



# Refugee Processing National Stakeholder Engagement Questions & Answers Sept. 12, 2024

**Q) Are there any updates on Form I-730 processing times for follow-to-join refugee beneficiaries?**

A: We are pleased to share that since we centralized domestic processing responsibilities for Form I-730 following-to-join refugee (FTJ-R) petitions in the International and Refugee Affairs Division (IRAD) in May, we have staffed and trained a new unit with this workload as their primary responsibility. Since transferring this workload to International Operations, that unit's rate of completions has increased month over month and continues to improve as the staff refine their expertise. Overall USCIS FTJ-R domestic processing completions in the 12 weeks after we transferred the workload are more than one and a half times higher than completions in the 12 weeks before we transferred the workload. We are committed to family reunification and continue to enhance programs to be more efficient and reduce backlogs and processing times.

**Q) What plans are in place to address long-delayed cases from areas with smaller caseloads, or where it is more dangerous to conduct processing/circuit rides?**

A: USCIS works directly with the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) not only to allocate circuit rides to locations where there are large numbers of refugee applicants, but also to deploy smaller teams of officers to PRM-identified locations with significantly smaller refugee populations. We are also expanding our remote interview capability to use when we cannot deploy staff to a location.

**Q) How does CAM processing vary by CAM country, e.g., how is CAM processing different in Guatemala where there is a continuous circuit ride associated with the Safe Mobility Initiative?**

A: Central American Minors (CAM) Program processing remains consistent among the various CAM processing countries. CAM processing has also not changed with the introduction of the Safe Mobility Office Initiative in Guatemala.



**Q) What is the refugee approval rate in CAM cases by CAM country for Phase 2 cases only?**

A: As of Aug. 29, 2024, Phase 2 CAM refugee approval rates this fiscal year are approximately 40%. Phase 2 CAM cases with refugee denials but parole approvals are approximately 56%. About 3% are denied for both, and approximately 1% have been closed. The refugee approval rates for Phase 2 cases by country are 40% in El Salvador, 44% in Guatemala, and 33% in Honduras.

**Q) Does USCIS still track PTA cases distinct from SMO cases?**

A: Yes, USCIS tracks Protection Transfer Arrangement (PTA) cases distinct from Safe Mobility Office (SMO) cases. In fiscal year 2024 to date, we have conducted over 8,800 PTA interviews. Of the approximately 8,700 PTA decisions issued in FY 2024, 89% have been approvals for refugee status, 4% were denials for refugee status but referred for parole, and 1% were denials for both refugee status and parole.

**Q) How many Afghan USRAP cases remain in the pipeline in Pakistan? How many refugee interviews have been conducted in Pakistan since the start of FY 2024?**

A: As of Aug. 30, 2024, approximately 11,600 Afghan refugee applicants have been interviewed in Pakistan in FY 2024. There are approximately 5,900 cases in the pipeline in Pakistan: approximately 2,400 are pre-USCIS interview, and approximately 3,500 are post-USCIS interview.

**Q) How many CAM Phase 1 cases are still pending?**

- **What is the breakdown of their posture (e.g., awaiting re-interview, awaiting USCIS decision, admin hold, awaiting medical, awaiting travel, add-on family member delays, other)?**

A: As of Aug. 27, 2024, there are 270 CAM Phase 1 cases in various stages of processing. Of those:

- 174 are pending medical processing
- 11 are pending administrative processing
- 47 are pending travel payment
- 11 are pending travel clearance
- 16 are pending travel scheduling
- 5 are pending I-512L issuance
- 6 have travel scheduled



**Q) To the extent SMOs bring online other lawful pathways aside from USRAP and HP as pathways actually accessed through the SMO rather than pathways on which the SMO provides information, how does USCIS envision the SMO being useful to those other pathways? In other words, which pathways, even theoretically, would make sense to have USCIS adjudicate or advance processing on from the location of the SMO (where, for many pathways, the relevant actor, e.g., sponsor or petitioners, is not located)?**

A: Currently, the only lawful pathways to the United States processed directly through the SMOs are protection pathways, mainly refugee resettlement. SMO applicants who are not eligible for protection, but are potentially eligible for other lawful pathways, receive counseling and information on local integration opportunities, as well as the application processes for any relevant lawful pathways. At this time, there is no plan to process other pathways to the United States through the SMOs.

**Q) What is the total number of Afghan refugees in various stages of the pipeline from referral to resettlement?**

A: Of the approximately 64,300 Afghan refugee applicants currently in the resettlement pipeline, roughly 45,900 applicants are pre-USCIS interview and roughly 18,400 applicants are post-USCIS interview.

**Q) I work at a Resettlement Agency and many clients have received Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) with errors, and many others must wait longer than usual to receive their EAD. USCIS is supposed to be processing refugee EADs faster. I believe they put out an announcement saying it would be 30 days or so. That is not the case for many of our clients. Many wait 4-6 months before they receive it. Some have even started receiving duplicate EADs. What is USCIS doing to resolve wait times and errors on EADs?**

A: The Form I-765 (a)(3) auto-generation process launched in December 2023. In the months since the launch, we have identified and corrected system-to-system processing issues for February 2024 arrivals. These issues have since been resolved, and we are monitoring the workflow and coordinating with our interagency partners to ensure all February arrivals have EADs.

Separate from the auto-generation workflow, we rely on photos captured overseas to produce EADs. When these photos do not meet the quality standards to produce a government-issued photo identification, an officer must send a request for evidence for a new photo to produce the card. While this is not a large number of cases, this will result in delays in getting EADs to refugees. Similarly, we use the resettlement address provided to our systems. We are working with our interagency colleagues to ensure addresses being provided to our systems are accurate.



Lastly, by way of clarification, admitted refugees with approved Form I-730 applications or applicants who file via the USCIS lockbox are processed through regular case processing channels and not the auto-generation workflow.

**Q) Which regions or locations are VTEL interviews used the most? What are the barriers to increasing use of VTEL? What plans are in place to utilize VTEL in areas where there are no circuit rides planned but many refugees in the pipeline?**

A: As of Aug. 26, 2024, USCIS has conducted over 3,000 interviews by video teleconference (VTEL) in FY 2024. Over two-thirds of these were conducted in Africa and the Middle East. We continue to streamline the required biometrics collection and identify verification processes while maintaining program integrity. In 2021, the secretary of homeland security approved a delegation of authority allowing Department of State officials stationed overseas to assist USCIS with biometrics collection and in-person identity verification for refugee applicants when USCIS requests assistance. This increases access to locations where we do not plan to send circuit rides. In 2024, embassies have been able to transmit biometrics electronically by scanning and sending fingerprint cards to our service centers here in the United States for ingestion into systems. We are working to further improve this process, including more avenues for the Department of State to collect biometrics in the field efficiently so that VTEL interviews can continue to increase in areas where circuit rides are not feasible or impractical.

**Q) What steps are being taken to ensure that refugees eligible for the P-2 Direct Access Program for Iraqi and Syrian Beneficiaries of Approved I-130s can access the program by receiving I-130 adjudications before they would have a visa available?**

A: USCIS continues to prioritize adjudication of Form I-130, Petition for Alien Relative, when the Department of State Visa Bulletin shows an immigrant visa is available or will soon become available. We also continue to prioritize cases due to country conditions when an executive directive identifies an urgent humanitarian situation or U.S. national interest. In addition, petitioners may request expedited processing of their Form I-130 in certain situations by adhering to the expedite request process on the USCIS website. We continue to consider all expedite requests on a case-by-case basis and understand the humanitarian concerns for nationals in the region. We consider each request carefully based on the urgency and merit of each expedite request.

**Q) How can individuals in the pipeline have a ‘dashboard’ they can access about their status?**

A: USCIS and our processing partners want to make it easier for applicants to view their application status. We are working through the best process and platform to provide accurate and timely information in an accessible way. We hope to provide more updates on this effort in coming engagements.



**U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services**

*Public Engagement Division*

**Q) What is the administration’s target for USRAP resettlement from Afghanistan in FY 2025?**

A: The administration’s commitment to resettling Afghans remains strong. Pending an FY 2025 presidential determination that will support other action, we plan to continue our efforts to manifest, interview, and resettle Afghans at the most rapid rate possible in FY 2025.

**Q) How many circuit rides and interviews took place in FY 2024 broken down by quarter and region?**

A: This information is posted annually on the USCIS website: [Refugee Processing Circuit Rides | USCIS](#) after the conclusion of the fiscal year. Please check this website for FY 2024 information after the start of FY 2025.