

FACT SHEET FOR SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISA HOLDERS FROM AFGHANISTAN

The Department of Human Services' Maryland Office for Refugees & Asylees (MORA) has helped more than 11,912 refugees make Maryland their home over the last 10 years, aiding their transition from "displaced persons" to independent, contributing members of their local communities.

MORA operates through a network of public and private service providers to plan, administer, and coordinate transitional services to help refugees become self-sufficient as quickly as possible via financial assistance, job placement, community orientation, English language & vocational training, academic support for youth, case management, & other support services.



As of August 2021, the Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees served **465** newly arrived eligible individuals.

Maryland currently ranks **#4** in the nation for SIV arrivals, having resettled more than **6,800** SIVs over the last 10 years.

Top 5 nationalities that MORA serves



Afghanistan



Cameroon



Eritrea



Democratic Republic of Congo



El Salvador

What is the Special Immigrant Visa Program for Iraqi and Afghan Nationals?

The 2006 Defense Authorization Act issues Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) to Iraqi and Afghan nationals who work for the U.S. military and meet certain requirements -- such as those who have worked with the U.S. Armed Forces or under Chief of Mission (COM) authority at the U.S. Embassy Baghdad or U.S. Embassy Kabul. Such persons often face threats and are targeted by armed groups.

Why is the SIV Program in the news a lot lately?

The U.S. government has begun withdrawing troops from Afghanistan, and the Taliban has seized power within the country. There are concerns that Afghans who supported and served our country will be harmed if left behind. The federal government is evacuating individuals eligible to receive a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) so that they may safely be processed for admission into our country. Maryland is one of six states in which the vast majority of SIV holders move to establish new lives. We anticipate that 180-300 individuals will arrive in Maryland between August & October 2021.

How do SIV applicants arrive in MD?

SIV applicants are processed at designated locations overseas before arrival to the United States. Due to heightened security concerns, some SIV applicants are being evacuated to various U.S. Military facilities across the United States where they will be processed and granted immigration documents before resettling in U.S. communities. Local state resettlement agencies welcome SIVs at designated airports.



What services are provided to SIVs in Maryland?

On arrival, SIV applicants receive a Permanent Residency Status (Green Card). The visa recipients are eligible for the same resettlement assistance, entitlement programs, & other benefits as refugees admitted under the Refugee Act of 1980. Below are specialized services that SIV applicants may access in addition to general public assistance:

Programs Administered by the Resettlement Agency:

- Reception and Placement (R&P) Program
- Matching Grant (MG) Program
- Preferred Communities (PC) Program

Programs Administered by MORA at the Maryland Department of Human Services:

- Refugee Transitional Cash Assistance (RTCA)
- Refugee Support Services (RSS)
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Vocational Training and Employment Services (VTES)
- Refugee School Impact Grant (RSIG)
- Refugee Youth Mentoring Program (RYMP)
- Extended Case Management Program (ECMP)
- Initial Medical Screening Program in partnership with MD Department of Health
- Refugee Health Promotion (RHP) Grant in partnership with MD Department of Health

Visit the Department of Human Services' [website](#) to learn more about MORA services and how to access them.

As an individual, how do I help?

Resettlement agencies (RAs) have resources and the infrastructure to assist Afghan refugees and SIV holders. RAs find housing for their clients before they arrive, and as such, they are often seeking donations of household items such as furniture, kitchen basics, hygiene items, school supplies for children, and much more.

RAs also recruit volunteers to help newcomers navigate their new homes and serve as cultural mentors and "first friends." Volunteers can help with daily tasks like learning bus routes, enrolling children in school, and connecting newcomers with resources within their communities. to helping parents engage with their kids' schools, to connecting newcomers with resources. Contact the resettlement agencies directly to donate or learn more about how you can help.

[International Rescue Committee Baltimore](#)

Phone: 410-327-1885

[International Rescue Committee Silver Spring](#)

Phone: 301-562-8633

[Ethiopian Community Development Council](#)

Phone: 301-562-7303

[Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area](#)

Phone: 240-714-4034

I am a U.S. armed forces veteran. How do I help?

Consider serving as a mentor or volunteer. Contacting a resettlement agency may be a good first step. RAs seek volunteers who can help newcomers adapt to life in their new communities, and you may be uniquely qualified especially if you served in Afghanistan. Consider sharing your experience. This may help dispel myths about the SIV program and its recipients.

I know people in Afghanistan who need safe haven. How do I help?

If the individuals are U.S. citizens or permanent residents, they should fill out [this form](#) created by the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. The State Department recently announced [Priority 2 \(P-2\) designation](#) for eligible Afghans and family members, granting them access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. Please visit www.state.gov/afghanistan-inquiries for more information about the P-2 program for Afghan refugees.

I am an Afghan who served American interests. What else should I know about the SIV program?

- If you have an approved I-360 petition and have questions regarding your case status, please contact the National Visa Center (NVC) at NVCSIV@state.gov or 1-603-334-0700.
- For general questions about filing SIV Form I-360, please contact the USCIS Nebraska Service Center at sivtranslator.nsc@dhs.gov.