

Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles

Refugee Resettlement Agencies of Los Angeles and Orange Counties

Refugee resettlement agencies in Los Angeles County and Orange County are urgently seeking to find permanent housing for Afghan refugees who had to leave their home country because their lives were at risk. There are approximately 5,500 refugees expected in Los Angeles County by next year. Finding long-term housing has been difficult, and our Task Force—a coalition of government actors, resettlement agencies and community organizations—is seeking to partner with the AAGLA to address the housing crisis facing our new refugee population.

Because this is a vulnerable population with unique circumstances, the resettlement agencies would like to work with the Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles to attempt to accomplish the following:

- Develop a system by which some apartment managers/owners would provide resettlement agencies and community-based organizations working with Afghans access to vacancies, if possible, prior to their being made available to the public. Working directly with the resettlement agency who are responsible for refugees means landlords would have immediate access to a tenant and to the federal funds that support housing costs.
- Waive credit history requirements for Afghan refugees because credit history can't be validated.
- Waive all or a portion of deposit requirements for refugees and limiting deposits to no more than the equivalent of one month's rent.
- Waive co-signer requirements, where they exist, or allow financially-responsible individuals or community-based organizations to be co-signers.
- Reduce considerations of occupancy limits as to not split up family units who are in new surroundings.

BACKGROUND

The fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban last August prompted this refugee crisis. The U.S. evacuated thousands of U.S. citizens and permanent residents and citizens of allied countries. It also evacuated more than 85,000 Afghans to U.S. military bases here and abroad. The refugees in California are a combination of Afghans who hold Special Immigrant Visa (SIVs) and those on what is called humanitarian parole.

Those holding the Special Immigrant Visa are here through a program that authorizes Afghan nationals lawful status in the United States because their work for the U.S. government puts their lives at risk. Those admitted through humanitarian parole are using this designation because it allowed the U.S. government to quickly admit people at risk into the United States. Humanitarian parole does not mean the individual has a criminal background. It simply allows lawful entry to the U.S. for a designated period, which in this case is two years.

Renting to a refugee or parolee is renting to a network of support comprising a new refugee tenant, a resettlement agency, community organizations and other community support. Millions of dollars in federal and state funding will be available to guarantee the rents for refugees. On August 29, 2021, President Biden directed the Department of Homeland Security to lead and coordinate ongoing efforts to support vulnerable Afghans as they safely resettle in the United States. The refugees are here legally and have Social Security numbers and California identification cards.

Refugees are thoroughly vetted for weeks to months by various federal agencies—including Department of Homeland Security, Department of Health and Human Services, and Department of State—at US military bases before being “assured” and allowed to relocate to their city of choice. All arrivals receive a COVID test and other vaccinations.

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