



## FACT SHEET

### 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 (known as "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 provision of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Refugee Resettlement Program, asylees and/or their family members may receive Refugee Cash Assistance for up to eight months, medical assistance and other social services from the date asylum was granted.

Other services asylees and their derivative family members may receive include:

- Refugee Social Services;
- California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), Medi-Cal, CalFresh (formerly known as Food Stamps) and other social services;
- Health assessments and physical examinations using trained, culturally-sensitive licensed medical providers and interpreters;
- Referrals of medical and mental health conditions to primary care providers for continuum of care;
- Preventive healthcare, 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; and
- 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](mailto:RPB@dss.ca.gov).

#### **Additional Information**

For additional information about asylees, visit the Office of Refugee Resettlement's Asylee webpage: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/asylee-eligibility-for-assistance-and-services-through-the-office-of>.