

# SECURITY SCREENING OF REFUGEES ADMITTED TO THE UNITED STATES

Refugees seeking resettlement in the United States must pass through a series of rigorous checkpoints aimed at ensuring they will not pose a security risk to the United States.

THE SCREENING PROCESS TAKES 18 TO 24 MONTHS AFTER REFERRAL

**CHECK POINT 1**  
**AN INDIVIDUAL REGISTERS AS A REFUGEE WITH THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES**  
 UNHCR collects identifying documents, biographic information, and biometric data (such as an iris scan for Syrians), and in most cases, interviews the applicant to determine if they qualify as a refugee under international law.

**CHECK POINT 2**  
**A REFUGEE WHO MEETS ONE OF THE CRITERIA FOR RESETTLEMENT IS REFERRED TO THE U.S.**  
 UNHCR, a U.S. Embassy, or a Non-Governmental Organization will refer the refugee for resettlement to the U.S. Under legislation passed by Congress, Iraqi nationals who have worked for the U.S. government, a U.S. contractor, or a U.S.-based media organization or NGO, and their family members, as well as Iraqis with family members in the U.S. can apply directly to the resettlement program without being referred by UNHCR.

**CHECK POINT 3**  
**RESETTLEMENT SUPPORT CENTERS INTERVIEW THE REFUGEE**  
 Contracted by the Department of State, these centers compile a refugee's personal data and background information for the security clearance process and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in-person interview.

**CHECK POINT 4**  
**THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE CHECKS THE REFUGEE'S NAME AGAINST THE U.S. WATCH LIST THROUGH ITS CONSULAR LOOKOUT AND SUPPORT SYSTEM**

**CHECK POINT 5**  
**CERTAIN REFUGEES UNDERGO AN ADDITIONAL SECURITY REVIEW CALLED THE SECURITY ADVISORY OPINION**  
 These cases require a positive clearance from a number of U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies in order to continue the resettlement process.

**CHECK POINT 6**  
**THE NATIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM CENTER CONDUCTS AN INTER-AGENCY CHECK ON THE APPLICANT WITHIN A DESIGNATED AGE RANGE**  
 This is a "recurrent vetting" process. USCIS will be notified of any new derogatory information identified after the initial check and up until the applicant's travel to the U.S.



IF THERE IS DOUBT ABOUT WHETHER AN APPLICANT POSES A SECURITY THREAT, HE OR SHE WILL NOT BE ADMITTED TO THE UNITED STATES.

**CHECK POINT 7**  
**SYRIAN REFUGEES REFERRED TO THE U.S. FOR RESETTLEMENT ARE FLAGGED FOR ADDITIONAL SECURITY SCREENING**  
 Before USCIS schedules an interview with the applicant abroad, a Refugee Affairs Division officer at USCIS headquarters reviews Syrian applications. If USCIS finds certain criteria to be met, the case is referred to the agency's Fraud Detection and National Security Division for further review. This review includes open-source and classified research, which is compiled into a report for use by the USCIS interviewing officer.

**CHECK POINT 8**  
**USCIS CONDUCTS AN IN-PERSON INTERVIEW WITH THE REFUGEE ABROAD AT THEIR LOCATION**  
 A highly trained USCIS officer conducts a detailed, face-to-face interview with the applicant as well as accompanying family over age 14. The officer collects the applicant's fingerprints and photographs. The officer evaluates the applicant's credibility and considers whether their testimony is consistent with country conditions. Based on the interview and the refugee's case file, the officer will determine whether the individual qualifies as a refugee and is otherwise admissible under U.S. law.

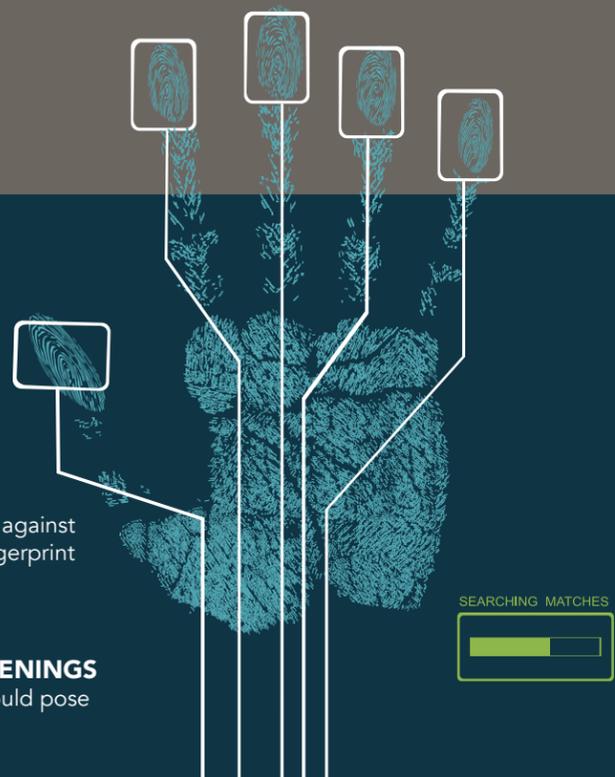


**CHECK POINT 9**  
**IF THE NECESSARY CRITERIA ARE MET, THE USCIS OFFICER CONDITIONALLY APPROVES THE REFUGEE'S APPLICATION FOR RESETTLEMENT AND SUBMITS IT TO DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOR FINAL PROCESSING**

**CHECK POINT 10**  
**USCIS COORDINATES 3 BIOMETRIC CHECKS**  
**FBI SCREENING**  
 The applicant's fingerprints are run through the FBI's Next Generation Identification System.

**DHS SCREENING**  
 The applicant's fingerprints are screened against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Automated Biometric Identification System, which includes watch-list information as well as data on previous immigration encounters in the US and abroad.

**DOD SCREENING**  
 The U.S. Department of Defense screens fingerprints of refugees within a certain age range against its Automated Biometric Identification System. ABIS contains a variety of data, including fingerprint records from Iraq.



**CHECK POINT 11**  
**THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION OR A PHYSICIAN DESIGNATED BY THE U.S. EMBASSY CONDUCT APPLICANT MEDICAL SCREENINGS**  
 This screening ensures that the applicant does not have any communicable diseases that could pose a public health threat, and, as such, prohibit his or her admission to the U.S.



**REFUGEE APPROVED FOR RESETTLEMENT**  
 Once the results of all security checks and the medical screening have been received and cleared, the conditional approvals become final, and the refugee is approved for resettlement in the U.S.

**REFUGEES ARE MATCHED WITH A SPONSOR AGENCY**  
 Agencies like the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants place refugees with a local partner agency or office that assists them upon arrival to the U.S.

**REFUGEES ARE OFFERED CULTURAL ORIENTATION WHILE WAITING FOR FINAL PROCESSING**  
 This orientation prepares them for their journey to and initial resettlement in the U.S.



**REFUGEES ARE ADMITTED TO THE U.S. UPON ARRIVAL AT A U.S. AIRPORT**  
 A Customs and Border Protection officer reviews the refugee's documentation and conducts additional security checks against its National Targeting Center-Passenger program and the Transportation Security Administration's Secure Flight program. CBP ensures that the arriving refugee is the same person who was screened and approved for admission to the United States.

