



FAQ: Refugee Adjustment of Status After One Year in the U.S.

This guidance is effective October 2025

What is Adjustment of Status?

Adjustment of status is the process that allows refugees to become lawful permanent residents (LPRs) in the United States, also known as getting a **green card**. Refugees must file an application to adjust their status with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) one year after they arrive in the U.S. This application determines if they are eligible for a green card, and it is free of charge for refugees. Each person in the family must submit their own form -including children. **The IRC advises all refugees to speak with an immigration legal service provider to confirm that they are eligible before applying to adjust status.** You can find more information about refugee adjustment of status [here](https://www.uscis.gov/green-card/green-card-eligibility/green-card-for-refugees): <https://www.uscis.gov/green-card/green-card-eligibility/green-card-for-refugees>.

I am a refugee who arrived more than a year ago and I have not yet applied for adjustment of status – what should I do?

Don't panic! If you are a refugee who has been in the U.S. for a year or more and have not applied for adjustment of status, you are strongly urged to seek advice from an immigration legal service provider. Recent changes in policy may affect your eligibility, and it's important to understand your options before submitting any application to USCIS. You can find a list of low-cost legal service providers [here](https://www.immigrationadvocates.org/legaldirectory/): <https://www.immigrationadvocates.org/legaldirectory/>, or search for a qualified immigration lawyer [here](https://ailalawyer.com/): <https://ailalawyer.com/>. Be sure to seek assistance only from a trusted provider, such as a licensed attorney or US Department of Justice accredited legal representative.

Can a refugee be deported or detained if they do not apply for adjustment of status after one year?

The law requires refugees to apply for adjustment of status after one year in the U.S. However, refugees cannot lose their status or be deported just because they did not do so. Historically, the U.S. government would only detain or deport refugees who had not applied for adjustment of status after one year if there was a specific reason to believe they should be deported from the U.S.

What can cause a refugee to be detained or deported?

Actions that may trigger detention or deportation include criminal convictions, lying to the U.S. government on their application for refugee status, a history of engaging in terrorist activities or supporting terrorist organizations, and participating in the persecution of others, among other things. The Department of State has recently designated new foreign terrorist organizations. You can view the updated list by clicking [here](https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations): <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations>. If you have had contact with any of these organizations, or if you have concerns about whether any of these situations applies to you, be sure to speak with an immigration legal service provider.

Will refugees be allowed to continue working if they do not adjust status?

Refugee status does not expire whether or not someone applies for adjustment of status after one year. Refugees also remain work authorized indefinitely and may renew their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) if needed.

Will refugees be eligible for benefits if they do not adjust status?

Under a law enacted in July 2025, according to the U.S. government, refugees are no longer eligible for certain federal benefits, including SNAP (food stamps), until they have been in the US for 5 years and adjusted to LPR status. Also, starting in October 2026, refugees will not be eligible for Medicaid and will not be able to enroll in subsidized health insurance or receive tax credits through the Affordable Care Act until they have 5 years in the U.S. and LPR status. **Note: benefits eligibility may vary from one US state to another so check with your resettlement agency or state benefits-granting agency for more information.**