

Ukrainians seeking Refuge in Washington: Frequently Asked Questions

How is the State of Washington responding to the Russian invasion in Ukraine?

“We have all been inspired by the people of Ukraine,” Governor Inslee said during a news conference on March 4, 2022, “We know that there are hard days ahead and Washington state wants to do our part to support them.”

“At DSHS, we are a team of humanitarians and global citizens who deeply care for people around the world. It is our nature to open our arms to those suffering from loss, sorrow and pain. We are deeply saddened for the Ukrainian community and the unjust assault on human freedom their country is now facing. Upon direction from Governor Inslee, DSHS is ready and prepared to assist in any repatriation efforts of U.S. citizens living in Ukraine. We remain ready to assist in the event Ukrainian citizens come to Washington state.” Jilma Meneses, Secretary of DSHS said on February 25, 2022.

Washington state continues to be a welcoming state and the DSHS Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance is working to stabilize, strengthen and support our resettlement infrastructure to respond to those fleeing persecution and seeking to rebuild their lives in our local communities.

How can Washingtonians support Ukraine and Ukrainians?

Washington state has a long history welcoming refugees fleeing war and persecution in their home countries. Over the past 10 years, more than 30,000 refugees from over 70 countries have resettled in Washington state through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. This includes over 6,500 Ukrainians who have resettled in our local communities since 2010, including 121 newly arrived individuals since October 2021. Ukrainians may also enter the United States independently outside of the formal U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. Many of those arriving in the past several weeks have entered the U.S. as humanitarian parolees and not through the federal refugee program.

As the federal government prepares guidance to states on the legal pathways by which Ukrainians will be arriving, Washington’s Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance is working with our refugee resettlement agencies, provider networks and local communities to prepare for an increase in arrivals. At this time, we do not have any additional information about how many people might come to Washington state or when they might arrive. It is too early to estimate the numbers of people who will arrive in local communities in Washington.

When refugees and immigrants do arrive in our state through the federal resettlement program, we work with our community-based partners and resettlement agencies to connect people with vital, culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate services like food and cash assistance, temporary and long-term housing, medical screenings and behavioral health services, employment and training programs, child care assistance, and help navigating social services.

Through Washington's recent participation in the federal government's [Operation Allies Welcome](#), our state welcomed more than 3,200 Afghan arrivals since October 2021. Building off the work we have done over the past six months, the Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance will work with communities and organizations to support those seeking refuge in Washington state, specifically those from Ukraine as well as many other across the world.

This is a dynamic and fluid situation. You can find relevant information, including different ways to learn and engage, at the Department of State's United with Ukraine website, found [here](#).

The United States Agency for International Development encourages cash donations to reputable relief and charitable organizations on the ground. In addition, Washingtonians may also donate to local community organizations serving Ukrainians. Here are some ideas or places to support:

- <https://www.cidi.org/disaster-responses/war-in-ukraine/>
- [Ukrainian Community Center of Washington](#)
- [Local Refugee Resettlement Agencies](#)

President Biden announced that the United States would accept up to 100,000 individuals who fled the war. What does this mean?

On March 24, 2022, President Biden [announced](#) that the United States plans to welcome up to 100,000 Ukrainians and others fleeing the war through the full range of legal pathways.

The federal government is working to expand and develop new programs designed to provide temporary safe harbor for Ukrainians and others, largely focused on welcoming those with family members in the United States.

This announcement means Washington's Ukrainian community will have more opportunities to reunite with their family members, and that other affected communities, such as Russian Washingtonians, will also be able to provide refuge for their loved ones. Because the Biden Administration is focusing on the ability to offer refuge to those who have family in the United States, states with larger Ukrainian populations, such as Washington, Oregon and Illinois, may see larger numbers than the rest of the country. It is too soon to tell how many Ukrainians will come to our state as a result of the policies enacted under this announcement.

What is *Uniting for Ukraine*?

On April 21, 2022, President Biden announced a new program, [Uniting for Ukraine](#), as a streamlined process for Ukrainian citizens to apply for humanitarian parole in the United States. To be eligible, Ukrainians must have been residents in Ukraine as of Feb. 11, 2022, have a sponsor in the United States, complete vaccinations and other public health requirements, and pass rigorous biometric and biographic screening and vetting security checks. Ukrainians approved via this process will be authorized to travel to the United States and be considered for parole, on a case-by-case basis, for a period of up to two years. Once paroled through this process, Ukrainians will be eligible for work authorization.

Beginning on April 25, 2022, U.S.-based individuals and entities can apply to the Department of Homeland Security to sponsor Ukrainian citizens who have been displaced through the Uniting for Ukraine process, which is now live on the [DHS website](#). Any U.S. citizen or individual, including representatives of non-government organizations, can sponsor Ukrainian applicants. Individuals and organizations seeking to sponsor Ukrainian citizens in the United States will be required to declare their financial support and pass security background checks to protect against exploitation and abuse. The Department of Homeland Security will administer the program. Eligibility requirements will include required vaccinations and other public health requirements as well as biographic and biometric screening, vetting, and security checks.

I have family members and loved ones who fled Ukraine. How can I bring them to Washington as fast as possible?

The federal government oversees immigration policies, not the state. As such, federal agencies, like [USCIS](#) and the [Department of State](#), oversee the U.S. immigration system. Please review their websites in close consultation with an immigration attorney for the best path forward.

Because each individual situation is different, we suggest that you reach out to an expert in immigration law. You can find low-cost immigration legal services by connecting with a Department of Justice accredited agency. Find the list of agencies in Washington [here](#). You can also search for an immigration lawyer affiliated with the American Immigration Lawyers Association [here](#). If you are connecting with an immigration representative, please educate yourself on how to spot immigration fraud (also called Notario Fraud), which unfortunately can occur in times such as this. Learn more [here](#) and, if warranted, seek a second opinion from another immigration attorney before paying large sums of money.

Members of Washington's federal delegation can assist in certain cases. Find your Congressman [here](#). You may also contact the offices of Senators [Murray](#) and [Cantwell](#).

What kind of immigration statuses might Ukrainians and others seeking refuge from the war have?

All those we welcome under this pledge will be seeking refuge but not all will have "refugee" as their immigration status – an important distinction for potential receiving communities like Washington.

Ukrainians may arrive into Washington through many different legal immigration pathways. The legal immigration pathways for arrival determine the type of services and level of state and federal support available to them through an emergency response. DSHS expects that immigration pathways such as family reunification, student visas, employer-sponsored visas and humanitarian parole may be options. We may see a small number of the most vulnerable arrive through an expedited refugee process and be served by the traditional refugee resettlement system. Note that all of these processes will allow individuals to work, but their access to federal public benefits and other supports will be different.

Will Washington see Ukrainian asylum seekers?

Yes. Asylum seekers are those individuals who make their own way to the U.S. border and claim asylum to Customs and Border Patrol personnel. This happens through self-directed rather than federally coordinated processes. See more from the Bipartisan Policy Center [here](#). Asylum seekers will more than likely be joining family here in the United States.

Asylum seekers, if they pass a credible fear interview, should be able to stay in the United States while their asylum case proceeds in federal court. Asylum seekers must apply for asylum within one year of arrival and are encouraged to meet with a qualified immigration attorney. Asylum seekers are not eligible for refugee services or many public benefits until their asylum case has been approved in federal immigration court. However, they can apply for work authorization. Note that Title 42 remains in effect at our southern border with Mexico, and this affects the ability of asylum seekers to enter the United States through that land border. Learn more about this policy [here](#) from the American Immigration Council.

I am from Ukraine, and I was in the United States as a student, tourist or otherwise without immigration status on April 11, 2022.

On April 18, 2022, the [United States Citizenship and Immigration Services](#) released information on how Ukrainians can apply for Temporary Protected Status in the United States.

To be eligible under the Ukraine designation, individuals must demonstrate their continuous residence in the United States since April 11, 2022, and continuous physical presence in the United States since the designation date in the Federal Register notice. USCIS estimates 59,600 currently in the United States individuals may be eligible for TPS under the designation of Ukraine.

Ukrainian nationals currently outside the United States are not eligible for TPS under this designation, and they will not become eligible by relocating to the United States in the coming weeks. Ukrainians are encouraged instead to apply for a visa or other legal pathway at a U.S. consulate abroad.

[Here](#) is a fact sheet about TPS from the American Immigration Council.

Can I provide housing to people in Washington seeking refuge?

Refugees from all countries may need housing assistance. If you are interested in providing housing for a refugee in general, you can reach out to Airbnb's Open Homes host program at <https://www.airbnb.org/help-ukraine>.

What public benefits or services will be available to people from Ukraine?

People arriving in Washington from Ukraine may be eligible for a variety of public benefits programs and services. Eligibility for cash, food and medical assistance is determined by immigration status and often based on income and resources available. It is important to note that not all people arriving from Ukraine may be eligible for federal or state-funded benefits or services.

Similarly, programs and services administered by the DSHS Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance depend upon immigration status. For more information, please see the chart below.

Program	Ukrainian with Refugee or Asylee Immigration Status	Ukrainian with Humanitarian Parole Immigration Status
Refugee Resettlement Agency support	Eligible for: Reception and Placement Program	Ineligible
Washington cash and food programs*	Eligible for: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (federally-funded cash assistance) (for households with minor children) SNAP Food Assistance (for all in these categories) Refugee Cash Assistance (for individuals and couples without minor children)	Eligible for: State Family Assistance (for households with minor children) Food Assistance Program (for all)
		Ineligible for: Refugee Cash Assistance (for individuals and couples without minor children)
WIC ¹	Potentially Eligible for: Pregnant individuals, new and breastfeeding moms, and children <5 years of age	Potentially Eligible for: Pregnant individuals, new and breastfeeding moms, and children <5 years of age
Apple Health (Medicaid) ²	Eligible	Potentially Eligible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apple Health for Kids • Apple Health for Pregnant Women • MCS • AMP
		Ineligible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apple Health for Adults • Apple Health for Families and Caretaker Relatives • SSI-related Medicaid

¹ WIC Eligibility: <https://doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/wic/wic-eligibility>

² HCA Citizenship and Immigration Status Guide: https://www.hca.wa.gov/assets/free-or-low-cost/citizenship_alien_status_guide.pdf

ORIA-Funded Programs for New Arrivals

Program	Ukrainian with Refugee or Asylee Immigration Status	Ukrainian with Humanitarian Parole Immigration Status
Refugee Health Screening and Refugee Health Promotion	Eligible	Ineligible
LEP Pathway Employment and ESL	Eligible	Eligible for those on SFA, but Ineligible for those only on FAP
CLEVER	Eligible	Ineligible
ORIA BFET	Eligible	Ineligible
PRIME	Eligible	Ineligible
Refugee School Impact, Refugee Youth Mentoring and Unaccompanied Refugee Minor	Eligible	Ineligible
Refugee Elders	Eligible	Ineligible