

Refugees in Georgia: The Benefits

Employment

- **Eighty percent of employable adult refugees resettled in Georgia are working and paying their own expenses, and US taxes, within six months.**
 - Georgia is tied with Texas for the highest six-month self-sufficiency rates in the country.

Workforce Assets

- **Over 200 companies employ refugees in Georgia, and refugees are a key, legal asset for the workforce in Georgia's food processing industry.**
 - Refugees tend to fill many hard-to-fill labor roles in workplaces such as processing plants and warehouses. Many refugee women work in the hospitality industry. As legal workers, refugees contribute to the economy by paying taxes. Many refugees have started businesses, become economically successful, and are motivated to help support newcomers.

Schools

- **Schools receive substantial support to integrate refugee students.**
 - Every school with a significant refugee population is being supported by federally funded programs that provide support for refugee education and integration, such as after-school enrichment and tutoring, parental engagement, translation services, early-learning opportunities, and cultural trainings for school personnel, among others.

Citizenship

- **Refugees enter the US as legal residents on-track to become US citizens.**
 - Refugees are invited by the US Government to be resettled via the US Refugee Resettlement Program. All refugees undergo rigorous State Department and Homeland Security screenings, as well as health screenings and immunizations. Refugees are eligible to work upon arrival in the US, apply for permanent residence after 1 year, and apply for citizenship after 5 years. Last year, local refugee agencies assisted with more than 1,000 citizenship applications.

Community Support

- **Georgia has been a successful resettlement site for over 30 years.**
 - Georgia's vibrant faith community has played a major role in helping refugees successfully integrate into local communities. We are tied for Texas for best employment outcomes nationally.
- **More than 450 faith and civic organizations annually support refugee resettlement and support activities.**

Federal Investment

- **More than \$16 million of federal funding is invested annually in Georgia through the US Refugee Resettlement Program alone, which is administered by the State of Georgia.**
 - These investments offset many costs that would otherwise fall to state and local governments. The six local resettlement agencies spent more than \$3.1 million directly supporting Georgia businesses in 2012 alone. Refugee organizations also leverage millions of dollars from other federal agencies.

Reponse to Concerns

Don't refugees just end up on welfare and public assistance?

- **Refugee families do not typically go on welfare.**
 - Only 0.02% of newly arriving refugees receive benefits through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program—representing only 0.004% of all Georgians in TANF. An average refugee spends 6 months in TANF before finding employment, versus more than 4.5 years for the average Georgian.

Why should Georgians welcome newcomers when our economy is hurting?

- **Over 200 companies employ refugees in Georgia, often in hard-to-fill labor roles in processing plants and warehouses—key segments of Georgia's economy.**
 - Refugees also pay taxes, so they contribute to the economy like other workers. Many refugees have started businesses, become economically successful, and are motivated to help support newcomers. Refugees play a key role in the food processing industry of the state.

Aren't the DeKalb County Government and the City of Clarkston overburdened by refugees?

- **The refugee population in DeKalb County Schools is 3.9 percent of the overall total.** Refugee-specific federal funding administered through state and county programs, as well as nonprofit and faith-based organizations, supports these students, diminishing perceived adverse impacts.
- **The federal government supports a refugee state health coordinator's office to address refugee health needs.**
- **Refugee resettlement agencies settle refugees in safe and affordable housing. Agencies do not resettle refugees into substandard housing.** In 2011, resettlement agencies assisted refugees to rent 555 previously vacant apartments in Clarkston alone.
- **Refugees start new businesses**, and there is now a multi-cultural community with a host of culturally appropriate products and services in the City of Clarkston and surrounding area. Thanks to these new businesses, Clarkston enjoys development and economic activity on nearly all commercial properties in the city.
- **There is no evidence that refugees are disproportionately involved in crime, and in fact our experience shows that they are generally very law abiding people.** Community-based civic groups have successfully organized themselves to address local concerns, such as crime and safety, when issues arise. These organizations represent the diverse demographics of Clarkston, including newcomers and long-time, US-born residents, and cooperation among them has worked well thanks to multiple local nonprofits focus on assets-based collaboration and capacity strengthening toward Clarkston's community development.
- **There is no evidence that schools where refugees constitute a major student population are performing more poorly than other comparable schools in DeKalb County.** We have seen a number of valedictorians, Posse and Gates Millennium Scholarship Winners, and Woodrow Wilson Prize finalists from the refugee community in recent years.