

FAQs on Afghan Priority 1 and Priority 2 Referrals U.S. Refugee Admissions Program

1. What is a “Principal Applicant”?

The Principal Applicant (PA) is the individual affiliated with the U.S. government or otherwise eligible to be referred to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).

2. Who constitutes an eligible family member?

The Principal Applicant’s spouse and children of any age, whether married or unmarried, are eligible to be referred to the USRAP based on the Principal Applicant's affiliation with the U.S. government.

3. I would like to refer an Afghan to the USRAP. Should I refer them to the P1 or P2 program?

If the individual meets any of the following three criteria, refer them to the P2 program:

- Afghans who do not meet the minimum time-in-service for a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) but who work/worked on a full-time basis as contractors, Locally Engaged Staff (LES), or interpreters/translators for the U.S. Government, USFOR-A, ISAF, or Resolute Support;
- Afghans who work/worked for a U.S. government-funded program or project in Afghanistan supported through a U.S. government grant or cooperative agreement;
- Afghans who are/were employed in Afghanistan by a U.S.-based media organization or nongovernmental organization. Note: For this category, Afghan employees may be referred by an American senior employee of these organizations.

If the individual does not meet any criteria above, but is known to Embassy Kabul, he or she may be eligible for referral to the P1 program. Work with your agency’s representative at Embassy Kabul to determine if the individual is eligible for referral to the P1 program.

4. If a potential Principal Applicant might be eligible for a SIV, but was never able to get a letter of employment verification to start the SIV process, can they be referred to the P1 or P2 program?

Yes. If the Principal Applicant qualifies for both the P1 and P2, refer them to the P2. If the Principal Applicant does not qualify for P2, but is known to the Embassy, refer them to the P1. If the Principal Applicant does not qualify for either the P1 or P2, they cannot be referred to the USRAP.

5. Can an individual pursue refugee processing under this program if they have an active SIV application?

The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) will not reject a referral for the P1 or P2 program just because an applicant has an active SIV application. However, given limited State Department Consular Affairs and PRM resources, it is most efficient if referring agencies focus

on submitting P1 or P2 referrals for Afghans who do not qualify or have access to the SIV program. This will maximize U.S. government resources for Afghans at-risk.

6. Can I refer an Afghan resident who does not have Afghan nationality to the USRAP under the P2 access category if he or she worked for a U.S. government entity and permanently reside in Afghan?

No. The Principal Applicant's nationality must be Afghan.

7. Which route is faster, SIV processing or refugee resettlement? How long will the refugee resettlement process take?

We are unable to predict whether it would be faster to process in the SIV program or for refugee resettlement, as that depends on the particularities of each individual case. Refugee resettlement processing may take 18-24 months from the time the applicant is in an eligible processing location, and sometimes longer.

8. I'm interested in referring an Afghan national who worked for a sub-contractor of a Department of Defense prime contractor. Can sub-contractors be referred to the P1 or P2?

- This individual cannot be referred to the P2 program because U.S. sub-contractors, sub-grantees, etc., do not qualify for the P2 program. However, if this person is known to Embassy Kabul, and in imminent danger, he or she may be eligible for P1 referral.

9. Should the Principal Applicant and family request asylum when they get to the country of asylum in order to attain international protection?

This will depend on the country of first asylum. In countries where UNHCR is present and there is no functioning asylum system, the Principal Applicant and family should register with UNHCR for international protection reasons. If the Principal Applicant and family are in a country with a functioning asylum system and they do not have a legal status in the country (i.e., valid visa or similar), the family may consider applying for asylum if they believe they have compelling protection concerns and may be danger of being forcibly returned to Afghanistan.

10. How will the Department of State verify if the Principal Applicant and family are in a country of asylum so that case processing can begin?

The Principal Applicant will be given instructions to contact PRM via email once they have relocated to a country of asylum. Once the Principal Applicant contacts PRM with this information, PRM will assign the case to a Resettlement Support Center (RSC) to begin case processing. Note: If the family decides to relocate elsewhere, they will need to notify the RSC that they were originally assigned to and that RSC will determine whether the case needs to be transferred elsewhere.

11. What does the process look like once case processing starts? Does the Principal Applicant and family have to go into an office or would most of the processing be virtual?

Prescreening interviews are generally conducted in-person, at the RSC's office. However, all RSCs have the ability to conduct prescreening interview remotely depending on the RSC's COVID protocol at the time. DHS/USCIS interviews are generally conducted in-person but may take place via video in exceptional circumstances.

12. Could the family and/or Principal Applicant travel back and forth from Afghanistan?

USCIS will ask questions about travel back to Afghanistan during the USCIS interview and will use this information in their assessment of the refugee claim. It is not prohibited for the applicant to travel back, but it could have an impact on their refugee claim based on the assessment of the USCIS officer.

13. Can a referring agency or individual provide DHS/USCIS additional information or evidence at the time of adjudication? For example, if the Principal Applicant had traveled to the asylum country with his/her family, then returned to Afghanistan to work, could a referring agency provide additional details about how those actions were in the U.S. government's interest and should not invalidate the PA's refugee claim?

DHS/USCIS will be represented on the USRAP Interagency Task Force (IATF) where this will be discussed and DHS/USCIS officers will be briefed on country conditions and caseload profile in advance of interviews.

14. If the Principal Applicant's family relocates to the country of asylum ahead of the Principal Applicant, could case processing begin for the relocated family members? Could the Principal Applicant be interviewed virtually while still in Afghanistan?

The Principal Applicant needs to be in the country of asylum with the rest of the family in order for refugee processing to take place. A prescreening interview cannot be scheduled with RSC staff until the Principal Applicant is in the country of asylum as the Principal Applicant cannot be interviewed remotely from Afghanistan. The family does have the option to begin processing on their own, separate refugee case, without the Principal Applicant, but must be able to articulate their own refugee claim as part of the application process. If the family chooses this option, the Principal Applicant would be processed separately on his or her own case and would not be processed with their family until/unless they reunite with the family in the country of asylum. In practice, this means the Principal Applicant's family could complete the refugee process and depart to the United States without the Principal Applicant. In this circumstance, there is no guarantee the Principal Applicant would be reunited with his or her family.

15. What if the Principal Applicant and family went to the asylum country, did the initial prescreening, and then the Principal Applicant returned to Afghanistan?

This would not be advisable, as it could impact the DHS/USCIS adjudication. The Principal Applicant must be present and available for the DHS/USCIS interview in order for the case to proceed to conclusion. The family members cannot complete the process and will not be able to travel to the U.S. without the Principal Applicant as the Principal Applicant is part of the case.

16. I want to refer someone who doesn't know they are being referred. When/how will this person be notified that he or she was referred and can move forward with case processing?

The referrer will be notified once the referral has been accepted. It is the referrer/their agency's responsibility to keep in touch with the Principal Applicant and notify the applicant that they have been referred to the USRAP when it is appropriate to share such information. At that time, the agency can provide the applicant with PRM's specialized email address and stress to the applicant that PRM will only be able to respond to the applicant's email if the applicant is writing to confirm that he or she has reached a country of first asylum.

17. I am responsible for submitting my agency referrals into PRM's case management system. I do not have the information necessary to fill out a required field. Do I have to redo the entire referral?

The required fields when submitting an Afghan Referral Record consist of the minimum information necessary for PRM to ensure eligibility for the USRAP and to allow for case processing to begin. If any required fields are missing at the time of submission, the system will display an error message and the record will not be submitted. The referrer can 'Save' the referral at any point and return to fill in the missing information.

18. I am responsible for submitting my agency referrals into PRM's case management system. I submitted the referral record but have not received notification from PRM if the referral was accepted. What is the status of the referral?

When an Afghan Referral Record is created a Referral ID number (ARR-XXXXXXXX) is assigned to the record along with a default Status of 'New.' Referral records can be viewed by the user who created the record. Agency representatives with access to PRM's case management system can search the Referral ID number at any time to see the current status of the referral, defined as follows:

Status	Definition
New	The Afghan Referral Record has been created by a referring agency but has not yet been submitted to PRM for review.
Pending Review	The Afghan Referral Record has been submitted by a referring agency to PRM for review. The referral will remain at this status until PRM reviews the submission and makes a determination on eligibility.
Accepted	The Afghan Referral Record has been accepted by PRM, and PRM has sent a notification to the Principal Applicant, with the referrer and form submitter in copy, to contact PRM at a specific email address once they have reached a country of asylum. (Note: If the applicant was not aware they had been referred to the USRAP, PRM will only email the agency referrer and form submitter. The agency will have to inform the applicant, when appropriate, of the accepted referral.) The referral will remain at this status until the Principal Applicant contacts PRM via email to confirm they are in another country, at which point PRM will transition their referral record into a case which is

	assigned to the nearest Resettlement Support Center (RSC) overseas to begin case processing.
Rejected	The Afghan Referral Record has been rejected by PRM as the applicant was determined to be ineligible for the P1 or P2 Afghan program.

19. I/my agency submitted a referral into PRM’s case management system, and I received a notification the referral was accepted. Can you explain the next steps of the process?

If PRM determines the referral is complete, and the Principal Applicant knew they were referred to the USRAP, PRM will accept the referral and send a message to the Principal Applicant, copying the referrer and form submitter, instructing the Principal Applicant to contact PRM at a specific email address once they have reached a Country of First Asylum.

If PRM determines the referral is complete, and the Principal Applicant does not know they were referred to the USRAP, PRM will accept the referral and send a message to the referrer and form submitter informing them of the acceptance. The agency must advise the Principal Applicant they have been referred to the USRAP when appropriate to do so and instruct the Principal Applicant to contact PRM at a certain mailbox once they have reached another country.

A successful refugee application will complete the following steps prior to arrival to the United States:

- **Step 1: Acceptance to the Program.** Once the individual informs PRM via email that they are in another country, PRM will assign their case to its nearest Resettlement Support Center (RSC) overseas to begin case processing.
- **Step 2: Prescreening Interview.** A Resettlement Support Center (RSC) conducts an in-depth interview with refugee applicants in order to prepare their case files. The interview collects biographical information, reasons for flight and information regarding past persecution.
- **Step 3: USCIS Interview.** USCIS officers review the case file compiled by RSC and conduct an interview with each refugee applicant to determine eligibility for admission to the United States. The ultimate determination as to whether an applicant can be admitted as a refugee is made solely by USCIS.
- **Step 4: Security Checks.** Before an individual is admitted to the United States for resettlement, the U.S. government must conduct several security checks. Security checks are completed throughout the entire duration of the process and must be cleared before a case can depart for the United States.
- **Step 5: Medical Examination.** Medical examinations are required for all applicants prior to entry to the United States. RSCs coordinate medical examinations with IOM and U.S. Embassy panel physicians.
- **Step 6: Resettlement Agency Placement.** Cases are assigned to a Resettlement Agency in the United States that is responsible for receiving refugees and providing certain benefits upon arrival.
- **Step 7: Cultural Orientation.** Prior to departure, approved refugees over the age of 14 are eligible to participate in cultural orientation classes provided by the RSC. The purpose

of cultural orientation is to prepare refugees for resettlement by providing them with a basic introduction to life and culture in the United States.

- **Step 8: Travel.** The International Organization for Migration (IOM) will organize the applicants' travel to the United States.

20. Do people approved for refugee status in the P1 or P2 programs have Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) status upon arrival in the U.S.?

No, refugees are required to apply for LPR status one year after arrival. Refugees do receive work authorization documents shortly after arrival.

21. I have more questions. How do I contact PRM with my questions?

Due to the high volume of questions, you must route your question through your USRAP Interagency Taskforce representative. Your representative is knowledgeable about the intricacies of this program and will be able to address most questions. However, if your representative does not know the answer, he/she will raise questions with PRM during a regularly scheduled USRAP Taskforce meeting to ensure you receive a response promptly.

*****If you are a USAID Partner, your questions should be routed to USAIDAfghansupportcell@usaid.gov and will be answered as quickly as possible *****