

The U.S. Federal Refugee Act of 1980 was enacted to create a uniform system of service for refugees migrating to the U.S. The Act entitles all newly arriving refugees to a comprehensive health assessment.

Formed in 2008, the Refugee Health Program is a partnership between the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, and the Pennsylvania Department of Health through the Office of Health Equity (OHE) and Bureau of Epidemiology. Other key partners within the Department of Health are the Bureaus of Family Health, Community Health Systems and Communicable Diseases.

The goal of this program is to ensure that all newly arriving refugees receive a comprehensive health screening as soon as possible after entering the United States. These screenings protect the public's health against communicable diseases, identify health problems that have been overlooked or developed subsequent to the overseas medical exam, and provide a level of care necessary for a supportive and successful resettlement.

Partner Volunteer Agencies (VOLAGs)

Allentown	Catholic Charities
Erie	International Institute Catholic Charities
Harrisburg	Catholic Charities
Lancaster	Church World Services Lutheran Refugee Services Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
Philadelphia	Nationalities Service Center Lutheran Children & Family Service of Eastern PA Jewish Family & Children's Service of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh	Catholic Charities Diocese of Pittsburgh
Scranton	Catholic Social Services

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Refugee Health Program



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What is a refugee?

A refugee is defined as a person who is outside his or her country of nationality and who is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution based on race, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

People are admitted as refugees after they are granted their status by the appropriate Federal agencies. They are supported within the United States by voluntary refugee resettlement agencies (VOLAGs). These organizations work with the Federal Department of State to provide basic needs such as food, housing and transportation, to help navigate government assistance programs, and to provide translation services and English language education.

These VOLAGs work closely with the Refugee Health Program to provide health care for the refugees in their care.

Refugee Health Program

Good health is an important part of successful resettlement and adjustment to a new life in the United States.

From health problems they may have faced in their home countries to adjusting to a new health care system in a foreign country, the many health challenges refugees face pose significant issues for both refugees and the communities they live in.

The Refugee Health Program works with commonwealth-selected medical providers to ensure that all refugees receive an initial health assessment to identify and treat health conditions or health-related issues that could get in the way of successful resettlement

Health Assessment

To assess the current health status of all newly arriving refugees and to identify health problems, the Refugee Health Program provides financial support for refugees to receive initial health assessments after they arrive in Pennsylvania.

Although all refugees are given a medical exam overseas before entering the United States, these assessments look for health issues not identified or developed subsequent to the overseas exam. The health assessment also ensures that conditions identified during the overseas medical exam are properly treated.

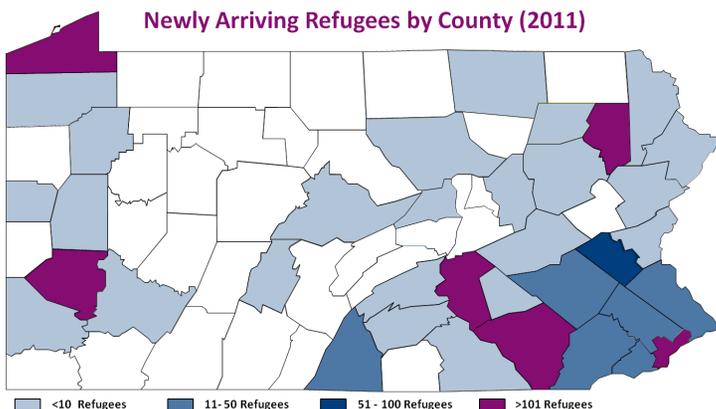
The primary components of the health assessments are:

- Medical history and physical examination;
- Tuberculosis screening;
- Sexually transmitted infections, HIV and hepatitis screenings;
- Intestinal parasite screenings;
- Immunizations;
- Specialist referrals and any needed follow up.

The Refugee Health Program also provides medical interpretation, a vital part of reducing disparities in those who have limited English language skills. The Office of Health Equity is also working to develop cultural competency trainings with our medical provider partners, VOLAGs, and community organizers. Additionally, we advocate for Culturally & Linguistic Appropriate Service (CLAS) Standards to be incorporated into all health care systems in order to better serve refugee and immigrant communities.

Partner Health Care Providers

The PA DOH Refugee Health Program encourages medical providers in the commonwealth interested in joining the network of participating medical providers to complete our Participating Provider Agreement (PPA). Becoming a Refugee Health Program provider is especially important to those physicians and medical practices whose mission includes outreach to underserved populations.



If you are a medical provider interested in joining the Refugee Health Program, please contact Cliff Deardorff or visit <http://www.health.state.pa.us/RefugeeHealthPPA>.