



REFUGEE SCHOOL IMPACT PROGRAM

SUPPORTING REFUGEE STUDENTS & FAMILIES IN WASHINGTON STATE

The Refugee School Impact (RSI) Program provides supports to refugee students and families to help with their transition and integration into a new school system.

Students often lack sufficient English language skills and/or the formal education needed to succeed in school. In addition, many refugee parents lack knowledge or tools necessary for navigating school systems and supporting their children’s learning.

For the success of refugee students, it is important to help students and parents acquire these essential skills while also building the skills of educators and providers to serve this population. This requires collaborative partnerships between school districts and community partners.

...WHAT IS THE REFUGEE SCHOOL IMPACT PROGRAM.....

Washington State’s Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance receives Refugee School Impact set-aside funds from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement. School’s Out Washington (SOWA) uses these resources to support local school systems impacted by significant numbers of refugee children and youth, ages 5-18, in the country less than three years.

In Washington State, the Refugee School Impact Program is focused on these goals:

TO ENSURE refugee students’ high academic performance and successful school integration including mastery of English and critical skills for success in college and career.

TO STRENGTHEN the skills, knowledge, and competence of parents, schools, and community-based organizations for the benefit of refugee students.

STUDENT PROFILE: SETTING REFUGEE STUDENTS ON A PATHWAY TO COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS

A recently arrived 17-year old Congolese student worked with staff at the International Rescue Committee to connect with a tutor and an English Language Learner program at Highline College. The tutor worked with him on homework, reading, and conversational English. He also attended job readiness classes for resume-writing and job interview skills. This resulted in a summer job that helped him support his family. His hard work led his teachers to recommend him for a free college-level English class at Highline College next year while he completes his high school diploma.

2017-18 FUNDED RSI SCHOOL DISTRICTS:

- Auburn
- Federal Way
- Highline
- Kennewick
- Kent
- Renton
- Seattle
- Spokane
- Tacoma
- Tukwila

THE REFUGEE SCHOOL IMPACT PROGRAM IN THE UNITED STATES

Today, the number of forcibly displaced persons around the world exceeds 65 million, the largest number in recorded history. Among them are over 25 million refugees, the majority of which are children. The United States has long been a leader in protecting and defending liberty and justice through its support of refugees and other vulnerable populations who are victims of persecution and violence. Robust funding is critical for these programs, and refugee children and youth are particularly vulnerable. The Refugee School Impact Program is a critical service that allows children to thrive in their new communities.



Funding for the Refugee School Impact Program is made available through the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Refugee Resettlement, housed at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

HOW SCHOOL'S OUT WASHINGTON SUPPORTS THE REFUGEE SCHOOL IMPACT PROGRAM

For three decades, SOWA has served a critical role as the expert and backbone organization working closely with programs offered outside the traditional school day. We work to ensure high-quality expanded learning programs offered afterschool and during the summer are available so all of Washington's youth—but especially low-income youth and youth of color—have opportunities to thrive.

SOWA has been the grant administrator for the Refugee School Impact Program since 2007. As a non-profit intermediary organization, SOWA not only manages and monitors the grants to school districts, but also provides grantees with opportunities for training, technical assistance, and connecting to the expanded learning field across the state.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR REFUGEE STUDENTS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES

Through RSI, partnerships between schools and community organizations have contributed to academic and social integration gains for refugee students in Washington State. Longitudinal data shows that 67% of students served over two years made one or two level gains on the English proficiency assessment.

In addition to academic support, schools and community based organizations are able to offer customized services for refugee students outside the traditional school day. Schools and afterschool providers support parental involvement in school systems and help in creating welcoming opportunities for refugee families. Training opportunities and resources increase the knowledge and skills of staff who work with refugee students and families.

In order to measure social integration, SOWA piloted a refugee student survey. Responses indicate that students felt positive about their teachers, were connecting to schools, and had good self-esteem, proving that RSI is meeting outcomes and making a difference in the lives of young refugee students.

For more information, contact Pang Chang, Refugee School Impact Program Director at PChang@schoolsoutwashington.org or David Beard, Policy & Advocacy Director at DBeard@schoolsoutwashington.org