



Regardless of the resettlement agency (RA) you partner with as a community sponsor or volunteer, you will likely be required to submit a background check.

This is a standard best practice across the refugee resettlement field in the United States. All volunteers working directly with refugee clients and/or who have access to confidential information about clients will be required to complete and submit a background check.

Why are background checks required?

RAs and local affiliate offices require background checks for staff members and volunteers as one method of safeguarding the clients they serve. Refugees are a particularly vulnerable population who have often experienced significant trauma including violence, sexual assault, imprisonment, and loss of home.

What kind of background check is needed?

The RA or affiliate office may require different types of clearance depending on the involvement the volunteer has with the client. Examples include:

Direct Service Clearance

Required for: Any volunteer assisting the family with direct services including core services, interpretation, tutoring, mentorship, etc.

Required background checks:

- State Criminal
- Federal FBI (if you have lived out of state within the last 10 years)

Transportation Clearance

Required for: Any volunteer who is tasked with transporting a client by driving a vehicle.

Required background checks include all checks required for Direct Service Clearance, in addition to:

- Motor Vehicle Record (MVR)



Client Funds Clearance

Required for: Any volunteer who will be tasked with the handling, holding, and distribution of client per capita funds.

Required background checks include all checks required for Direct Service Clearance, in addition to:

- Credit check

The RA or affiliate will set its own standard for what types of items on a background check may disqualify someone from being able to serve as staff or a volunteer. Additionally, the RA or affiliate may have specific rules regarding limiting volunteers from working with particularly vulnerable populations.

Examples: The RA or affiliate may not permit volunteers to have one-on-one contact with a minor. Or, they may not permit male volunteers from having one-on-one contact with female survivors of sexual violence.

How are background checks obtained?

In many cases, the RA or affiliate will provide options and instructions for how to obtain a background check. Those background checks are often sent directly to the RA or affiliate. However, some RAs or affiliates may provide guidance for accepting current background checks provided by the volunteer. Please note it is usually the responsibility of the potential volunteer to cover associated costs, which can range from \$30 to \$80 or more. Cost often depends on the type of clearance and associated costs in the volunteer's state.