



# URBANALLIANCE



**Supporting  
Immigrants and  
Refugees**



**This booklet was prepared by:**

Urban Alliance, Inc.  
62 Village Street  
East Hartford, CT 06108  
[www.urbanalliance.com](http://www.urbanalliance.com)

**Content prepared by:**

Jessica Sanderson, Ph.D., LMFT  
Angela G. Colantonio, MS., MPH  
Rosaicela Rodriguez

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Connecticut has a sizable immigrant population. In fact, one in seven people in the state are immigrants.<sup>1</sup> As business owners, taxpayers, neighbors, and workers, immigrants are an integral part of Connecticut's communities and make significant contributions that benefit everyone.

However, many face significant challenges, such as poverty, stigma, discrimination, legal challenges, and isolation. This is particularly true for those who are undocumented or working towards obtaining citizenship.

It is critical that program staff and volunteers have an understanding of the unique challenges faced by this group as well as the information needed to help them navigate supports and programs available in the community. A first step in this process is learning terms and basic information about different groups of immigrants.



## Important Terms

**Permanent Resident:** Someone who has been granted authorization to live and work in the United States permanently. Also known as “Green Card Holder” or “Permanent Resident Alien.” A person can become a permanent resident sponsored by a family member, by a U.S. employer, or through a diversity visa program (coming from certain countries with low levels of immigration). They are able to become a naturalized citizen five years after their green card is granted.

**Naturalized Citizen:** Any foreign-born person who earns American citizenship through the naturalization process, in which he/she fulfills the requirements for citizenship established by the U.S. government.

**Non-Citizen:** Any foreign-born person living in the U.S. who is not a naturalized citizen. This includes those who are authorized to live in the U.S., either permanently or temporarily, as well as those who are not legal residents of the country. In Connecticut less than half of non-citizens are undocumented immigrants.

**Undocumented Immigrant:** Sometimes referred to as illegal immigrant. Any non-citizen who is living in the U.S., but is not a legal resident. Examples include people who overstayed a legal temporary visa or who entered the U.S. without going through a port of entry.

**Refugee or Asylee:** A refugee leaves his/her country for another because he/she is persecuted or fears persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a social group. An asylee meets the definition of a refugee, but is already in the U.S. when he/she applies for asylum status or is seeking admission at a port of entry. Refugees and asylees have legal status in the United States. They are able to become a green card holder one year after they are admitted into the country.

**Visa:** A visa is a document prepared by the U.S. Department of State (DOS) that gives a person the right to present themselves at a U.S. border or port of entry and seek entry. There are two categories of U.S. visas: immigrant and nonimmigrant. Immigrant visas are issued to foreign nationals who intend to live permanently in the U.S. In most cases, a relative or employer sponsors the individual by filing an application with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Such a person will receive a green card soon thereafter, and can stay in the U.S. for life. Nonimmigrant visas are for foreign nationals wishing to enter the U.S. on a temporary basis - for tourism, medical treatment, business, temporary work, study, or other similar reasons.

**Foreign-born or Immigrant:** Any person living in the U.S. who was not an American citizen at birth. This refers to anyone born outside of the U.S. to non-American parents, including naturalized citizens, legal non-citizen residents, and undocumented immigrants.

**Native-born:** Any person living in the U.S. who was either born in the U.S. or born abroad to at least one American parent. Puerto Rico, Guam, and U.S. Island Areas are U.S. territories and considered to be part of the country. Therefore, persons born in these areas are native-born. All native-born people are American citizens.

(All definitions taken from the Department of Homeland Security)<sup>2</sup>

## The Green Card Process

The U.S. immigration process is complex which makes it difficult for many people to navigate. It is built on the following principles: the reunification of families, admitting immigrants with skills that are valuable to the U.S. economy, protecting refugees, and promoting diversity. The body of law governing current immigration policy is called The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).<sup>3</sup> The INA allows the U.S. to grant a certain number of permanent immigrant visas each year across various categories. In addition to those visas, there is no limit on the annual admission of U.S. citizens' spouses, parents, and children under the age of 21. In addition, each year the president is required to consult with Congress and set an annual number of refugees to be admitted to the United States through the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Process.

### Paths to Obtaining a Green Card

*A green card allows a non-U.S. citizen to gain permanent residence in the United States. Many people from outside the United States want a green card because it would allow them to live and work (lawfully) anywhere in the United States and qualify for U.S. citizenship after three or five years. The following paragraphs describe different pathways to obtaining a green card.*<sup>4</sup>

**Family-Based Immigration:** Family unification is an important principle governing immigration policy. The family-based immigration category allows U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents to bring certain family members to the United States. Family-based immigrants are admitted either as immediate relatives of U.S. citizens or through the family preference system. Eligible family members include spouses, children, parents (of petitioner over 21 years), and siblings. Many extended family members such as cousins, aunts and uncles, and grandparents do not qualify.

**Employment-Based Immigration:** The United States provides various ways for immigrants with valuable skills to come to the country through employer-sponsored visas. In some cases, spouses and children qualify too. There are both temporary visas, which are issued for a limited period of time as well as permanent visas, which do not have a time limit.

**Diversity Visa Program:** The Diversity Visa lottery was created by the Immigration Act of 1990 as a channel for immigrants from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States. To be eligible for a diversity visa, an immigrant must have a high-school education (or its equivalent) or have, within the past five years, a minimum of two

years working in a profession requiring at least two years of training or experience. People from eligible countries in different continents may register for the lottery. However, because these visas are distributed on a regional basis, the program especially benefits Africans and Eastern Europeans.

**Refugees and Asylees:** There are several categories that are used to describe people who are fleeing persecution or are unable to return to their homeland due to life-threatening or extraordinary conditions. Refugees are admitted to the United States based upon an inability to return to their home countries because of a "well-founded fear of persecution" due to their race, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, religion, or national origin. Refugees apply for admission from outside of the United States, generally from a "transition country" that is outside their home country. Asylum is available to persons already in the United States who are seeking protection based on the same five protected grounds upon which refugees rely. They may apply at a port of entry at the time they seek admission or within one year of arriving in the United States. These groups are able to become legal permanent residents one year after admission to the US.



## Other Types of Humanitarian Relief

**Temporary Protected Status (TPS)** is granted to people who are in the United States but cannot return to their home country because of “natural disaster,” “extraordinary temporary conditions,” or “ongoing armed conflict.” TPS can be granted for 6, 12, or 18 months and can be extended as needed.

Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) provides protection from deportation for individuals whose home countries are unstable, therefore making return dangerous.

**Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)** is a program established in 2012 which permits certain individuals who were brought to the United States under the age of 16 to remain in the United States. They are able to work lawfully for at least two years as long as they have no significant criminal record and have graduated high school or college or received a degree equivalent. This is different from having permanent legal status and must be renewed every two years.

**Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)** allows victims of domestic violence (battery or extreme cruelty) to apply for a green card. An abuse victim may apply for a green card on their own, without the

knowledge or permission of their abusive relative, who can include:

- A current or former spouse who is a U.S. citizen or green card holder
- A parent who is a U.S. citizen or green card holder
- A child who is a U.S. citizen

**T Visa:** Victims of human trafficking who are living in the United States, whether documented or undocumented, may apply for a T visa to stay in the United States for up to four years. As a condition of the T visa, however, they must help to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of human trafficking (unless the victim is under age 18, in which case they need not help with such efforts).

**U Visa:** Victims of “substantial physical or mental abuse” who are living in the United States, documented or undocumented, may seek protection by applying for a U visa. To obtain a U visa, the victim’s application must be certified by a law enforcement agency. Like recipients of T visas, an applicant for a U visa must also agree to help investigate and prosecute people who commit certain crimes, such as kidnapping, sexual assault, and torture.

## Undocumented Immigrants

Undocumented immigrants are non-citizens who are living in the U.S., but not legal residents. This group has received a great deal of media attention over the last decade and a number of policies have been put in place to try to control the number of undocumented immigrants entering the U.S. More than half of undocumented immigrants have lived in the United States for more than a decade; nearly one-third are the parents of U.S.-born children, according to the Pew Research Center.<sup>22</sup> While many of the policies that aim to reduce unlawful immigration focus on enforcement at the border, individuals who arrive in the United States legally and overstay their visas far outnumber those who enter unlawfully at the border. Currently in the U.S., there are approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants.

There has been much debate about how to respond to undocumented immigrants. Some view their presence in a very positive way, while others push for stronger laws to reduce the number of undocumented immigrants. Some arguments have merit and others are unfounded (based on myths and misinformation).

- Arguments for undocumented immigrants. Some people say that illegal immigration benefits the United States' economy through additional tax revenue, expansion of the low-cost labor pool, and increased money in circulation. They argue that immigrants bring good values, have motivations consistent with the American dream, perform jobs that Americans won't take, and that opposition to immigration stems from racism.
- Arguments against undocumented immigrants. Opponents of illegal immigration say that people who break the law by crossing the U.S. border without proper documentation or by overstaying their visas should be deported and not rewarded with a path to citizenship and access to social services. They argue that people in the country illegally are criminals and social and economic burdens to law-abiding, tax-paying Americans.

## No Clear Path to Becoming a Legal Citizen

For many there is not a clear path to becoming a legal resident. Many people fleeing unsafe situations fear the process of seeking asylum. Some people are detained for a long period of time after legally crossing the border. There have been instances of children and parents being separated, young children being placed in detention centers without adults to care for them, and a high percent of those who seek asylum are denied and deported. Further, asylees from certain countries are disproportionately denied asylum (e.g. Mexico). This disincentives the process for individuals from these countries. The process for seeking asylum in the U.S. can be overwhelming, frightening and uncertain which leads many to entering the U.S. unlawfully.<sup>23</sup>

Further, there are many undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children. Now as adults they find themselves without the legal rights of a U.S. citizen and without a path to becoming a legal resident. As stated earlier, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is a program established in 2012 which permits certain individuals who were brought to the United States under the age of 16 to remain in the United States and work lawfully for at least two years. However, individuals in the DACA program have no long-term path to becoming a permanent citizen and fear deportation every two years when they reapply. This creates much anxiety and limits their ability to make long-term plans for their future. This is a very difficult way to live on an ongoing basis. Therefore, many choose to remain undocumented to avoid the possibility of deportation every two years.

Finally, for many who are already in the U.S. there is not a legal pathway to becoming a citizen. They may not meet the criteria for obtaining a visa and have to choose between staying illegally or returning to their country of origin, which in many situations is unsafe or creates a significant hardship.



## CT Statistics

The following section offers general statistics about immigrants living in Connecticut. This information was taken from the American Immigration Council Fact Sheet.<sup>5</sup>

*One in seven Connecticut residents is an immigrant, while one in six residents is a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent.*

- In 2018, 520,262 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 15 percent of the population.
- Connecticut was home to 257,175 women, 235,611 men, and 27,476 children who were immigrants.
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were India (9 percent of immigrants), Jamaica (7 percent), Dominican Republic (5 percent), Poland (5 percent), and Ecuador (5 percent).
- In 2018, 564,663 people in Connecticut (16 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least one immigrant parent.

*More than half of all immigrants in Connecticut are naturalized U.S. citizens.*

- 275,693 immigrants (53 percent) had naturalized as of 2018, and 95,482 immigrants were eligible to become naturalized U.S. citizens in 2017.
- Four out of five immigrants (81 percent) reported speaking English "well" or "very well."

*Immigrants in Connecticut tend to be college educated.*

- More than one-third (37 percent) of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2018, while about one-fifth (19 percent) had less than a high school diploma.

*Nearly 60,000 U.S. citizens in Connecticut live with at least one family member who is undocumented.*

- 120,000 undocumented immigrants comprised 23 percent of the immigrant population and 4 percent of the total state population in 2016.
- 143,784 people in Connecticut, including 58,893 U.S. citizens, lived with at least one undocumented family member between 2010 and 2014.
- During the same period, about 1 in 20 children in the state was a U.S. citizen living with at least one undocumented family member.

## WHAT IMMIGRATION MEANS TO CONNECTICUT



**519,648** immigrants make up **14.5%** of the state's population.

### IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS INVIGORATE THE ECONOMY



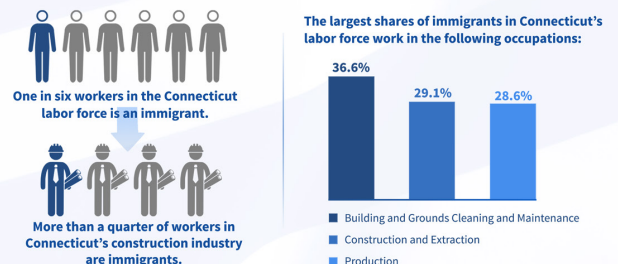
### IMMIGRANTS ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF COMMUNITIES



### IMMIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS STRENGTHEN THE ECONOMY



### IMMIGRANTS ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE LABOR FORCE



SOURCE: AMERICAN IMMIGRATION COUNCIL, "IMMIGRANTS IN CONNECTICUT" 2017.  
FIND YOUR STATE: STATES.IMMIGRATIONCOUNCIL.ORG



*Connecticut is home to thousands of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.*

- 3,560 active DACA recipients lived in Connecticut as of March 2020, while DACA has been granted to 4,886 people in total since 2012.
- As of 2019, 33 percent of DACA-eligible immigrants in Connecticut had applied for DACA.
- In addition, fewer than 2,000 residents of the state would satisfy all but the educational requirements for DACA and less than 1,000 would additionally become eligible as they grew older.

## Top 5 Myths about Immigrants

Unfortunately, many misperceptions about immigrants exist today. Many are based purely on inaccurate information, stereotypes, and discrimination. The following are some of the most common myths about immigrants:

- 1. Most immigrants are here illegally.** While a great deal of media attention is given to immigrants who are undocumented, most foreign-born people living in the U.S. have permission to be here. They have entered through a port of authority, have an active visa, or are naturalized citizens.<sup>6</sup>
- 2. It is easy to enter the country legally.** The process of immigration has drastically changed over time. For about the first 100 years, the U.S. had an “open immigration system” that allowed any able-bodied immigrant in.<sup>7</sup> Today many rules specify who may enter and remain in the country legally. Further, there is a rigorous process for obtaining documentation to enter the U.S. as a resident, including applying for immigrant visas and permanent resident/green card status. Many immigrants who arrived between 1790 and 1924 would not have been allowed into the country under the current policy.<sup>8</sup>
- 3. Today’s immigrants don’t want to learn English.** Many immigrants speak English in addition to their native language. Approximately 35 percent of those age 5 or older speak English “very well” and 21 percent speak it “well,” according to the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, many participate in ESL programs and are working to learn the language.
- 4. Immigrants take good jobs from U.S. citizens.** According to the American Immigration Council, research indicates there is little connection between immigrant labor and unemployment rates of native-born workers.<sup>10</sup> Another version of this myth is that it is undocumented immigrants who are taking jobs. However, the U.S. civilian workforce included 8 million unauthorized immigrants in 2014, which accounts for only 5 percent of the entire workforce.<sup>11</sup>
- 5. Undocumented immigrants don’t pay taxes and burden the national economy.** Immigrants who are undocumented pay taxes every time they buy taxable goods such as gas, clothes, or new appliances (depending on where they reside). Therefore, simply living in the U.S. often results in contributing economically to society. They also contribute to property taxes—a main source of school funding—when they buy or rent a house or apartment. Undocumented people are usually having taxes withheld from paychecks.<sup>12</sup>  
  
A 2017 report from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy highlights that undocumented immigrants pay an estimated \$11.74 billion in state and local taxes a year. The U.S. Social Security Administration estimated that in 2010 undocumented immigrants—and their employers—paid \$13 billion in payroll taxes alone for benefits they will never get.<sup>13</sup>  
  
Another myth is that the government financially supports them through government sponsored programming. While immigrants can receive education and emergency medical care, they are not eligible for state and federal entitlement benefits, such as SNAP and Medicaid. Under the 1996 welfare law, most government programs require proof of documentation, and even immigrants with documents cannot receive these benefits until they have been in the United States for more than five years.<sup>14</sup>

## Christian Faith and Immigration

Many Christians wrestle to understand the issue of immigration from a Biblical perspective. This is particularly true when it comes to undocumented immigrants. First, it is important to note that when wrestling with an issue like immigration, it involves considering both a person's individual relationship with immigrants and refugees as well as how to respond to government level laws and policies that impact the lives of immigrants and refugees. There is no easy answer as it takes great discernment and wisdom to determine one's personal conviction and its practical applications. There are various thoughts that must be weighed when considering this issue.

### Obey the Law

On the one hand, Romans 13:1-2 says, "Obey the government, for God is the One who has put it there. There is no government anywhere that God has not placed in power. So those who refuse to obey the law of the land are refusing to obey God, and punishment will follow." And, 1 Peter 2:13-14 says, "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good." Leaders are simply God's instruments and are put in place by Him. Christians

have a responsibility to obey leaders and the law. Many apply these verses to undocumented immigrants and assert believers have a responsibility to obey laws and policies put in place by the government.

### Love the Foreigner

There are also many verses in the Bible about caring for the immigrant and refugee.

- "The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." (Leviticus 19:34)
- "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13:2)
- "I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts." (Malachi 3:5)



- “He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.” (Deuteronomy 10:18-19)
- “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” (Matthew 25:35)

The term foreigner and alien were used in the Old Testament to describe a person residing in a land different than where they were born. These verses are just a few of the numerous verses in the Bible addressing this group and how God wants them to be treated. A few conclusions can be drawn from these verses. First, foreigners and aliens are in lists of people groups who need special care because they are more vulnerable.

In Deuteronomy 10:18-19, the orphan, widow, and immigrant are listed as people who God instructs Christians to offer special care to. Second, in each verse God calls believers to treat these more vulnerable groups (orphan, widow, immigrant) well. For example, “love the alien as yourself,” “do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,” “love the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing,” and He warned against mistreatment, such as “oppressing hired workers” and “throwing aside the alien.”

In Matthew 25, people are separated into two groups – sheep and goats. The sheep are invited to spend eternity with God. He explains to them, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” The sheep are confused and asked when they did these things, because they were not aware of serving God in this way. And He responds, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Therefore, believers must take very seriously how they treat the most vulnerable people in society because it is the criteria God uses for separating the sheep and goats in Matthew 25. It demonstrates God’s fierce love for the orphan, widow, and immigrant.

After weighing these verses, many argue that the laws and policies put in place by government are not just and do not care for immigrants and refugees as God desires. In response, many support programs that help immigrants and refugees and advocate at a policy level against laws that they feel do not align with this Biblical mandate.

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*“The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” (Leviticus 19:34)*

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### Jesus was a Refugee

Finally, it is important to note that Jesus himself was a refugee. Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem for a census and delivered Jesus in a stable or some believe a cave. They likely were very poor for the first years of his life. They were visited by the three Magi and presented with gifts, then warned by an angel to flee for their lives. King Herod, who was threatened by the birth of a child who was prophesized to be king, ordered that all males under two years of age be murdered. It is likely that the lavish gifts presented by the three kings provided the financial means for the family to escape to Egypt.

“When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. ‘Get up,’ he said, ‘take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.’ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘Out of Egypt I called my son.’” (Matthew 2:13-15)

A refugee is a person who flees their home because of persecution or threat of harm and Jesus and his family certainly meet that criteria. How significant is the verse, “And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt” (Deuteronomy 10:18-19) as it applied to the people’s treatment of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

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*A refugee is a person who flees their home because of persecution or threat of harm and Jesus and his family certainly meet that criteria.*

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## Common Struggles for Immigrants and Refugees

In order to know how to best support immigrants, it is important to understand some of their unique challenges. By understanding these challenges, pastors, leaders, and program volunteers are better equipped to offer support and connect them to helpful programs in the community.

**Language Barriers.** The United States is not known for being multilingual and many immigrants did not grow up speaking English. This language barrier makes it very difficult for immigrants to find employment, find housing, build friendships, interact with medical providers about health concerns, communicate with schools and teachers, and advocate for themselves legally. For these reasons many immigrants enroll in ESL classes to learn the English language. However, the English language is very hard to learn and juggling ESL classes with work, childcare, and other commitments can be quite stressful.<sup>15</sup>

### *CT Resources:*

- Most towns offer ESL classes through their adult education program. Urban Alliance's Adult Education brochure can be used to help immigrants find an ESL program in their community

**Legal Challenges.** Many immigrants benefit from advocacy and legal aid. Some enter the country sponsored by an employer or family member and desire to become a naturalized citizen. Naturalization is the process by which U.S. citizenship is granted to a lawful permanent resident after meeting the requirements established by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

Others are undocumented making this process very difficult. The U.S. immigration law offers very few options to go from being an illegal or undocumented immigrant to a U.S. permanent resident (with a green card). The four most common paths to green card status include marriage to a U.S. citizen, green card through employment, asylum status or visas for victims of crime. Most often these require legal advocacy. Further, undocumented immigrants are at constant risk of getting caught and deported from the U.S. When deportation comes into question legal support is critical. The possibility of deportation creates a constant anxiety for many who are undocumented.<sup>16</sup>

### *CT Resources:*

- There are many community organizations that offer legal advocacy to immigrants. For a full listing visit: Immigration Advocates Network ([www.immigrationadvocates.org](http://www.immigrationadvocates.org)), click on "find help", and search for Connecticut programs.
- Most towns offer citizenship classes through their adult education program. Urban Alliance's Adult Education brochure can be used to help immigrants find an citizenship classes in their community.

**Securing Employment.** Some immigrants come to the U.S. through a work visa and employment is secured from the start. For others, finding stable employment is a significant challenge. Many are desperate and willing to take whatever job is available. Finding a living wage job with an upward trajectory is often very difficult. In particular, language barriers prevent many immigrants from being hired for even minimum wage positions.

Refugees and immigrants who are educated and who formerly had strong jobs back home, find it frustrating that they can't obtain the same jobs here. Undocumented immigrants who are not legally allowed to work in the U.S. face unique challenges. According to a 2008 Pew report, undocumented workers make up at least 10 percent of the hospitality industry and 13 percent of the agriculture industry (though these are estimates and are likely underrepresented). Discrimination and exploitation occur frequently with employers and force immigrants into undesirable and unsafe roles. Undocumented immigrants are most vulnerable to mistreatment and exploitation.<sup>17</sup>

## Common Struggles for Immigrants and Refugees cont.

*CT Resources:* The following programs provide general assistance to immigrants and refugees, including employment assistance. See below for a more detailed description of each.

- CT Institute for Immigrants and Refugees: <https://cirict.org/>
- CT Immigrant and Refugee Coalition: [www.coalitionct.org](http://www.coalitionct.org)
- Integrated Immigrant and Refugee Services: <https://irisct.org/>
- Refugee Assistance Program: [portal.ct.gov/DSS/Economic-Security/Refugee-Assistance-Program](http://portal.ct.gov/DSS/Economic-Security/Refugee-Assistance-Program)

**Raising Children and Helping them Succeed.** Raising children in a culture different than their own can be a significant challenge for parents. Immigrants often find that their children quickly adapt to the American culture, mastering the English language and internalizing its values. This can present challenging family and relational dynamics between adult family members and children.

Further, most children attend American schools. Language barriers can make it difficult for parents to talk regularly with teachers and advocate for their child if there is a problem at school. This is particularly true when the child needs additional support because they are not proficient in English, need additional support through a 504 or IEP, or need mental health support.<sup>18</sup>

*CT Resources:*

- Child Development Infoline (CDI) serves as the access point for the Connecticut Birth to Three System, the Help Me Grow program, Preschool Special Education Services, and Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs program and provides information about early intervention services, developmental concerns, managing challenging behaviors, parent education/family support, special education, disability, and health related issues. Dial 2-1-1 or visit [cdi.211ct.org](http://cdi.211ct.org)
- Family Resource Centers provide access to a broad continuum of early childhood and family support services, which foster the optimal development of children and families.

- Urban Alliance’s Family Resource Center brochure can be used to help immigrants find a Family Resource Center in their community
- Center for Children’s Advocacy provides legal representation for at-risk children and youth. Areas include but are not limited to education, special education, distance learning, access to healthcare, public benefits, utilities, housing, DCF, immigration, teen homelessness, rights of children with disabilities, conditions of confinement, reentry from detention, or incarceration. Call 860-570-5327 ext 261 or 203-335-0719 ext 201 or visit [cca-ct.org](http://cca-ct.org).
- The following resources also provide support to immigrant and refugee families so all members receive the support they need. A description of each is provided below:

- \* *CT Institute for Immigrants and Refugees:* <https://cirict.org/>
- \* *CT Immigrant and Refugee Coalition:* [www.coalitionct.org](http://www.coalitionct.org)
- \* *Integrated Immigrant and Refugee Services:* <https://irisct.org/>

**Securing Stable Safe Housing.** In the U.S., safe, affordable housing is very expensive. Immigrants with visas and professional employment are often able to secure adequate housing. However, immigrants who are undocumented or working in minimum wage jobs face a number of barriers. Many families choose to live in large groups to reduce costs and end up in low-income housing units that are unsafe.

Many landlords run a background check and check credit scores prior to renting a unit, and undocumented immigrants are not able to comply. They are also vulnerable to being taken advantage of by landlords who do not keep properties up to standard. There are housing programs in the U.S. that can provide affordable housing for all immigrants, including those who are undocumented. These programs can play an important role in helping undocumented immigrants secure housing.<sup>19</sup>



*CT Resources:*

The following programs provide general assistance to immigrants and refugees including housing assistance. See below for a more detailed description of each.

- CT Institute for Immigrants and Refugees: <https://cirict.org/>
- CT Immigrant and Refugee Coalition: [www.coalitionct.org](http://www.coalitionct.org)
- Integrated Immigrant and Refugee Services: <https://irisct.org/>
- Refugee Assistance Program: [portal.ct.gov/DSS/Economic-Security/Refugee-Assistance-Program](http://portal.ct.gov/DSS/Economic-Security/Refugee-Assistance-Program)

**Transportation.** While public transportation is available to all regardless of immigration status, it can be frightening and overwhelming for people who are not fluent in English. In order to operate a motor vehicle, a driver's license is needed. Obtaining a driver's license, whether documented or not, is extremely difficult for a variety of reasons.

For those who don't speak English, a translator is needed and they aren't easy to come by. Also, the driver must be literate in order to pass the written exam. Some states have special programs for undocumented immigrants allowing them to obtain a valid driver's license. The purpose of the Drive Only license program is to improve public safety and to try to ensure that all drivers are tested, know how to drive, and understand the rules and laws for driving.<sup>20</sup>

*CT Resources:*

- CT Drive Only License Program: The Connecticut DMV has started a Drive Only license program for undocumented individuals who are 16 and older and cannot establish their legal presence in the United States or may not have a Social Security number. The process involves applying for a learner's permit that can then lead to a Drive Only license. Learner's permits are now required of all new license applicants regardless of age. The Drive Only license program is authorized under Public Act 2013-89.

Website: [portal.ct.gov/DMV/Licenses/Licenses/Drive-Only-License-Program](http://portal.ct.gov/DMV/Licenses/Licenses/Drive-Only-License-Program)

**Basic/Health Needs.** Many immigrants live below the poverty level and struggle to meet their basic needs and access healthcare. Further many have experienced trauma and benefit from mental health services. Immigrants who are permanent residents are eligible for state and federal programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (provides additional funds for food each month) and Medicaid (free or subsidized health insurance). However, undocumented immigrants are not eligible for these services. If the parents are undocumented, but the children were born in the U.S., the children are eligible for SNAP and Medicaid. All immigrants regardless of legal status are eligible for Women Infants and Children (WIC), which provides supplemental food and nutrition education.<sup>21</sup>



## CT Resources

- **The Department of Social Services** provides benefits, such as SNAP, Medicaid, TANF, to permanent or naturalized citizens. Visit [www.connect.ct.gov](http://www.connect.ct.gov) for more information or to apply.
- **The Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC)** is an income-based supplemental nutrition program that provides women and their young children with nutrition education and nutritious foods regardless of legal status. Contact a local WIC office to schedule an intake:

Hartford: 860.757.4780

East Hartford: 860.528.1458 #1

New Britain: 860.225.8695

Middletown: 860.358.4070

To find the nearest WIC office visit [portal.ct.gov/DPH/WIC/Find-a-LocalAgency](http://portal.ct.gov/DPH/WIC/Find-a-LocalAgency)

- **Foodshare's mobile food pantry** program offers multiple locations where produce and pantry items can be picked up. Find a schedule of locations at [www.foodshare.org](http://www.foodshare.org) or Text FOODSHARE to 85511 for times and locations.
- **Malta House of Care** is a mobile medical clinic that provides free, high-quality primary health care to uninsured adults in Greater Hartford. Visit [maltahouseofcare.org](http://maltahouseofcare.org) for a schedule of times and locations.



## Local Programs Offering Comprehensive Services to Immigrants and Refugees

**CT Institute for Immigrants and Refugees:** The Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants, Inc. (CIRI) is a statewide nonprofit organization that assists refugees and immigrants resolve legal, economic, linguistic and social barriers so that they become self-sufficient, integrated and contributing members of the community. CIRI achieves this mission by providing a compassionate array of high-quality legal, social and educational programming and by promoting cross cultural understanding and decent treatment for all.

<https://cirict.org/>

**CT Immigrant and Refugee Coalition:** The CT Immigration and Refugee Coalition is a broad-based network of community organizations, religious and business groups, legal service providers committed to protecting the rights and economic development of refugee and immigrant communities in the state. The mission of CIRC is to promote the rights and opportunities of immigrants and refugees in Connecticut and to foster their civic participation.

[www.coalitionct.org](http://www.coalitionct.org)

**Integrated Immigrant and Refugee Services:** Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services (IRIS) is a non-profit agency whose mission is to help refugees and other displaced people establish new lives, strengthen hope, and contribute to the vitality of Connecticut's communities. Welcoming persecuted people from other countries is America's most noble tradition. IRIS helps newcomers on the road to self-sufficiency by providing lifesaving support during their transition to life in the United States.

<https://irisct.org/>

**Refugee Assistance Program:** The Office of Community Services of the Department of Social Services (DSS) is responsible for disbursing federal funds related to the resettlement of refugees in Connecticut. Refugees are assigned by the U.S. State Department to local affiliates of national voluntary resettlement agencies in Connecticut. DSS disburses federal refugee assistance program funds, administers refugee cash and medical assistance programs, and monitors resettlement activity for individuals who qualify as refugees under international law. A refugee can request to become a legal permanent resident after one-year residence in the U.S. and can apply for U.S. citizenship five years after their date of entry to the U.S.

DSS regional offices administer the **Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)** and **Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA)** programs for refugees for up to eight months from their date of entry to the U.S. DSS also provides refugees with temporary family assistance/cash assistance, medical coverage and food stamp assistance under those public assistance programs since refugees qualify as legal non-citizens.

Visit [portal.ct.gov/DSS/Economic-Security/Refugee-Assistance-Program](http://portal.ct.gov/DSS/Economic-Security/Refugee-Assistance-Program) for more information.

The State contracts with the following agencies to provide resettlement services including case management, employment assistance, and additional supportive services to refugees:

- **Catholic Charities Migration, Refugee and Immigration Services**, 35 Groton Street, Hartford, CT 06106, (860) 297-7800, [www.ccaoh.org](http://www.ccaoh.org)
- **Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants**, 670 Clinton Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06605, (203) 336-0141, <https://cirict.org/>
- **Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services**, 235 Nicoll Street, New Haven, CT 06511, (203) 562-2095, [www.irisct.org](http://www.irisct.org)
- **Jewish Federation of CT, Inc.**, 40 Woodland Street, Hartford, CT 06105, (860) 727-5701, [www.jfact.org](http://www.jfact.org)
- **Connecticut Coalition of Mutual Assistance Associations, Inc.**, 2074 Park Street, Hartford, CT 06106, (860) 236-6452, [ct.coalition@yahoo.com](mailto:ct.coalition@yahoo.com)

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