Each year people come to the United States seeking protection because they have suffered persecution or have a well-founded fear that they will suffer persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Under the law, they may seek refugee or asylum status.



Pathway 1 – Refugee Resettlement Process

Applies for refugee status outside the United States.

Pathway 2 - Affirmative Asylum Process

Enters U.S. on valid visa (ex, student, tourist, work visa) and requests asylum within one year of arrival.

Pathway 3 - Affirmative Asylum Process

Arrives at point of entry (border checkpoint, port, airport) and requests asylum **OR** enters country without inspection (not at official border checkpoint, port or airport), surrenders to Border Patrol or other official, and requests asylum.

Pathway 4 - Defensive Asylum Process

Located within U.S. without legal status – ex. overstayed visa, entered without inspection, or apprehended while attempting to enter the U.S. without proper documentation. Individual now faces deportation and files asylum claim.

Primary Pathways for Individuals Fleeing Persecution to Enter the United States

