



Understanding the Program of Initial Resettlement

An overview of program requirements to support service delivery for new arrivals

As of January 1, 2026, all newly arrived refugees and Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders are eligible to be served under the Program of Initial Resettlement (PIR). This new program, operated by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), provides case management, housing placement, direct financial assistance, and referrals to support new arrivals with their immediate and essential needs. Keep reading for guidance on meeting the needs of your clients and the requirements outlined in ORR's PIR instructions issued January 7, 2026.

Defining PIR

The **Program of Initial Resettlement (PIR)** provides immediate, essential support to clients for at least 30 days and up to 90 days and establishes a foundation for long-term economic self-sufficiency through early employment and successful integration into local U.S. communities. With the support of states, **initial resettlement providers (IRPs)** (formerly known as “resettlement agencies”), and **local resettlement providers (LRPs)**, ORR coordinates placement and resettlement across the U.S.



The Program of Initial Resettlement (PIR) establishes a foundation for long-term economic self-sufficiency through early employment and successful integration.

After arriving at their destination, eligible newcomers receive initial benefits and services, including assistance in securing housing, case management, employment readiness, and time-limited cash and medical assistance. These services are administered through ORR's extensive private-public recipient network.

Populations Eligible for PIR

There are two populations eligible for PIR: **refugees and Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders**. While refugees are placed with a local resettlement provider prior to arrival, SIV holders may travel independently to the U.S. and seek services after arriving on their own. These cases are commonly referred to as "walk-ins." A walk-in SIV holder can request PIR benefits at a local resettlement provider office within 90 days of their arrival. However, ORR has extended the eligibility window for walk-ins who arrive during fiscal year 2026 (October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026). You may still submit an SIV walk-in application for PIR benefits if the case has not yet accessed Reception & Placement or PIR benefits, even if they are beyond the 90-day window. If you receive a walk-in request for PIR benefits, follow your initial resettlement provider's guidance on submitting the SIV holder's visa foil and form DS-0234.

PIR Service Period

Upon arrival, or upon approval of PIR benefits for walk-in SIV holders, clients must receive services for a minimum of 30 days. Depending on the client's needs, you can continue to serve them under PIR for up to 90 days. If the client needs additional assistance after the PIR service period ends, connect them to [other appropriate services](#) like the Preferred Communities' (PC) Intensive Case Management (ICM) program.

Pre-Arrival Services

Once a case is assigned to your office, prepare for the client's arrival by:

1. **Confirming the case placement;**
2. **Contacting the U.S. tie (UST)**, if applicable, and determining their willingness to support the client;
3. **Securing housing, which may include temporary housing**, if needed. The housing

must meet the local, state, and federal housing standards of your location;

4. **Furnishing the housing** with basic furniture, essential household items, and cleaning supplies;
5. **Arranging for a culturally appropriate, ready-to-eat meal** for the client to receive on their day of arrival;
6. **Securing essential goods** such as groceries, diapers, formula, and hygiene products. Have a plan to easily access seasonally appropriate clothing and a cell phone should new arrivals require these items; and
7. If a client will arrive with a known medical need, **share pre-arrival medical information** with the State Refugee Health Coordinator (SRHC) and appropriate health care providers. If the medical condition is a public health concern, work with the SRHC to report the concern to the appropriate county or local health agency.

Arrival

Pick up the newcomer(s) from the airport or arrange for them to be picked up. Transport them to their housing and provide a [basic home and safety orientation](#). Offer them the ready-to-eat meal and explain how they can use a phone to reach you or [call 911](#) if there is an emergency. Share your availability and when you will meet with them next. Per PIR guidance, **a home visit must be conducted within 72 hours** of arrival or upon approval of PIR benefits for walk-in SIV holders. If there are any emergency health needs, assist the client with receiving emergency health services.

Services of Initial Resettlement

Interpretation

[Interpretation services](#) should be provided throughout the service period, including upon arrival. Use a mutually understood language spoken by you or someone on your team and the client and/or the client's family members. While interpretation may be provided by staff, paid or volunteer interpreters, or family members, including USTs, it is important you ensure that interpretation is accurate, confidential, and supports the client's ability to make informed decisions. Remember that children should never be used as interpreters.

Home Visit

Only one home visit is required for PIR cases. It must be completed within 72 hours of arrival or approval of PIR benefits for walk-in SIV holders. The home visit helps you establish an effective working relationship with the clients and is the time to assess their needs and living conditions. This visit can also be a suitable moment to share a [brief overview of what they can expect from the PIR program](#), their responsibilities, and what services the local resettlement provider provides. Sharing this information early helps newcomers set expectations that fit the realities of the program.

Pocket Money

Pocket money gives newcomers agency and the ability to purchase incidentals they may need. While there are no program requirements for when pocket money must be provided, it is best practice to give these funds early in the service period. Local resettlement providers often give pocket money to each adult on the case and add an additional amount based on the number of children on the case; follow your office's policy.

Material Resettlement Support

Your clients will need assistance with various material needs, and it is your role to help meet those needs for at least the first 30 days. Material needs include:

- Furniture
- Household goods
- Cleaning supplies
- Weather-appropriate clothing
- Baby supplies like formula and diapers
- Hygiene products
- Food

You can meet these needs through a combination of donated items and funds allocated for clients' use. Make sure that in addition to the above items, your clients have all their necessary critical medications.

Switchboard has developed [cultural backgrounders](#) for many ORR-eligible client populations, including [Afghan](#) and [Afrikaner](#) communities.

Needs Assessment and Service Planning

Together with the client, you will create a **Self-Sufficiency Plan (SSP)** to meet their needs. Within seven business days after arrival or approval of PIR benefits for walk-in SIV holders, work with your client to identify all their needs, barriers to employment, and resettlement goals. Using this information, you'll create an SSP for each adult on the case.

Your initial resettlement provider may have a template for the SSP. If not, make sure your document includes action steps with timelines, referrals, services, follow-up plans, and a space where the client acknowledges they have reviewed and agreed to the plan. Use the plan to guide services for the client and review it again at the end of the service period to assess any remaining needs or vulnerabilities.

Resettlement Services

Your client will need support with services and referrals throughout their PIR service period. All activities should support the client's ability to become self-sufficient and integrate into their local U.S. community. On the next page is a table outlining **specific services to provide your PIR clients** along with the timeline for the service. The deadline is measured from arrival or approval of PIR benefits.

Direct Assistance

Clients receive direct assistance on a per person basis to support their basic needs, including rent, utilities, food, and material needs. **ORR allocates \$2,000 per client in direct assistance** to be used for their direct benefit. Direct assistance may be paid on behalf of the client to cover basic needs and/or provided as cash, depending on the client's needs. The pocket money described earlier is a part of this \$2,000 per client direct assistance. Remember that you should collect a client signature and receipt, if appropriate, for each direct assistance expenditure. All direct assistance must be paid before the end of the service period.

Note: If a client out-migrates (moves away) from your program service area before the minimum 30-day service period, your local resettlement provider may pay the remaining direct assistance as a lump sum to the client.

Service	Deadline
ORR and mainstream benefits: assist clients with applying for cash and medical assistance	7 business days
English language training: refer clients for English language training services, as needed	7 business days
Employment and social services: refer clients for employment and social services, as needed	7 business days
Social Security cards: assist clients with applying for a Social Security card, as needed	7 business days
AR-11 Change of Address: assist clients with completing the AR-11 Change of Address form	10 calendar days
Selective Service registration: assist all men aged 18–25 with registration in the Selective Service	30 calendar days
Employment Authorization Document (EAD): assist refugee clients with receiving their EAD	end of service period
Legal Permanent Residence (green card): assist SIV holders with receiving their Legal Permanent Residence card, also known as a green card	end of service period
State identification or driver's license: assist clients interested in receiving a state ID or driver's license card	end of service period
School enrollment: assist parents and guardians in enrolling all their school-aged children in school	30 calendar days
Domestic medical screening: help clients receive a domestic medical screening, tuberculosis (TB) screening, and any required vaccines	90 calendar days
Cultural orientation: help clients understand their local community and life in the U.S. by covering topics such as employment, housing, U.S. laws, public education, transportation, English language learning, financial management, and health care access	end of service period
Additional services: connect clients with any additional programs or services based on identified needs; this may include other ORR programs or community-based services	end of service period
Case closeout: assess clients and document any changes in vulnerability, well-being, and remaining needs	end of service period

Documenting Services

Each PIR case should have a case file that includes the Primary Applicant (PA) and all case members. The case file documents all services, referrals, assistance, follow-up, and direct assistance spent on the case. **The case file contains:**

- A shared case note log
- A joint needs assessment (see Needs Assessment and Service Planning above)
- A self-sufficiency plan for each adult (see Needs Assessment and Service Planning above)
- All direct assistance documentation, including client acknowledgments of assistance and receipts for expenses
- All required documentation for cases that include refugee minors who are traveling without their biological or legally adoptive parents or are married, regardless of travel companions or U.S.-based relatives. Your IRP can provide additional guidance on the requirements for these cases.

Support your clients through [Settle In!](#) Settle In empowers newcomers to navigate life in the U.S. with confidence by providing timely, accurate, and culturally relevant information in multiple languages. Settle In is available through their website, mobile app, [Facebook page](#), or via two-way communication.

- [Employment in the U.S.](#)
- [Learning English](#)
- [Change of Address \(AR-11\)](#)
- [Housing in the U.S.](#)
- [Healthcare](#)
- [Money management](#)
- [Education in the U.S.](#)
- [Transportation](#)

Virtual PIR Considerations

Some initial resettlement providers have virtual PIR programs. If you are assigned a virtual case, follow all program requirements. You must also:

- **Evaluate and confirm the U.S. Tie's (UST's) capacity to provide in-person support**, including arranging airport reception, initial housing and food, and transportation as needed. Whenever possible, capture confirmation of these commitments in writing (e.g., email confirmation from the UST, screenshots of text messages, signed forms).
- **Make sure the client receives the required direct assistance.** This can be provided entirely in cash, depending on the client's needs and circumstances. If cash is provided, it must be delivered in a secure manner (i.e., activate their debit card once receipt and identity are confirmed) to protect the funds and reach the client as intended. The case file must include evidence of receipt.
- **Provide all recommended PIR services**, and maintain the same service and documentation standards as in-person delivery.
- **Consult with State Refugee Coordinators (SRCs) and SRHCs** as needed to understand the local resettlement context and ensure linkages to state benefits and services.

Reporting Requirements

Your initial resettlement provider must submit individual-level data to ORR each month. Follow your initial resettlement provider's reporting guidelines for sharing information for their reporting.

Conclusion

Newcomer clients bring many strengths, but also require supports to become self-sufficient through employment and integration into their new communities. The Program of Initial Resettlement (PIR) outlines specific services, referrals, and support you are required to deliver to help newly arrived refugees and SIV holders meet these and other resettlement goals. Keep in mind that because PIR is a new program, ORR may release new guidelines and/or your initial resettlement provider may have additional guidelines for you to follow.

Resources

[Sample Comprehensive Case Management](#)

[Onboarding Guide](#): A customizable framework to help orient new staff members who will provide case management as refugee service providers.

[Sample Housing Onboarding Guide](#): A customizable framework to help new housing staff understand housing services.

[Managing Newcomers' Housing Expectations](#): A blog post covering key messaging that resettlement staff can use when discussing housing with newcomers to help set expectations given housing realities in the U.S.

[Three Steps You Can Take to Support Clients' Food Security](#): A blog post to help service providers take action to support food security for their clients.

[Case Management Documentation: Making the Paperwork Work for You](#): A blog post exploring ways to streamline processes, so documentation supports compassionate case care.

[Creating High-Quality Case Management Documentation](#): A webinar to support staff understanding of the role of documentation and techniques to improve case note quality and efficiency.

[De-Mystifying the Family Self-Sufficiency Plan](#): A blog post explaining how providers can look beyond economic self-sufficiency to identify other areas of family well-being and support integration.

[Refugees and Asylees Have the Right to Work: Busting Three Myths about Social Security and Work Authorization Delays](#): A blog post helping resettlement providers understand the right to work and documentation of work authorization.

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