

# [***Refugees Get Fast Track for Work Permits***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BJ7-W6B1-JBR6-9433-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** New USCIS rule cuts the refugee work permit waiting period to 30 days, enhancing U.S. integration efforts.

**Body**

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) on Tuesday announced a new measure that drastically reduces the waiting period for refugees to receive work authorization in the United States, cutting the timeline to just 30 days after arrival.

The updated protocol, part of a USCIS initiative to improve efficiency through digitization, simplifies what was once a protracted paper-based application into an automated system that no longer requires refugees to apply for Employment Authorization Documents (EADs). The change is expected to expedite refugees' [*transition into the workforce*](https://www.newsweek.com/job-market-warning-signs-february-report-wells-fargo-fed-rate-cuts-1878399?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) and marks an enhancement to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

Under the revamped system, upon a refugee's entry to the U.S., the USCIS will digitally generate the Application for Employment Authorization, known as Form I-765, on their behalf. The approach addresses an administrative barrier as it bypasses the need for refugees to navigate the application process themselves.

Once the USCIS approves the Form I-765, the refugee can anticipate receiving their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) within one to two weeks. The USCIS said it will coordinate with the Social Security Administration to issue a Social Security number and card to refugees.

The procedure, initiated for refugees admitted on or after December 10 of last year, promises a [*swifter entry into the labor market*](https://www.newsweek.com/us-productivity-surges-record-high-1878679?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

It's important to note that the U.S. refugee program operates distinctly from the asylum process, [*which has been a path sought by many migrants*](https://www.newsweek.com/how-many-migrants-are-crossing-border-1867407#:~:text=Northern%20border%20crossings,2021%20to%20182%2C402%20in%202023.?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) at the U.S. border over the past year. While both programs offer protection to people fleeing persecution, the asylum system applies to those who are already in the U.S. or are seeking entry at a port of entry, as opposed to refugees who are processed outside the country and then admitted, according to the Council on Foreign Relations.

The refugee program, managed by the U.S. State Department, involves a vetting process including interviews, security checks and medical examinations before people are cleared to enter the U.S.

In 2023, the U.S. admitted 60,014 refugees.

**How Does the System Work?**

A refugee, as outlined by U.S. law and the 1951 Refugee Convention, is someone who has been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war or violence, with a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) was officially adopted in 1980, creating a standardized process for the identification, vetting and resettlement of refugees.

The number of refugees admitted to the U.S. has varied across different presidential terms due to shifts in global ***politics***, humanitarian crises and changes in U.S. policy, according to the Council on Foreign Relations.

During [*George W. Bush*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/george-w.-bush?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s presidency, the refugee ceiling was largely maintained between 70,000 to 80,000, reflecting the post-9/11 security climate. [*Barack Obama*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/barack-obama?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) sought to increase the ceiling, especially in response to the Syrian crisis, proposing a cap of 110,000 for fiscal year 2017.

However, [*Donald Trump*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/donald-trump?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) reduced the number of refugees admitted, citing national security concerns, and set the ceiling at a historic low of 15,000 for fiscal year 2021.

In contrast, [*Joe Biden*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/joe-biden?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) has aimed to restore the U.S. commitment to refugee resettlement, setting the ceiling at 125,000 for fiscal years 2022 and 2023, though actual admissions have struggled to meet the targets due to processing backlogs and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The initiative is part of a broader effort by the U.S. government to support individuals fleeing persecution and to strengthen the nation's humanitarian response to global crises. The USCIS said the new streamlined process is a leap toward enhancing the integration of refugees into American society.

*Newsweek* has reached out to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services by email for comment on Wednesday afternoon.

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2361877/refugee.jpg)

**Graphic**

Refugee

ANGELA WEISS/AFP via Getty Images

Ukrainian refugees wait in line to attend a job fair in the Brooklyn borough of New York. The procedure, initiated for refugees admitted on or after December 10 of last year, promises a swifter entry into the labor market.

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