



The Massachusetts Office  
for Refugees and Immigrants

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019

**Charles D. Baker**

Governor

**Karyn Polito**

Lieutenant Governor

**Marylou Sudders**

Secretary of Health & Human Services

**Mary Truong**

Executive Director



# OUR MISSION

**Promote the full participation of refugees and immigrants as self-sufficient individuals and families in the economic, social, and civic life of the Commonwealth.**

## About ORI

The Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) administers programs that provide direct services to clients through a network of community partners including sister agencies, resettlement agencies, faith-based and ethnically grounded organizations, all of which cooperate to meet the needs of our culturally and linguistically diverse newcomer populations.

## Welcome from Governor Charlie D. Baker

“ The Baker-Polito Administration values the immigrant community’s role in making Massachusetts a vibrant and competitive Commonwealth. Massachusetts has long benefited from the significant contributions that persons who come to the United States from other countries make to our economy and our communities. ”

# CONTENTS

Mission	3
About ORI	3
Welcome from Governor Charlie D. Baker	3
Contents	4
Message from the Executive Director	5
Executive Summary	6
Refugee Population Demographics	8
Employment Services	9
Educational Training Programs	10
Children and Youth Services	14
Community and Elders Services	18
Health Services	20
Citizenship Services	21
Town Hall Meetings	22
Success Stories	24
Community Partnership	26
Financials	30
Acknowledgment	31

# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Dear friends,

Without a doubt, these are challenging times for refugees, immigrants, and those assisting them at various points along their journeys, here in Massachusetts and across the U.S. Against a backdrop of change and uncertainty, Massachusetts has continued its longstanding commitment to welcoming, serving and celebrating the contributions of refugees and immigrants to our Commonwealth.

Embracing diversity and providing support through sustainable means to the world’s most vulnerable populations is central to the mission of Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI). Despite unprecedented challenges, ORI continues to work passionately with legislative and community partners to find new ways to provide culturally and linguistically diverse programming for Massachusetts refugees and immigrants. The goal remains the same: integration into the economic, social, and civic life of our Massachusetts communities, on the way to self-sufficiency and success. In FFY2019 ORI has served more than more than 5,900 refugees and immigrants across all federal, state, and privately-funded programs.

As overseas refugee arrivals continue to below in 2019, ORI sharpened its focus on programming for newcomers already here. Two highly successful initiatives garnered widespread support among key legislators to support the increase in state funding for the next year. First, ORI’s Financial Literacy for Newcomers (FLN) program received recognition from community partners and agencies and brought together eleven diverse financial institutions, non-profits, government agencies, and private foundations to help



**Mary Truong,**  
Executive Director

refugees and immigrants navigate the language, systems, and products integral to financial literacy and ultimately, financial independence.

Second, ORI initiated two new programs—Refugee Youth Mentoring (RYM) and English Language Training for integration (ELT), supported by the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement. The RYM program was designed to connect young newcomers with mentors in their communities to help them work towards individual goals. The ELT program provides training to eligible refugees in order to support self-sufficiency and successful integration into their communities of resettlement.

We are deeply appreciative of the unwavering support extended to ORI, our service providers, and, most importantly, our refugee and immigrant communities by Governor Baker, legislators, and community leaders throughout Massachusetts. We invite you to explore our 2019 Annual Report to learn more about ORI and our work on behalf of Massachusetts refugees and immigrants. Thank you for supporting our cause and our mission. Your commitment and advocacy on behalf of refugees and immigrants inspires our work every day, and creates a better Massachusetts for us all.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last year, ORI worked diligently to expand and strengthen its partnerships with service providers and stakeholders to ensure providing high quality and locally accessible services to its refugee and immigrant populations. In brief:

- 36 workshop series have been delivered in 4 regions of the state, to equip 206 participants with knowledge necessary for them to take control of their finances.
- 1,880 Massachusetts' lawful permanent residents enrolled in ORI Citizenship for New Americans Program.
- 1,035 refugees participated in various employment programs. Of those, 718 obtained employment, with an average hourly wage of \$13.81 per hour.
- ORI successfully assisted 178 unaccompanied minors into appropriate housing and care.
- Youth Adjustment Services helped 98 young newcomers through their transition into living in Massachusetts communities.
- 200 refugee and immigrant elders received ORI's services to refugee elders.
- Refugee Community Services provided 690 refugees with assistance to access and understand mainstream service systems and local resources.
- ORI's health promotion services reached out to 605 individuals and helped them with their medical needs.
- Health assessment program conducted 650 early medical screening service visits to newly-arrived refugees and immigrants, with 96% making successful transition to primary care.
- ORI Refugee School impact program served 596 students and 106 parents around the state to ensure better academic achievement for children.
- Through visits to cities and towns across the Commonwealth, ORI connected with 206 refugees and immigrants to learn about their struggles and successes.
- In 2019, Refugee Youth Mentoring (RYM) matched 43 young newcomers with mentors in their communities to help them to define and work toward their individual vocational and educational goals.
- ORI enrolled 59 individuals into its new English Language Training for integration (ELT) program.



**Top:** ORI Executive Director with the DMH staff getting prepared for the Town Hall Meeting  
**Bottom:** Participants and staff attending the Worcester Town Hall Meeting



# REFUGEE POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

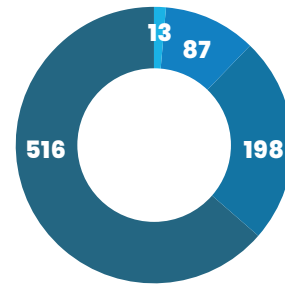
In FFY2019, Massachusetts welcomed 814 individuals from 46 countries. The largest populations came from The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Afghanistan, Ukraine, El Salvador, and Eritrea. The following infographics represent our newcomers' nationalities, age distribution, and resettlement locations in the last year.

## ARRIVAL BY IMMIGRATION STATUSES



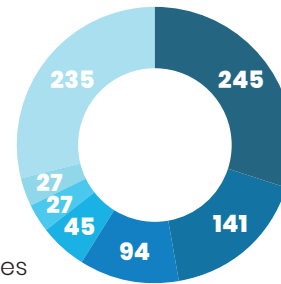
## AGE DISTRIBUTION

65 years and over  
0 through 4 years  
5 through 17 years  
18 through 64 years

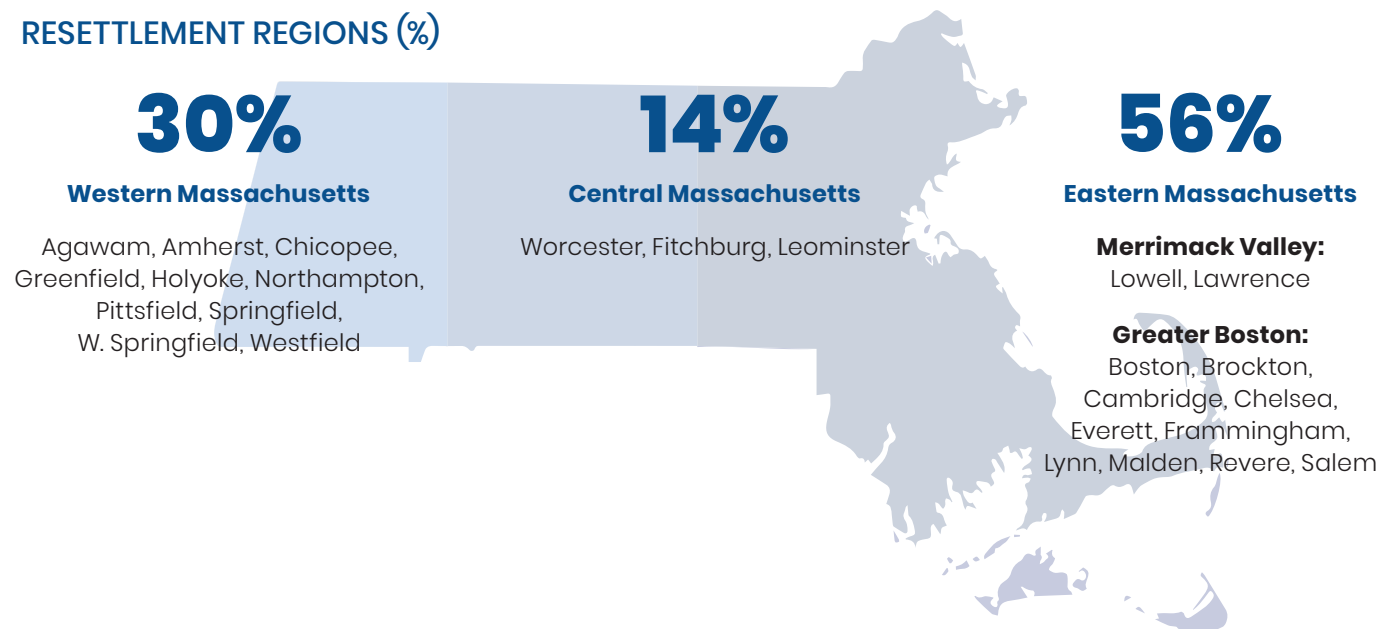


## COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

DR Congo  
Haiti  
Ukraine  
Afghanistan  
El Salvador  
Eritrea  
Other Countries



## RESETTLEMENT REGIONS (%)



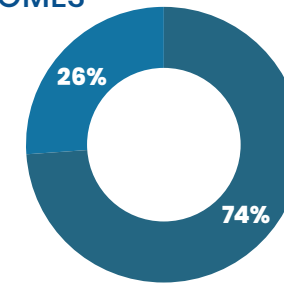
# EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Employment services help all employable individuals obtain their first job, retain employment, and identify career-laddering opportunities. Bilingual and bicultural employment staff provides intensive counseling and mentoring to support economic independence and reduce welfare dependence of refugees and other eligible populations.

Services offered include: Integrated English for Employment, resume creation, interview preparation and coaching, computer literacy, online job applications, and, once employed, first job assistance, post-employment follow-up, retention assistance, suggestions about upgrades, career-laddering, career path opportunities, trainings, and networking.

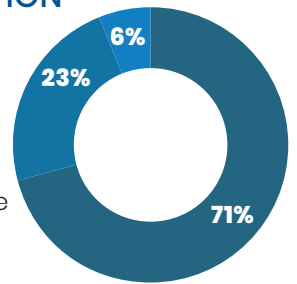
## EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

Obtaining Job Upgrades  
Obtaining 1<sup>st</sup> Employment



## CASH ASSISTANCE TERMINATION & REDUCTION

Cash Assistance Terminations  
Cash Assistance Reductions  
Continued on Cash Assistance (TAFDC)



## ACCESSED VOCATIONAL SKILLS TRAININGS

76 Driver's Educational Training  
61 Customer Service  
54 Health Sciences/Elder Care  
47 Hospitality  
32 Food Service Training  
31 Information Technology  
12 Financial/Banking Industry Training  
11 Cosmetology  
5 Medical Interpretation

ORI's employment partners maintain strong connections with employers to provide cultural competency supports during the hiring and training processes, as well as during the months following employment. Furthermore, ORI, in partnership with employers, conducts Vocational Skills Training (VST). VST is designed to assure that employment services meet local market demands and take advantage of job opportunities.



# EDUCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS

## Financial Literacy for Newcomers

The Financial Literacy for Newcomers Program (FLN) supports refugees, immigrants, and some Puerto Rican evacuees by working in close cooperation with financial institutions, government agencies, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders. The FLN program targets the specific needs of newcomers as they learn how to manage their personal finances. The program explains American credit and banking systems in ways that can be easily grasped. The information presented is culturally and linguistically appropriate, thorough and practical, covering the basics of banking, budgeting, credit scores and credit reports, borrowing basics, and buying a home.

“Excellent program and very special to have an interpreter in the language of Spanish. So this will be very helpful for my family and for the community... Thank you for giving these workshops, because they are very important to put them in practice to keep and create our credit. In my case, I’m a newcomer in this country, and I don’t know things. As a result, I have put in practice what I’ve learned, my credit, organize and prioritize my budget, the importance to save, keep a record, etc. Thanks.”

— Kathia Gomez, FLN Participant

In 2019, the FLN program met its three main objectives: **1)** increasing access for refugees and immigrants to a portfolio of financial products and services, **2)** augmenting the availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate teaching tools and resources, and **3)** strengthening partnerships between the state, financial institutions, and service providers to further support refugee populations. Furthermore, MassHousing recognized ORI for our commitment to homebuyer education at their 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Awards Celebration on November 20<sup>th</sup>.

In 2019, ORI provided financial education training to 206 participants through 36 workshop series conducted in Greater Boston, Merrimack Valley, and Central and Western Massachusetts. This year’s workshop series was delivered in 6 languages: Arabic, Haitian Creole, Kinyarwanda, Russian, Spanish, and Swahili.



Photo: FLN Banking workshop in West Springfield



Top: ORI receiving recognition from MassHousing  
Bottom: FLN graduation ceremony in Lynn



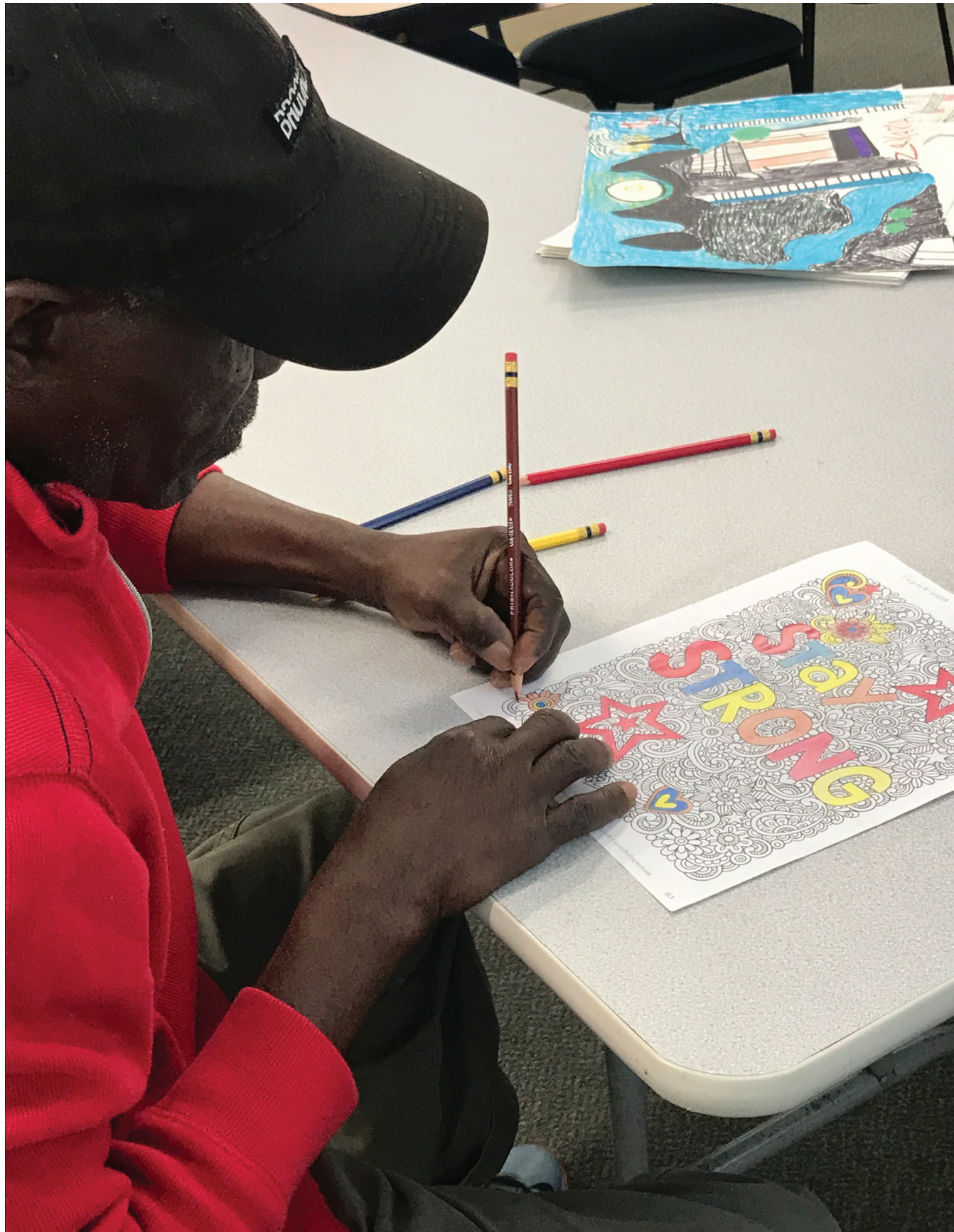


Photo: English Language Training for integration

# EDUCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS (CONT.)

## English Language Training

In order to support English language learning needs of refugee newcomers who struggle to integrate into their new communities, ORI developed a pilot one-year program to provide ELT in three regions of the state (Western MA-Northampton and Amherst, Merrimack Valley-Lowell, and North Shore-Lynn) where sizable numbers of eligible refugees have been resettled within the previous three to four years.

Three distinct models of ELT provision have been developed by each provider to target specific refugee populations, ages, learning styles, and personal interests, all with the goal of integrating English language acquisition with life skills,

greater familiarity with community resources (libraries, civic centers, public transit), as well as touching on civics and financial literacy.

The target populations for ELT services includes stay-at-home caregivers, older refugees that haven't had an opportunity to attend English studies, and employed refugees who haven't attained the level of English proficiency needed to advance in their jobs or careers. These populations have very different needs and skill levels as well as optimal learning styles. By end of FFY2019, 59 eligible clients had enrolled into the three programs.

“ The teachers teach by example, if I don't understand something they explain it. They demonstrate in three ways – words, action, and written word on the board and paperwork. I like the class and I like to help my classmates. The music class is great, music is the International Language, it's easier to learn English and understand it. It's faster to learn with my classmates with words while singing. ”

— Hadghembes Emnetu, Eritrea





Photo: Children at park

# CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES

## Youth Adjustment Services

Youth Adjustment Services (YAS) is dedicated to helping refugee youth find community and autonomy, facilitating integration and developing skills for independent living. Youth Adjustment Services are provided in Boston, on the North Shore, and in Springfield. This program provides young refugees with vocational

and educational exploration and support, referral to short term job training and internship opportunities, life skills coaching, and recreational, cultural enrichment and intergenerational opportunities. In FFY2019, YAS was able to help 98 young newcomers transition to life in Massachusetts.

## Refugee Youth Mentoring

The Refugee Youth Mentoring (RYM), which was recently launched, allows for the development of organizational capacity to recruit, train, and maintain a volunteer corps to provide mentoring for refugee youth. This program targets Lynn, Lowell, Springfield, and East Boston residents. RYM seeks to support youth physical and mental well-being, employability, integration/acclulturation, and financial literacy. Services under this program are designed to contribute to the achievement of vocational, educational,

and social adjustment goals for the youth through strategies like developing an individualized plan for each youth and on-site English Language classes.

In 2019, RYM matched 43 young newcomers with mentors in their communities to help them define and work toward their individual vocational and educational goals. Providers held 50 workshops focused on goal setting strategies, independent living, financial literacy, and leadership skills amongst refugee youth.

“The mentoring program is helping me achieve my goal of being a nurse. I’m getting support from the New American Center and I’m excited to work more with my mentor, Harena. By learning about different colleges and medical jobs from someone who’s already graduated, I’m more prepared for my future.”

— Sarah, New American Association of Massachusetts in Lynn



Photo: Rose and Anyang



# CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES (CONT.)

## Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program

In FFY2019, the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program (URMP) assisted 178 refugee minors with health, housing, education, community engagement, and other forms of support. In partnership with the Department of Children and Families, ORI's URMP helps children and adolescent refugees who are without parents or guardians. These minors require support in adjusting to new caregivers, communities, and schools, and their emotional and behavioral health is often at risk. Children and adolescents are placed in a range of environments, including licensed foster homes, group homes, residential treatment centers, independent living homes, and therapeutic foster care.



**Photo:** Minors attending the annual barbecue at Hopkinton State Park

## Refugee School Impact Program

The Refugee School Impact (RSI) program supports effective local partnerships between refugee providers and local public schools/school districts to address gaps in services for refugee school-age children and provides individualized services for each refugee child entering the public school system.

Service providers work with families to foster understanding of elementary and secondary education in the United States, so that parents can encourage academic achievement and social integration. In FFY2019, the RSI program enabled 596 students and 106 parents to better-connect with their school systems and learn needed skills to increase academic success.



**Photo:** Lara, a client of Jewish Family Service of Western Massachusetts Park

# COMMUNITY AND ELDERS SERVICES

## Refugee Community Services

Refugee Community Services (RCS) introduces refugee populations to the diverse range of social services available in Massachusetts, and helps them understand and access state and local resources.

These services include family supports to promote economic self-sufficiency, help with housing issues, fuel assistance, education and daycare for children, as well as referrals to mental health, medical, and legal services. Providers use culturally appropriate TV, radio, newspapers, and local events to reach out to refugee populations.

In FFY2019, RCS directly supported 690 refugees in accessing and understanding mainstream service systems and local resources.

“ My father always talked about the services he received from the refugees/asylees program at Haitian-American Public Health Initiatives (HAPHI) and we are lucky to receive services from head to toes like my father had. We will never forget how HAPHI welcoming us when we first entered the United States. God Bless America, God Bless HAPHI. ”

— Darlin Borgelin

## Program to Enhance Elder Refugee Services

ORI's Program to Enhance Elder Refugee Services (PEERS) aims to improve elder refugees' access to and utilization of needed services through strengthened coordination between refugees, elder services, Council on Aging, and the provision of naturalization services. Services range from community outreach and education to the development of employment opportunities. These services are delivered to clients living in Western Massachusetts, Central Massachusetts, and the North Shore. In FFY2019, PEERS served and assisted ~ 200 refugee elders with mainstream elder services, and provided activities that enabled them to combat isolation and depression.

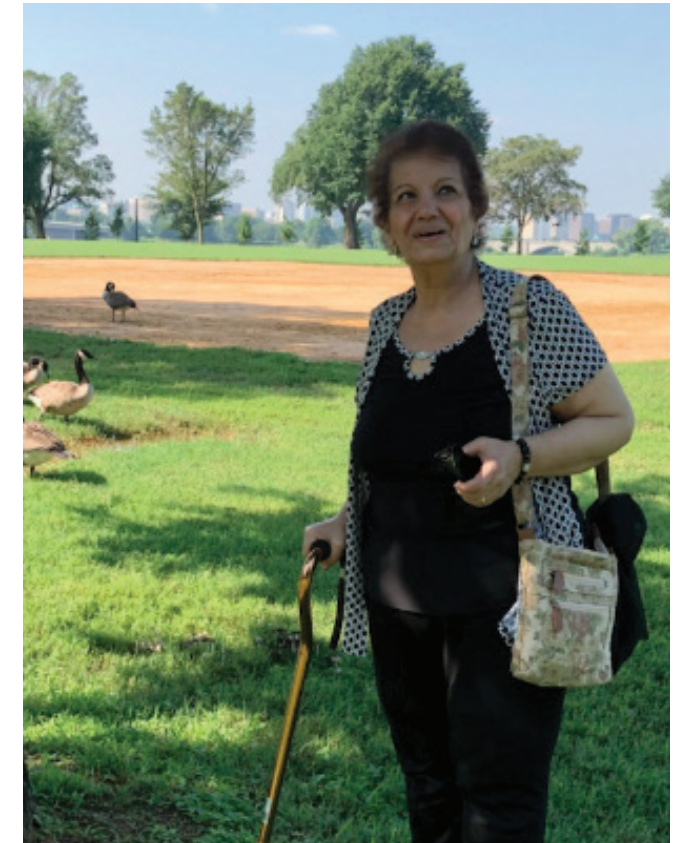


Photo: A PEERS program elder at park

“ The PEERS program at Ascentria is helping me to get connected with the right resources regarding my health issues. After Ascentria helped me to connect to support from home care services (nurses that come every day to my house in order to monitor my high blood pressure), I am now able to enjoy my life without any health concerns and I feel I would live longer. ”

— Shurooq



# HEALTH SERVICES

## Refugee Health Assessment Services

Through partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, ORI makes health assessment services available to all newly-arrived refugees. The Refugee Health Assessment Program (RHAP) facilitates follow-up care for these patients either through primary or specialty care. In 2019, 650 health assessments were conducted with 96% of individuals linked to primary care. Over 80% maintained primary care at the same site where they received health assessment services.



Photo: Healthcare Service

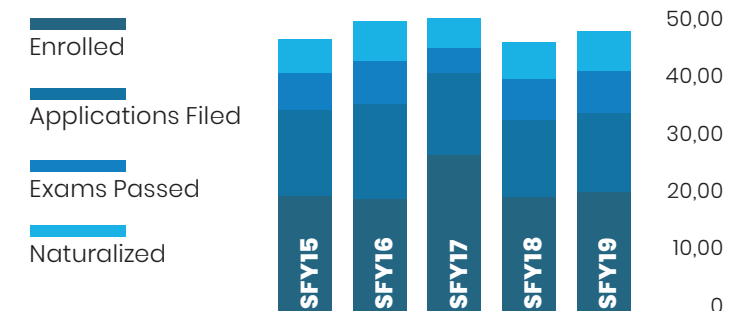
## Refugee Health Promotion

ORI's Refugee Health Promotion (RHP) program provides ongoing individual healthcare access assistance to our newest refugee arrivals and preventive health information to refugee communities. It also works to increase cultural competence within mainstream agencies. In 2019, ORI's health promotion program assisted 605 individuals in addressing emergent needs and accessing health services in their communities. In addition, 69 health classes were held on a variety of issues to build health literacy of newcomers. A total of 339 non-ORI service providers received orientation about culture and customs of refugee populations, in order to better understand how they may present as patients and how they may regard healers and health professionals.



Photo: CNAP Celebration

## CITIZENSHIP SERVICES



# CITIZENSHIP SERVICES

ORI's Citizenship for New Americans Program (CNAP) enables low-income, lawful permanent residents in Massachusetts to become naturalized citizens of the United States. Services provided under CNAP include: ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)/ civics classes, citizenship application assistance, interview preparation and supportive services including interpretation and referral services. This year, 1,880 individuals enrolled in CNAP and a total of 625 applicants were successfully naturalized.

“Thanks to the Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD), I was able to apply for citizenship which I found easy and fast. The staff was professional and they know what they are doing. Because of the program I am able to petition for my mother and bring her from the Dominican Republic. I will recommend ABCD to my family and friends. Thank you ABCD and the Immigration Program for helping me during the process of becoming a US citizen.”

— Joelina Gonzalez



# TOWN HALL MEETINGS

ORI's fourth annual statewide refugee town hall meetings in 2019 brought together 206 refugees and immigrants in 5 cities including Boston, Lowell, Lynn, West Springfield, and Worcester. Participants hailed from a range of countries of origin, including Afghanistan, Algeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Colombia, Ghana, Haiti, Iraq, Rwanda, Syria, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. Live interpretation was provided during all those meetings.

All participants expressed eagerness to integrate into their new communities and spoke of the obstacles they were facing. These discussions were honest, frank and interactive. Based on these exchanges, ORI is exploring new ways to better support and improve our services.

“ I have been here 4 months. In my country I learn French. When I came here hardest thing was English. I like it for now. I am not like before. I was very bad at English. This place has helped me find a job, open a bank account, many things. And I want to go to college. ”

— A meeting participant in Lowell



Photo: Refugee Town hall Meeting in Boston

Topics discussed included housing, education, employment, healthcare, transportation, civil rights, public safety, naturalization, and family reunification. This year's town hall meetings featured representatives from the Massachusetts Department of Mental (DMH). A representative from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) continued to address and answer many questions about services within the Department of Homeland Security including USCIS. ORI concluded Town Hall meetings by distributing donated items to participants. ORI thanked its community partners: Ascentria Care Alliance, International Institute of New England, and the New American Association of Massachusetts, for co-hosting these meetings.



# SUCCESS STORIES

## Maricella Obando-Moya

Moya was born and raised in Cost Rica and survived very difficult life situations to find freedom in the United States. Despite her limited English skills, she was very determined to become a U.S. citizen. She found assistance at the New American Center, which helped her learn English and be able to speak fluently. Moya is grateful to her service provider, as the Center also helped her find her first job as a Personal Care Assistant. She is passionate in her work with elders and finds these interactions very rewarding. She has learned a lot from their stories, and enjoys sharing her paintings with her clients. Moya is very proud of what she has accomplished. Currently, she works as a Dietary Supervisor at Baystate Franklin Medical center. She obtained her driver's license and became a proud U.S. citizen last summer.



Photo: Moya's naturalization certificate

## Samuel Candido

Samuel Candido arrived in the US as an infant with severe physical and mental challenges. In February 2019, when Samuel was 19, his parents reached out to immigrant case worker Maria Matos at the Massachusetts Association for Portuguese Speakers (MAPS) to help him become a U.S. citizen. With Maria's assistance, Samuel acquired a fee waiver and a Medical Certification for Disability Exceptions. Ms. Matos completed and submitted the citizenship application for Samuel. When Samuel encountered difficulties

with completing the required biometrics at USCIS, Maria contacted the local Police who were happy to assist Samuel in obtaining the fingerprints he needed.

In July, Samuel went for his citizenship interview, accompanied by his parents and Ms. Matos. After a rigorous but friendly process, the immigration officer approved Samuel's application and offered to perform the oath ceremony that same day. Samuel was presented with his certificate and the American flag; he had become a US citizen.



Left: Samuel celebrating with his parents

Right: Leyla and spouse receiving recognition from DTA at the State House



## Leyla and Her Husband

Leyla and her husband arrived in the US with their two young children as refugees from Ethiopia in February 2019. Having no income or stable housing, they enrolled in TAFDC and ESSP to cover basic needs while improving Vocational English and job readiness skills.

ESSP staff arranged for support services like daycare, afterschool programs, and transportation to allow both parents to attend classes and employment readiness programs. Dedicated students, they quickly improved their English language and verbal skills enough to start practice interviewing, learning about the job market, and developing strategies to find and keep a job.

Through ESSP, Leyla and her husband were connected to employer partner Bonapita. Bonapita offered alternative work schedules to allow the couple to balance their family needs. With consistent hours and the opportunity to work catered events for additional income, the family is making good progress toward achieving stable housing and financial independence.

Leyla was honored at DTA's Annual Client Recognition event at the State House on June 26, 2019.



# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

To ensure a successful integration for refugees and immigrants into their new communities, ORI continued its tireless efforts to strengthen existing partnership and create new ones. Below are pictures for some of partners ORI met with during this year.



**Top Right:** Catholic Social Services Diocese of Fall River  
**Middle Left:** Representative of the Office of Consumer Affairs  
**Middle Right:** Dignitaries from Latin American Countries  
**Bottom Left:** Representative of the Office of Labor  
**Bottom Right:** DMH Commissioner Mikula (left) and Staff

**Top Right:** Boston Center for Refugee Health & Human Rights  
**Middle Left:** Lawrence Family Development  
**Middle Right:** Vice Consul of Ireland  
**Bottom Left:** Senator Crighton and Staff  
**Bottom Right:** State Representative Miranda





## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (CONT.)



**Top:** Senator Keenan (left) and Staff  
**Bottom:** The Comptroller Team

**Top Left:** State Representative Joseph McGonale  
**Bottom:** Senator DiDimenico (3<sup>rd</sup> from left) and Staff

**Top Right:** State Representative Christine P. Barber



# FINANCIALS

ORI is 91% federally-funded through the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). In addition, it is 8% state-funded to support citizenship and employment services for refugees and immigrants living in the Commonwealth. ORI also received 1% of its total funds from private funding to support its Financial Literacy for Newcomers Program.

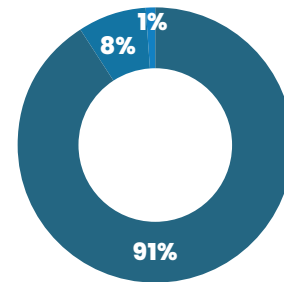
In FFY2019, the ORI overall budget was \$17.9M, with \$16.3M funded through federal grants, \$1.5M from state dollars, and \$100,000 through private donors.

ORI continues to develop public-private partnerships to sustain and enhance its mission, strengthen collaborations with key stakeholders, and further empower refugees and immigrants as they successfully integrate into their new communities.

ORI is grateful to all partners and key stakeholders who support its programs. ORI sincerely welcomes all who would like to help by contributing monetary and/or in-kind support to make 2020 an even more successful year for both newcomers and the Commonwealth. **If interested, please call us at (617) 727 - 7888 or send an email to [Mary.truong@state.ma.us](mailto:Mary.truong@state.ma.us).**

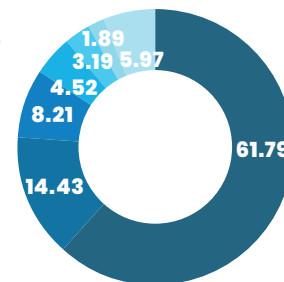
## FUNDING PERCENTAGE

Federal  
State  
Private



## FUNDING TO REFUGEE SERVICES BY CATEGORY (%)

Unaccompanied Minors  
Employment Related Services  
Health Assessment  
Cash Assistance  
Case Management  
Social Adjustment Services  
Other



# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

ORI would like to thank the following partners in support of our work:

**Governor Charles Baker**

**Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**

**Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) Secretary Marylou Sudders**

**Governor's Advisory Council on Refugees and Immigrants**

- Office of Refugee Resettlement
- MA Department of Children and Families
- MA Department of Public Health
- MA Department of Transitional Assistance
- MassHealth
- Interns, volunteers, supporters and service providers
- United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
- Generation Fund
- CONVERSE



Photo: ORI Staff and Members





## The Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants

### Contact Us

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