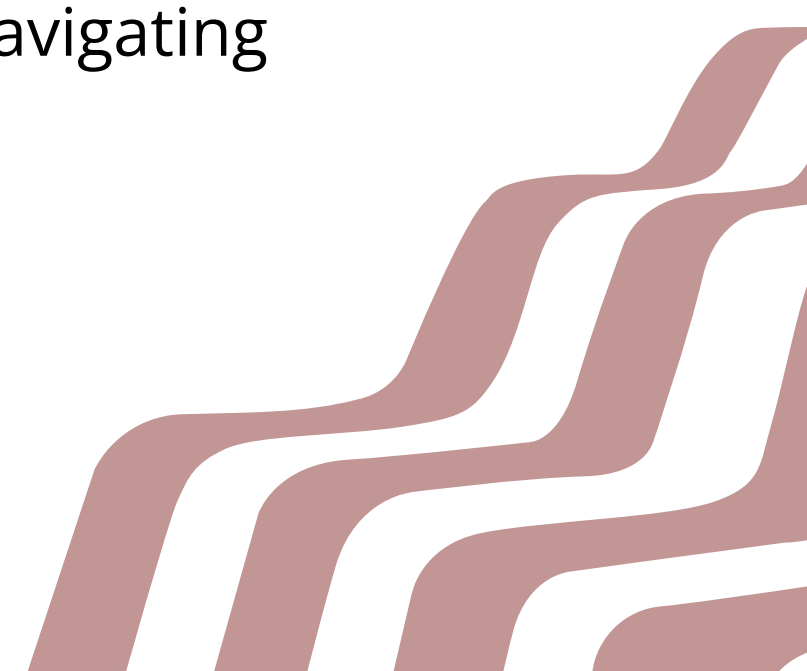
BEHAVIORAL

- Self-regulation challenges
- Defiance
- Poor attendance
- Inability to accept adult guidance
- Impulsivity
- High-risk behaviors
- Substance use

COMMON REALITIES FOR NEWCOMER YOUTH



- Interrupted or inconsistent education
- Learning a new language
- Adjustment to new systems, including school, transportation, and social norms
- Cultural adjustment and identity development stress
- Changes in family responsibilities (often translating or navigating systems)
- Lack of social network





TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICES

Regulate

your emotions and thoughts before interacting with newcomer youth.

Respect

youth's personal voice, choice, and cultural differences.

Relate

to each youth with genuine care, consistency, and authenticity.

Redirect

conversations towards empowerment and constructive outcomes.

Recognize

youth's adaptive coping strategies and normalize them.

Resist

re-traumatization and avoid potential triggers.

CASE EXAMPLE: ZAWADI

Zawadi, 14, was born in Tanzania. She grew up in a refugee camp there because her parents fled war and violence in their home country of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the camp, Zawadi wanted to learn and study, but the classrooms were overcrowded and teachers didn't stay long.

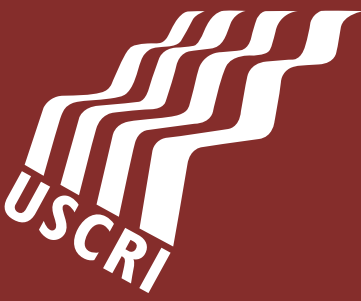
When Zawadi and her family traveled to the United States, she was sad because she had to leave some of her older siblings and all her friends. Moving to an apartment in the U.S. and learning to live in a new place was a big change. She felt lonely for some time, but she started making new friends in school. Zawadi is glad she finally gets the chance to learn.

- **What trauma or stressors (pre, during, or post-migration) do you identify in Zawadi's story?**
- **If you were working with Zawadi, how would you apply trauma-informed practices in your support and communication with her?**



Cultural Differences & Protective Factors

COMMON CULTURAL DIFFERENCES



Language &
Communication
Styles



Expression of
Emotions

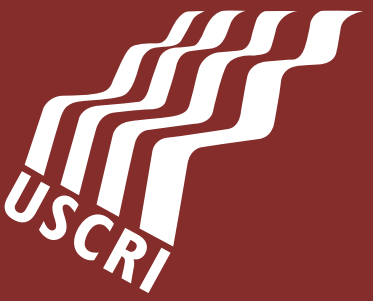


Views on Authority
& Hierarchy



Beliefs about
Education

COMMON CULTURAL DIFFERENCES



Gender Roles
& Expectations



Family Roles,
Expectations, &
Parenting Practices

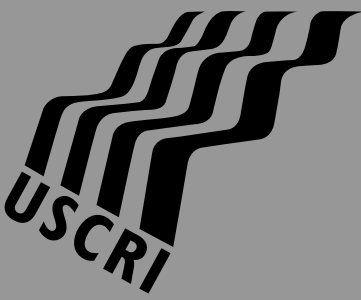


Decision-making
& Autonomy



Sense of Self,
Identity, &
Belonging

STRENGTHENING PROTECTIVE FACTORS



Sense of Belonging

Feeling accepted and valued within the larger community



Emotional Safety

Freedom to express themselves without judgment



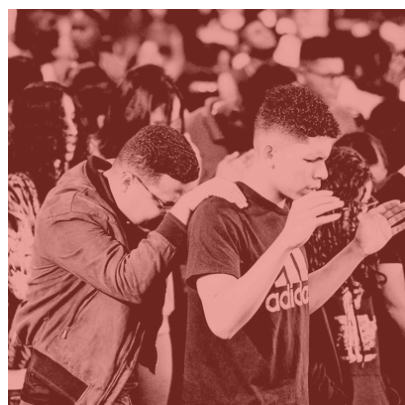
Cultural Identity

Pride and appreciation of one's culture and background



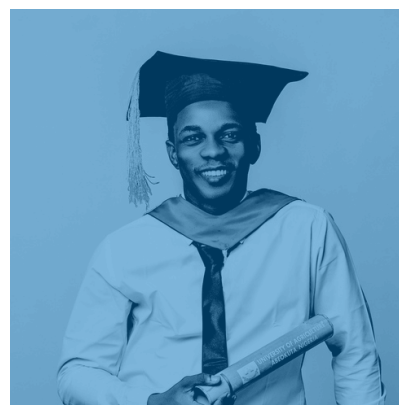
Communication Confidence

Feeling respected when communicating with others



Support Networks

Celebrate family bonding, positive friendships, and trusted adult relationships



Hope & Future Orientation

Belief in opportunities and growth

CASE EXAMPLE: AHMED

Ahmed is a 21-year-old Afghan refugee who arrived in the United States two years ago with his family. In his culture, showing respect to adults includes avoiding direct eye contact, speaking softly, and waiting to be invited to share opinions. Ahmed was raised to value humility, family honor, and respect for authority.

In meetings with his case manager, Ahmed is polite and attentive but rarely makes eye contact and shares limited information when asked questions. He feels uncomfortable when asked open-ended questions that require personal opinions. The case manager interprets Ahmed's quiet demeanor as disengagement or lack of confidence.

- **What cultural norms do you identify that could be misinterpreted by providers working with Ahmed?**
- **What are some values you identify as being important to Ahmed's identity?**
- **How could providers create an environment that respects Ahmed's cultural norms while encouraging his participation?**



Conclusion & Resources

TRAINING TAKEAWAYS



Explored who refugee and newcomer youth are and how they arrive in the U.S.

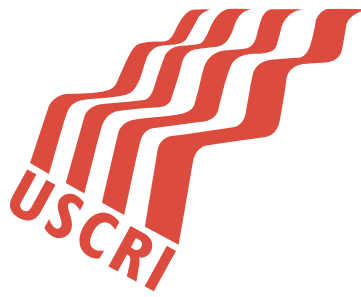


Discussed common traumas, experiences, and stressors newcomer youth may face in resettling to the U.S.

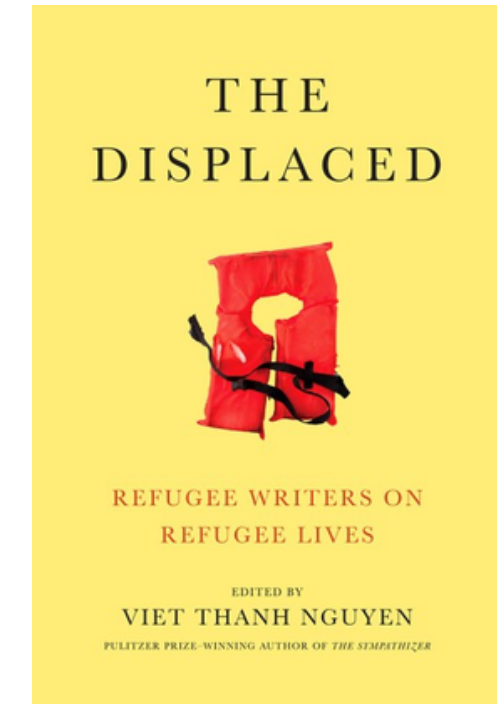
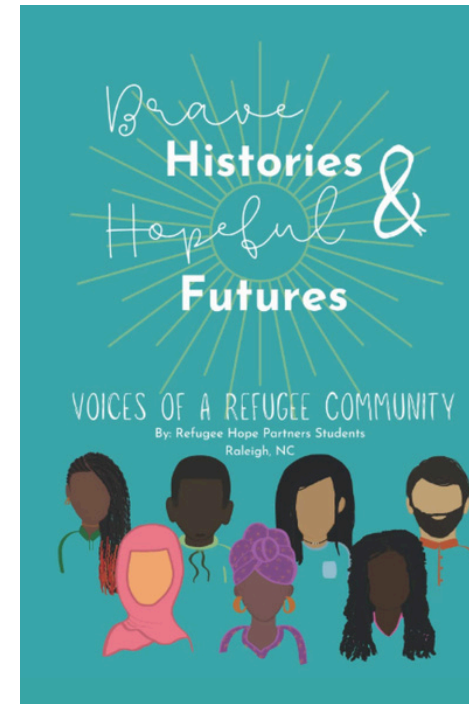


Reflected on the importance of trauma-informed and cultural responsive support for newcomer youth.

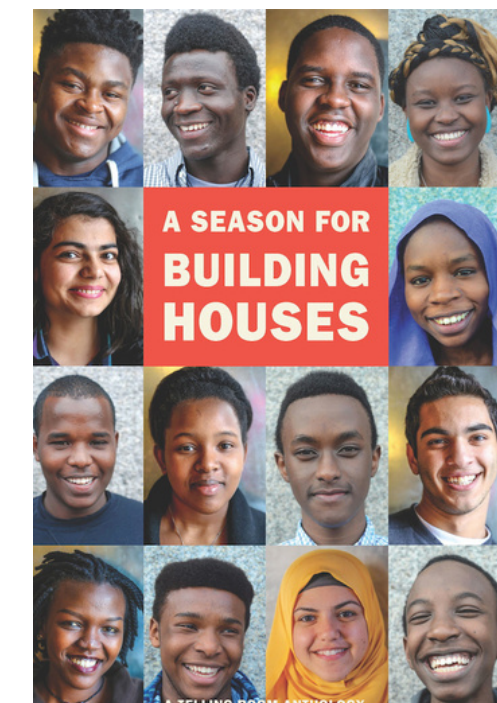
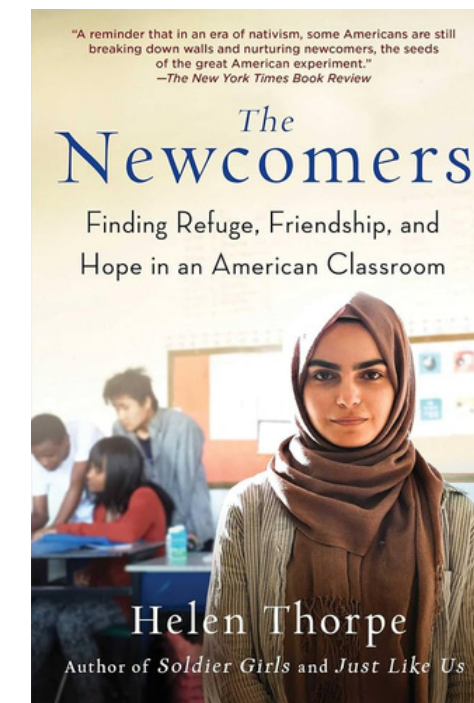
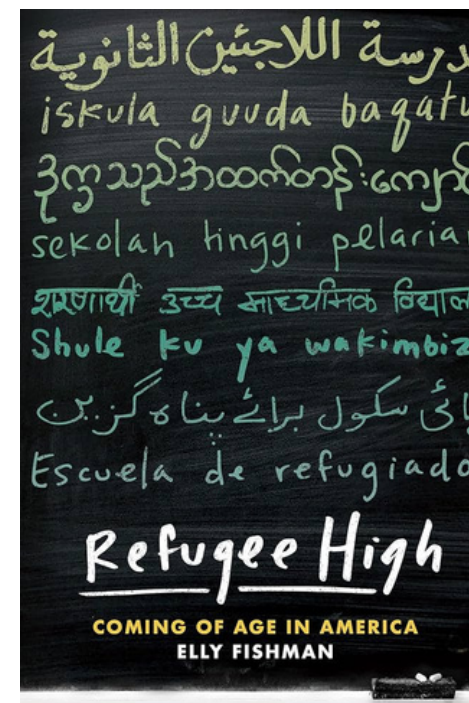
CONTINUED LEARNING RESOURCES



BOOKS ON REFUGEE EXPERIENCES



BOOKS ON NEWCOMER YOUTH



CONTINUED LEARNING RESOURCES



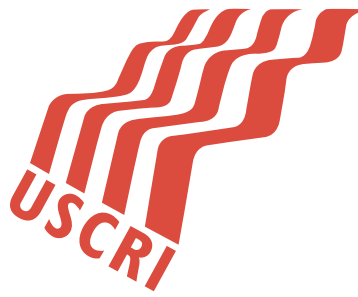
GLOBAL CONTEXT

- [UNHCR | UNHCR's mandate for refugees and stateless persons, and its role in IDP situations](#)
- [UNHCR | Mid-Year Trends 2025](#)
- [WORLD BANK BLOGS | 2019 update: How long do refugees stay in exile? To find out, beware of averages](#)
- [COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS | Global Conflict Tracker](#)

RESETTLEMENT IN THE U.S.

- [OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT | Eligible Populations](#)
- [USCIS | Humanitarian Programs](#)
- [INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE | How the U.S. refugee vetting and resettlement process really works](#)
- [REFUGEE COMMITTEE USA | Resettlement Process](#)
- [MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE | U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings and Number of Refugees Admitted, 1980-Present](#)
- [U.S. REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROGRAM | Archives](#)

CONTINUED LEARNING RESOURCES



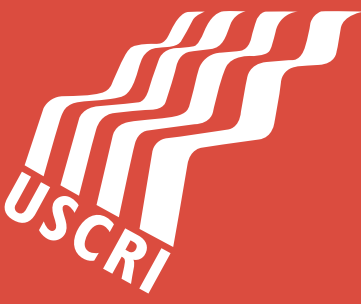
TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

- TRAUMA INFORMED | [Trauma](#)
- TRAUMA INFORMED CARE IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCE CENTER | [What is Trauma-Informed Care?](#)
- SWITCHBOARD | [Trauma-Informed Care: A Primer for Refugee Service Providers](#)
- SWITCHBOARD | [Demystifying Strengths-Based Services: Fostering Refugees' Resilience in Resettlement](#)
- IRISS | [Strengths-Based Approaches for Working with Individuals](#)
- CENTER FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT | [Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services](#)

CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

- OPRE | [Enhancing Cultural Responsiveness in Social Service Agencies](#)
- CULTURAL ATLAS | [Welcome to Cultural Atlas](#)
- DIVERSIFIED CONSULTING | [Custom & Cultural Nuance in the Classroom Setting](#)

REFUGEE-YOUTH.ORG



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REFUGEE YOUTH RESOURCE CENTER

Improving outcomes for refugee children, youth, and their families through resources, education, and provider support

UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN RESOURCE CENTER

CENTRO DE RECURSOS PARA JÓVENES INMIGRANTES



INFORMACIÓN
PARA JÓVENES Y
FAMILIAS

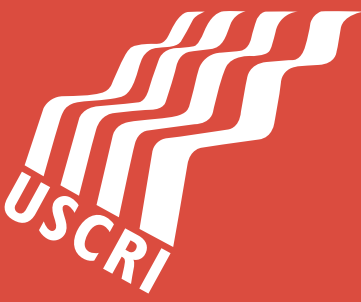
TALLERES PARA
JÓVENES Y
FAMILIAS



INFORMATION FOR
PROVIDERS

TRAINING &
TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE

ANTI-TRAFFICKING SERVICES



Anti-Trafficking Services

USCRI's Anti-Trafficking Work

USCRI receives grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP) to administer the Trafficking Victim Assistance Program (TVAP) and the Aspire: Child Trafficking Victim Assistance Program (Aspire). USCRI works with a network of service providers across the U.S. and its territories to provide case management services and direct financial assistance to foreign national survivors of trafficking.

ESSENTIAL LINKS

If you think you are in danger or have an emergency, please call 911 immediately. For other urgent needs, please contact the [National Human](#)