

# RENTING TO REFUGEES

*Information for Property Owners & Management Companies*

Updated February 2009



## Who are Refugees?

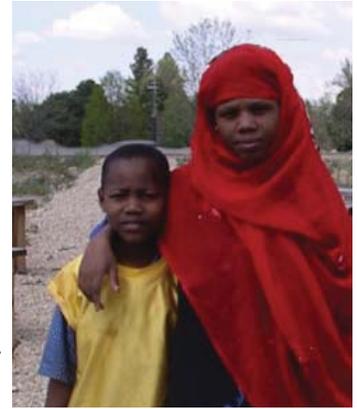
Refugees have fled religious, political or ethnic persecution and have been granted legal resident status as refugees by the US government. Each year the US Department of State assists thousands of refugees to resettle in the US. Refugees have experienced tremendous hardship, but they are resilient, motivated, and resourceful and eager to start a new life in a new land. They also have financial support and the help of case managers, interpreters, other refugees and volunteers as they adjust to life in America.

## Refugee Resettlement Agencies

Each refugee who arrives in the US is eligible for assistance through a resettlement agency. The agencies assist with housing, English language learning, employment and temporary financial assistance.

## Screening Criteria

Newly arriving refugees can sometimes face barriers to renting apartments when property management screenings rely on documentation that refugees do not typically have to assess their eligibility. Although refugees do not have "usual documentation", such as social security cards or credit history, rental history, or job history in the US, they can provide evidence of legal status, reliable income, and agency support to help resolve any tenant-landlord issues that might arise. The chart lists typical screening criteria used by property management agencies and provides information about equivalent documentation that can be used to verify eligibility of refugees for housing.



Screening Criteria	Usual Documentation	Equivalent Refugee Documentation
<b>Criminal History</b>	<b>Criminal Background Check</b>	Refugees have been screened, photographed and fingerprinted by the Department of Homeland Security prior to being admitted as a refugee. I-94 card showing that an individual was admitted as a refugee and/or Employment Authorization Document (EAD) tells you that the holder has passed extensive background checks by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and US Department of Homeland Security, are in the country legally, and are legally authorized to work, receive public benefits, and obtain a social security card
<b>Ability to Pay Rent</b>	<b>Income Verification Credit Check</b>	Refugees arrive with no credit history in this country and without employment; however, all refugees are eligible for cash assistance when they arrive in the US. Cash assistance programs are designed to pay for housing costs for at least four months, and in some cases, up to eight months or until the family's earned income exceeds the income limit for continued assistance. The case management agency can provide you with a written estimate of assistance for each family. If the refugee chooses, assistance checks can be made out directly to the landlord. Most refugees become employed within 4 months of US arrival.
<b>Rental History</b>	<b>Landlord Reference</b>	Although many refugees have been home owners or tenants for many years in another country, they will not have a rental history in the US. They do however have case managers, interpreters, volunteers and orientations to life in the US. Case management agencies can provide you with an agency contact who can assist with emergencies and help resolve tenant-landlord issues.

### Did You Know?

Resettlement Agencies in Boise assist more than 300 families each year to find housing?



### More facts about Boise's Refugees....

- More than \$700,000 in Cash Assistance payments were made to Boise landlords on behalf of refugees in 2008
- Most refugee families make Boise their home and remain as good long-term tenants in their original apartments long after cash assistance payments end.
- Historically, the vast majority of refugees become employed within 4 months of arrival in the US.

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### Additional Resources:

Translated Booklets on Safety and Being a good Tenant: <http://www.refugeehouse.org/publications>

Refugee Housing Program: [www.refugeehouse.org](http://www.refugeehouse.org)

Database of Boise Interpreters: [www.boiseinterpreters.com](http://www.boiseinterpreters.com)

City of Boise Fair Housing Information: <http://www.cityofboise.org/Departments/PDS-HCD/FairHousing/page11361.aspx>

Boise City/Ada County Housing Authority: [www.bcacha.org](http://www.bcacha.org)

### Refugee Agency Contact Information

Agency for New Americans .....208.338.0033



World Relief.....208.323.4964



International Rescue Committee.....208.344.1792



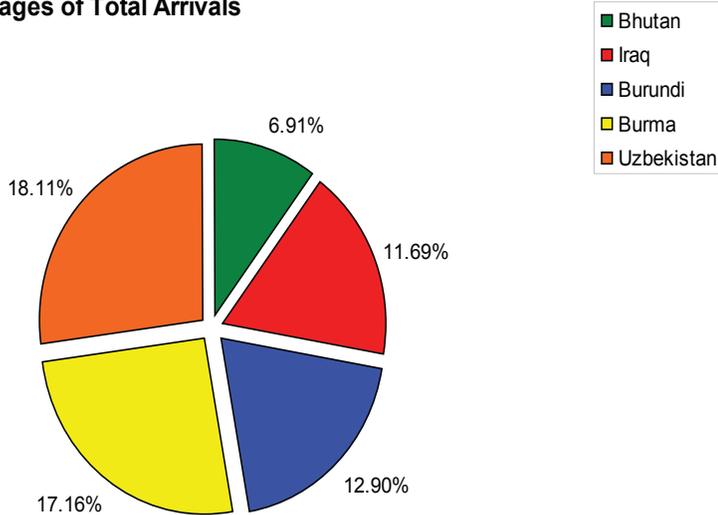
Idaho Office for Refugees.....208.336.4222



English Language Center .....208.336.5533

### FY 2006-2008 Refugee Arrivals by Country of Origin

#### Top Percentages of Total Arrivals



#### Notes:

2, 302 Total Arrivals from October 1, 2005-September 17, 2008.

These numbers are the percentages of the number of total arrivals. Refugees came to Boise from nearly 30 different countries during this time frame. Among this same group of refugees, over 40 languages are spoken.