



**CRSA**  
COALITION *of* REFUGEE SERVICE AGENCIES

COALITION OF REFUGEE SERVICE AGENCIES

# ***2019 ANNUAL REPORT***

# CRSA MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS



**BURMESE ROHINGYA COMMUNITY OF GEORGIA**  
BRCGROHINGYA.ORG



**CATHOLIC CHARITIES ATLANTA**  
CATHOLICCHARITIESATLANTA.ORG



**CDF: A COLLECTIVE ACTION INITIATIVE**  
CDFACTION.ORG/



**CENTER FOR PAN ASIAN COMMUNITY SERVICES**  
CPACS.ORG



**CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE**  
CVT.ORG



**CLARKSTON COMMUNITY CENTER**  
CLARKSTONCOMMUNITYCENTER.ORG



**ERITREAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION OF GEORGIA**  
ATLERITREA.ORG



**FRIENDS OF REFUGEES**  
FRIENDSOFREFUGEES.COM



**GEORGIA ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION NETWORK**  
GEORGIAASYLUM.ORG



**GLOBAL VILLAGE PROJECT**  
GLOBALVILLAGEPROJECT.ORG



**INSPIRITUS**  
WEINSPIRIT.ORG



**INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE IN ATLANTA**  
RESCUE.ORG/ATLANTA



**JEWISH FAMILY & CAREER SERVICES**  
JFCSATL.ORG



**LATIN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION**  
THELAA.ORG



**NEW AMERICAN PATHWAYS**  
NEWAMERICANPATHWAYS.ORG



**REFUGEE COFFEE CO.**  
REFUGECOFFEECO.COM



**REFUGEE WOMEN'S NETWORK**  
REFUGEEWOMENSNETWORKINC.ORG



**SOMALI AMERICAN COMMUNITY CENTER**  
FACEBOOK.COM/SOMALIACC



**SYRIAN COMMUNITY NETWORK – ATLANTA**  
SYRIANCOMMUNITYNETWORK.ORG



**TAPESTRI**  
TAPESTRI.ORG



**WORLD RELIEF ATLANTA**  
WORLDRELIEFATLANTA.ORG

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR


The Coalition of Refugees Service Agencies (CRSA) is a group of 21 nonprofit organizations that serve refugee and immigrant communities in Georgia. CRSA member organizations welcome our new neighbors and provide resettlement, employment assistance, adult education and youth programs, civic engagement, and many more initiatives that help new Americans integrate and thrive. This year, 1,330 refugees were welcomed to Georgia from 25 countries, and 92% of these families were financially self-sufficient within six months of arrival—among the highest rates in the nation.

However, changes in federal policy continue to reduce pathways for immigrants to come to America, including those fleeing war and persecution. The U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program has been cut to the lowest levels in its 40-year history and refugee arrivals in Georgia have dropped drastically from the 3,180 people we welcomed in 2016. This reduction in resettlement forced World Relief Atlanta, a founding member of CRSA, to close its resettlement program after four decades of service, leaving our community with one less avenue for success.

Despite these challenges, CRSA member organizations remain steadfast in serving the diverse immigrant population of Georgia, and we are encouraged that more Georgians are joining the work of welcome as advocates and volunteers. We are also excited to launch a new initiative heading into 2020—CRSA's Business and Immigration Georgia (BIG) Partnership, a statewide partnership of Georgia business and civic leaders committed to strengthening our economy by tapping the potential of the state's new American workforce.

We are grateful for the many Georgians who support our work, and we are inspired by the courage, character, and resiliency of the people we serve. Through this report we present our collective data from fiscal year 2019 (October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019) and share stories to highlight the economic, social, and cultural benefits of creating welcoming communities.



  
Jim Neal, CRSA Chair  
Director of Operations,  
Friends of Refugees

## OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2019

In 2019, the CRSA welcomed five new members to our coalition—representing several of Georgia's ethnic communities—who bring new perspectives and opportunities for partnership. New members include: the Eritrean-American Community Association of Georgia, the Burmese Rohingya Community of Georgia, CDF Action, the Center for Victims of Torture, and the Syrian Community Network.



The CRSA hosted our sixth annual New Americans Celebration at the Georgia State Capitol on Valentine's Day with the theme Georgia Loves Refugees. This day of education and advocacy brought over 300 new Americans and welcoming community members to the State Capitol and both chambers of the General

Assembly issued bi-partisan resolutions declaring February 14 as New American's Day in Georgia. Staff from Georgia's congressional delegation, including Senator Isakson and Representatives Johnson, Lewis, McBath and Woodall, attended the day in a show of support. The General Assembly did not pass any anti-immigrant or anti-welcoming legislation 2019.

The CRSA also engaged Georgia's congressional delegation to secure bipartisan support for a robust U.S. refugee resettlement program. Several Georgia members of Congress spoke up for the refugee program including Representatives Johnson and Lewis, who co-sponsored the GRACE Act (establishing a minimum annual number of refugees welcomed to the U.S.), Representative McBath, who co-sponsored the No Ban Act (preventing religious discrimination in immigration-related decisions) and Representative Woodall, who joined 17 GOP colleagues in sending a letter to the president encouraging him to support refugee resettlement.

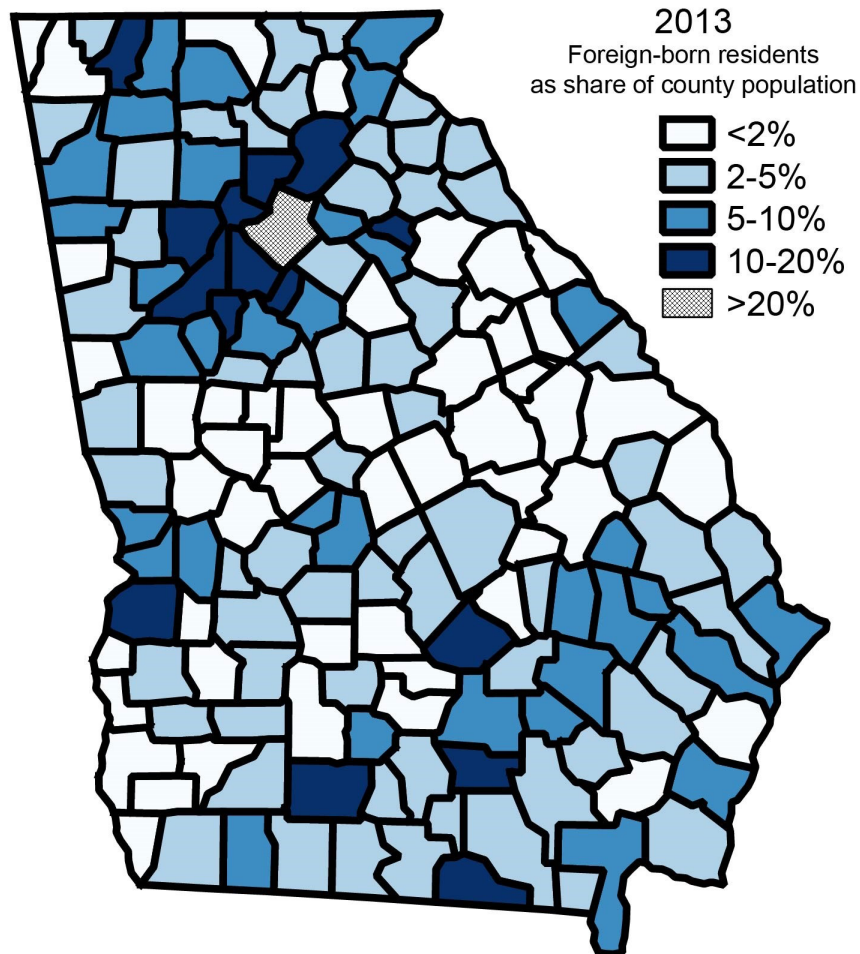
Our annual World Refugee Day Celebration brought over 200 Georgians to Clarkston—known as the “Ellis Island of the South”—to show support for refugees; hear from Congressman Hank Johnson, Georgia Senate Minority Leader Steve Henson, and former refugees themselves; enjoy cultural performances; and purchase food, art, and clothing from new American artisans and business owners. In 2020, the CRSA will continue to celebrate the contributions refugees and immigrants bring to our state and engage Georgia lawmakers on a bi-partisan basis to ensure that Georgia remains a welcoming place to live, work, and do business.

### **Our priorities for 2020:**

- Ensure effective and robust refugee resettlement in the United States on a federal, state, and local level
- Promote a legislative agenda in Georgia that provides opportunities for the success of all
- Provide and promote community engagement opportunities for refugees and immigrants

# GEORGIA: STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY

Immigrants and refugees make up over 10% of Georgia's population and play a critical role in the state's economy.



GEORGIA BUDGET & POLICY INSTITUTE

## Immigrants in Georgia

**1,059,476**

foreign-born  
residents in GA



**41%**

are naturalized  
U.S. citizens



**75%**

speak English  
well or very well



## Immigrants Strengthen Georgia's Economy

**91,765**  
immigrant  
entrepreneurs  
employ

**205,962**  
Georgians



Immigrants in  
Georgia have  
**\$25.9  
billion**  
in spending  
power

Immigrants in  
Georgia contribute  
**\$6.4  
billion**  
in federal taxes and  
**\$2.9  
billion**  
in state and local  
taxes

## Immigrants are Essential to Georgia's Workforce



1 in 7 workers in Georgia's labor force is an immigrant

**38.4%**  
of farming,  
fishing, and  
forestry



**27.4%**  
of construction  
and extraction



**24.5%**  
of computer and  
mathematical  
sciences



**17%**  
of doctors



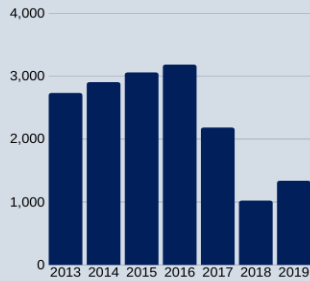
Sources: New American Economy, American Immigration Council, Georgia Budget and Policy Institute



# REFUGEES CONTRIBUTE TO GEORGIA

Entry-level jobs allow refugees and other immigrants to maintain an income to support their families while building new skills and gaining a better grasp of the English language.

## Refugee Arrivals in Georgia

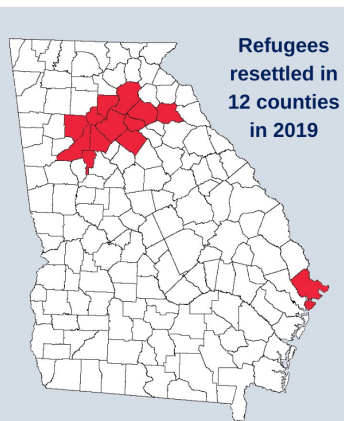


2013: 2,726  
2014: 2,901  
2015: 3,054  
2016: 3,180  
2017: 2,179  
2018: 1,015  
2019: 1,330

The refugee program is built around welcoming those who have fled persecution to a new home—and a new life—in America. **In 2019, CRSA member organizations welcomed 1,330 refugees to Georgia.**

Refugees arrived in Georgia from 25 countries in 2019, including Afghanistan, Burma/Myanmar, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Eritrea, Guatemala, Iraq, Syria, and Ukraine.

## Refugees came to Georgia from 25 countries in 2019



Once in Georgia, refugees resettled across the state—in 12 different counties. A majority of refugees resettled in DeKalb County, predominantly in Clarkston and the surrounding areas.

## Refugees support Georgia's vital industries



Tourism



Manufacturing



Food Processing

## In 2019:

**92%**

of newly-arrived refugee families were working and paying their own bills within

**180**

days of their arrival in Georgia



CRSA member organizations worked with over

**150**

Georgia companies to place

**2,515**

new Americans in jobs



## Average Hourly Wage of Refugees Placed in Jobs

2015: \$8.99 p/h

2016: \$9.63 p/h

2017: \$10.25 p/h

2018: \$11.10 p/h

2019: \$11.55 p/h

# CRSA SUPPORTS WELCOMING COMMUNITIES

## In 2019, CRSA Member Organizations:

**Brought over  
\$31.2  
million**  
in private and  
federal funding  
to Georgia

**Raised  
\$2.7  
million**  
in fees for  
service

**Spent over  
\$2.5  
million**  
directly in  
local Georgia  
economies



Much of the funds raised by CRSA are invested back into Georgia's welcoming communities—through job creation, housing support, and initial purchases made on behalf of clients, including rent, utilities, food, cell phones, MARTA cards, furniture, and household necessities. New Americans continue this investment into their new communities soon after their arrival, as they secure employment, achieve self-sufficiency, pay taxes, and spend locally.

However, with fewer arrivals also come cuts to spending in local economies. Over the past three years Georgia communities have lost more than \$3.9 million in potential revenue.\*



\*Calculated by comparing CRSA's annual spending in local economies in 2016 with spending in 2017, 2018, and 2019.

## In 2019, CRSA Member Organizations:

Employed  
**360 full-time**  
and  
**279 part-time**  
staff



Our staff  
represent over  
**20 countries**  
and speak more than  
**40 languages**



## In 2019, CRSA member organizations partnered with over:

- 200 faith communities
- 100 schools and universities
- 100 businesses
- 300 civic and corporate organizations



Our work would not be possible without the support of private organizations, faith communities, and individuals who believe in supporting new Americans.

## In 2019:

**5,157**  
volunteers donated over  
**128,000**  
hours of service to CRSA  
member organizations



A value of over  
**\$3.3 million**

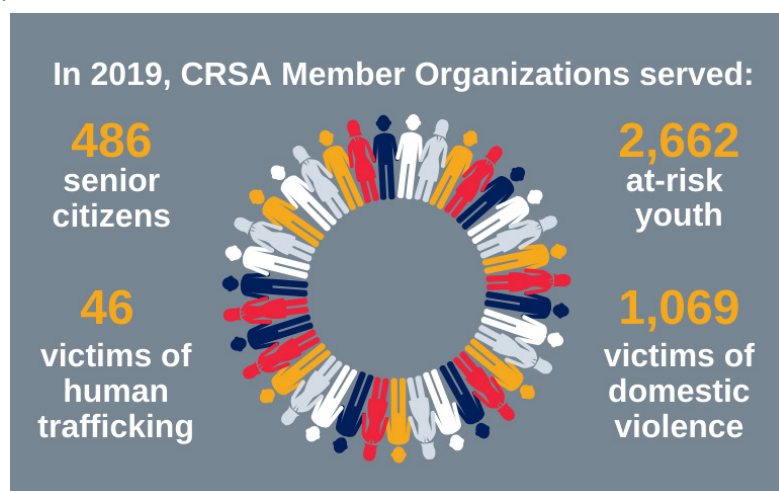


# CRSA MEMBERS PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Establishing safety and stability is the first step to self-sufficiency. In 2019, CRSA member organizations provided initial housing and basic needs for 1,330 newly-arrived refugees. CRSA member organizations help refugees and immigrants navigate new systems, address barriers, and take advantage of opportunities in their new homes. CRSA also serves welcoming communities by providing language support, building cultural competency, and providing direct services to community members.



Some groups of immigrants and refugees have unique needs. Several CRSA member organizations offer services targeted to the needs of specific populations.



It is important that every immigrant in Georgia obtains the most secure immigration status for which they are eligible. CRSA member organizations help by providing low-cost, high-quality immigration services.



*One of the most important rights and responsibilities for new citizens is to participate in the democratic process. CRSA member organizations helped 12,356 new Americans register to vote in 2019 and provided training and support to help new voters navigate the voting process.*



# STORIES OF NEW AMERICANS IN GEORGIA



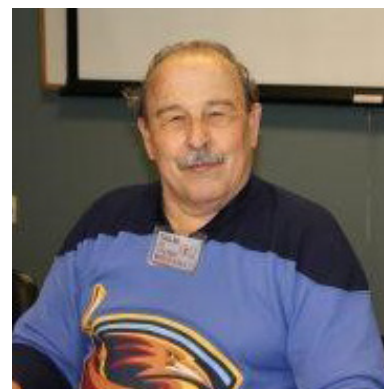
Michael and Rose came to Georgia through the refugee resettlement program in 2015, along with their two young sons, Emmanuel and Peter. CRSA member organizations supported Michael to secure his first job soon after arrival and obtain his forklift certification in 2017, and he recently participated in a career advancement program that helped him to earn a promotion at work. Michael worked hard to develop his English skills and now serves as an interpreter for a CRSA

member organization, helping to welcome new arrivals. Michael and Rose's third child, Alouishious, was born here in Atlanta and the couple recently purchased their first home. This new American family is on track to apply for citizenship in 2020.



Originally from Myanmar, Mohammad Karim and his family came to Atlanta through the refugee resettlement program in 2014. Mohammad Karim received support from several CRSA member organizations while he attended Clarkston High School, where he was an exemplary student and Junior ROTC member. Mohammad Karim worked with CRSA member organizations to apply for scholarships to assist with his educational expenses. He won a \$2000 scholarship which

he used towards his enrollment at Georgia State University where he is currently pursuing a degree in Criminal Justice. Mohammad Karim recently became a naturalized U.S. citizen. He said, "I want to be a Clarkston police officer because I really want to be someone who can protect my community and keep people safe and out of danger. Clarkston is not only the place where I have lived for more than four years but also a second home. I want to become a police officer for this community and a first for Burmese/Rohingya people."



In his native Buenos Aires, Armando was an actor and newscaster. Recently, the 67-year-old retiree portrayed the lead character in a Spanish-language play he wrote. Armando, his fellow actors, and audience members are all part of the Club de la Tercera Edad (Spanish for "Seniors Club"), a weekly gathering organized by a CRSA member organization, where senior immigrants from all over Latin America congregate for recreational activities, educational programs, and camaraderie nourished

by familiar culture, traditions, and language. For Armando, the Club de la Tercera Edad is much more than a gathering space. "I get to forget about my problems," said Armando, who has been attending for the past five years. "It's like family. I look forward to Fridays to see them again."



Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rukaiya grew up in Uganda after her family were forced to flee their homeland. She was 14 years old when she arrived in Georgia through the refugee resettlement program. Now in 11th grade, Rukaiya is enrolled in CRSA member organization youth programs, including a college readiness summer camp. A natural leader among her peers, after participating in a civic engagement workshop she was inspired to establish a "Welcome Club"

at her school, to make sure newly-arrived students feel comfortable and get the support they need to succeed. Using the leadership skills she learned at summer camp, Rukaiya was elected president of her school's 4-H club. She is also part of a "Reading Buddies" initiative between two CRSA member organizations, where she reads regularly to young refugee students at a local elementary school.



# STORIES OF NEW AMERICANS IN GEORGIA



Mohammad, his wife, and their young son arrived in Atlanta in 2019 after he received a special immigrant visa (SIV) for his service with the U.S. military in Afghanistan. Loyalty to the U.S. government can put SIV recipients—who serve as interpreters, translators, security officers, and in other support roles—and their families at risk of danger, threats and retaliation. In Afghanistan, Mohammad worked as a personal trainer for the U.S. Army and as the manager of the NATO gym

in Kabul. A CRSA member organization helped Mohammad to find a safe home in Clarkston and to secure employment at DSI Fitness in Norcross. Well on their way to self-sufficiency, Mohammad is currently enrolled in a CRSA member organization's career development program and is pursuing his personal trainer certification.



Forced to flee their home in Burma/Myanmar, Karim and his family were welcomed to Georgia through the refugee resettlement program. Karim's goal was to complete school and further his education, an aspiration he was unable to fulfill while living in a refugee camp. A CRSA member organization provided a career program that supported Karim to finish school and start his college application process. He is currently a student at the Interactive College of Technology in Chamblee,

working to complete his Information Technology Associates Degree.



Ahmed, Samira, and their sons Yosef and Aziz arrived in Atlanta in 2017 through the refugee resettlement program. Ahmed is a medical professional and worked as a hematologist in Kuwait after fleeing war in Somalia. Eager to start working again, Ahmed faced the challenge of starting over in his field with a positive attitude. With the support of a CRSA member organization, he was able to secure a

job as a Medical Laboratory Technician. Youngest son Aziz was born with cerebral palsy, and in addition to working toward self-sufficiency, the family had to navigate the complicated U.S. medical system to ensure that Aziz received the care he needed to thrive. A CRSA member organization supported the family through referrals and appointments, but Aziz and his parents demonstrated their determination throughout the whole process. Both boys are now in middle school and doing well.



Grace came to Georgia through the refugee resettlement program when she was 15 years old, after being forced to flee her home in Burma/Myanmar. Now 21, Grace is a sophomore at Georgia State University studying pre-nursing and is also serving as a full-time AmeriCorps Member with the same CRSA member organization that helped her family resettle in Atlanta. She is working with 2nd and

3rd grade students in the afterschool program and providing support to case managers and newly-arriving clients. Grace said, "I am happy to help people who are in the same position I was just a few years ago and tell them that everything is going to be ok, they just have to work hard."

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Asylum:** Asylum status is a form of protection available to people who meet the definition of refugee and are already in the United States or are seeking admission at a port of entry. Persons may apply for asylum in the United States regardless of country of origin or current immigration status.

**Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA):** On June 15, 2012, the Secretary of Homeland Security announced that certain people who came to the United States as children and meet several guidelines may request consideration of deferred action for a period of two years, subject to renewal. They are also eligible for work authorization. Deferred action is a use of prosecutorial discretion to defer removal action against an individual for a certain period of time. Deferred action does not provide lawful status.

**Immigrant:** A person who comes to a country to take up permanent residence.

**Immigrant Detention:** The policy of holding individuals suspected of visa violations, illegal entry or unauthorized arrival, and those subject to deportation and removal in detention until a decision is made by immigration authorities to grant a visa and release them into the community, or to repatriate them to their country of departure. Sixty percent of immigrants detained are held in privately run detention facilities. In 2018, Georgia ranked fourth in the nation in the average number of immigrants detained per day in the U.S. (3,717). Georgia is home to three privately run immigrant detention centers, Stewart, Irwin County and Folkston ICE Processing Centers.

**Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR):** Also known as legal permanent residents, and informally known as green card holders, are immigrants under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), with rights, benefits, and privileges to reside in the United States permanently.

**Mixed-Status Family:** A family whose members include people with different citizenship or immigration statuses.

**Naturalization:** The process by which U.S. citizenship is granted to a foreign citizen or national after they fulfill the requirements established by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

**Refugee:** Under United States law, a refugee is someone who is located outside of the United States; is of special humanitarian concern to the United States; demonstrates that they were persecuted or fear persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group; is not firmly resettled in another country and is admissible to the United States. Persons with refugee status are eligible to work in the United States and apply for Lawful Permanent Residence (Green Card) after one year.

**Sanctuary City:** There is no one definition of sanctuary city but rather it is a broad term applied to jurisdictions that have policies in place designed to limit cooperation with or involvement in federal immigration enforcement actions. At this time, no Georgia city has officially proclaimed itself a sanctuary city.

**Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for Iraqi and Afghan Nationals:** These visas are available to Iraqi and Afghan employees and contractors who were employed by or on behalf of the U.S. government in Iraq or Afghanistan for one year or more who have experienced or are experiencing an ongoing serious threat because of that employment. Persons granted SIVs are permanent residents of the United States and are eligible to apply for citizenship after five years in the U.S. SIVs are also eligible for the same services as refugees.

**Survivors of Torture Program:** The U.S. Survivors of Torture (SOT) Program helps people who have been tortured in another country and are now living in the United States. Torture is defined by U.S. law as an act which is intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering and committed by a person acting under the color of law upon another person who he has under his custody or physical control, 18 U.S.C. Code s. 2340. Research suggests that 44% of refugees, asylees, and asylum seekers living in the U.S. have experienced torture.

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**T Non Immigrant Status:** Allows victims to remain in the U.S. to assist federal authorities in the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases. The visa allows the recipient to live and work in the U.S. while the case is tried.

**Temporary Protected Status (TPS):** Establishes a legislative basis for allowing a group of persons temporary refuge in the United States. Under a provision of the Immigration Act of 1990, the Attorney General may designate nationals of a foreign state to be eligible for TPS with a finding that conditions in that country pose a danger to personal safety due to ongoing armed conflict or an environmental disaster. Grants of TPS are initially made for periods of 6 to 18 months and may be extended depending on the situation. Removal proceedings are suspended against aliens while they are in Temporary Protected Status.

**U Non Immigrant Status:** Set aside for victims of certain crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse and are helpful to law enforcement or government officials in the investigation or prosecution of criminal activity.

**Undocumented Immigrant:** Undocumented immigrants are foreign nationals who lack proper authorization to be in the United States and do not have a legal right to be or remain in the United States. These immigrants either entered the United States without inspection according to immigration procedures or entered the United States on a temporary visa and stayed beyond the expiration date of the visa.

**Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Immigration Provisions:** In cases of domestic violence, child abuse or elder abuse involving immigrant victims, VAWA has provisions to help victims whose immigration status is dependent on the abuser. These provisions allow victims to apply for permanent residence through “self-petition” or through a battered spouse waiver. VAWA also has a cancellation of removal to prevent the threat or use of deportation as a form of abuse. Successful VAWA cancellation of removal petitions can result in permanent residence for the victim and children.

**Visa:** Authorization that a citizen of a foreign country generally must obtain prior to traveling to the United States. Non-immigrant visas are obtained for travel to the United States on a temporary basis. These can include visas for tourism, visits, business, employment or study. Immigrant visas are for travel to the United States for those that want to stay permanently. These can include visas for family-based immigration, employment, business, and adoption. Immigrant visas are also granted through Special Immigrant Visa programs and the Diversity Lottery program.

**Welcoming City, County or Region:** A community that joins the Welcoming America network and works across multiple sectors, such as government, business, and non-profit, to create inclusive policies and practices such as making it easier for entrepreneurs to start a business or having government documents available in multiple languages. Welcoming Cities are guided by the principles of inclusion and creating communities that prosper because everyone feels welcome, including immigrants and refugees.





**Mission:** To engage a broad coalition to highlight the cultural, social, and economic contributions of refugees and immigrants in Georgia.




**Vision:** We envision a future where every person who calls Georgia home is valued, respected, and able to build a successful life.

**Contact Us:** If you would like to learn more about CRSA or any of our partners, please contact CRSA Chair, Jim Neal, at: [jimneal@friendsofrefugees.com](mailto:jimneal@friendsofrefugees.com)

## CRSA MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Burmese Rohingya Community of Georgia  
 Catholic Charities Atlanta  
 CDF: A Collective Action Initiative  
 Center for Pan Asian Community Services  
 Center for Victims of Torture  
 Clarkston Community Center  
 Eritrean-American Community Association of Georgia  
 Friends of Refugees  
 Georgia Asylum and Immigration Network  
 Global Village Project  
 Inspiritus  
 International Rescue Committee in Atlanta  
 Jewish Family and Career Services  
 Latin American Association  
 New American Pathways  
 Refuge Coffee Co.  
 Refugee Women's Network  
 Somali American Community Center  
 Syrian Community Network – Atlanta  
 Tapestri  
 World Relief Atlanta

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