

SITUATION:

For over 40 years, the Triangle has welcomed refugees from around the world who have fled persecution: Congolese, Syrians, Afghans, and Ukrainians. Church World Service (CWS) Durham is proud to stand in that long tradition and provides services to **more than 1,500 refugees and immigrants** per year in the Triangle through our resettlement, housing, wellness, employment, legal services, advocacy, and community building programming.

Today, this work is at risk of being shut down due to a halt in federal funding.

The Executive Orders that President Trump issued on January 20, followed by Notice of Suspension and Stop Work Orders issued on January 24, resulted in the immediate and indefinite suspension of several large CWS programs and almost entirely shut off our access to federal reimbursements. Our partners in the federal government have not provided clear information on when this issue will be resolved. Despite the memo from the Office of Management & Budget being rescinded on January 29, [the funding freeze remains in effect](#), impacting organizations that serve refugees and immigrants nationwide and creating critical cash flow challenges for CWS.

CONTEXT:

For decades, the United States has extended refuge to families fleeing persecution in places like Castro's Cuba, the Killing Fields of Cambodia, and most recently, those individuals who helped U.S. forces in Afghanistan. The United States fulfilled its promises of support through non-profit humanitarian organizations like CWS. In the past four years, the United States Refugee Admissions Program admitted the highest number of refugees in three decades—welcoming 100,034 new refugee arrivals in FY2024 alone ([Migration Policy Institute](#)). This four-year surge in arrivals invited communities like Durham to welcome newcomers at record numbers. Last year, in 2024, CWS Durham welcomed **628 refugees** and supported **more than 1,000 additional refugees and immigrants** through long-term integration programming.

Since the end of October, CWS Durham has welcomed **209 individuals** fleeing persecution and violence. One of these families is Afghan. The father worked with the U.S. Military fighting terrorism, but when the Taliban seized back control, he, his wife, and six children had to flee for their lives. After 3 years of waiting, they finally resettled in Durham just a few days before the January 20th Executive Orders, with the promise from the U.S. government that they would have support in rebuilding their life here.

But executive actions halting refugee admissions and freezing federal funds threaten CWS' ability to provide critical services to these families. Without CWS Durham programming, these individuals are at risk of losing their housing, health care, benefits, employment, and educational services. Even if the government is no longer willing to fulfill its promises to families seeking a safe place to call home, CWS is committed to keeping faith with these vulnerable neighbors.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE:

CWS Durham needs **\$600,000 in emergency funding to retain sufficient staff over the next 6 months to stabilize our most vulnerable clients** who currently have no access to critical federally funded programming. Those funds would go immediately to

1. Assist refugees who have arrived in the last 90 days to meet basic needs, avoid homelessness, secure work, and access to critical social services and community resources.

2. Retain a core of licensed immigration legal services staff to:
 - a. Fulfill legal obligations to more than 100 immigrant children whom we represent in immigration court and who have pending cases to secure Special Juvenile Immigrant (SIJ) status, a life-saving and necessary step to open a pathway to citizenship for children who have been abandoned, abused, and/or neglected by their parents.
 - b. Provide legal counsel to existing caseload of close to 1,000 clients seeking to navigate the increasingly complex and high-stakes immigration system to reunite with loved ones and secure pathways to permanent residence and citizenship.

As of February 2, a generous donor has committed \$300,000 of the \$600,000 to launch the fundraising campaign. CWS Durham asks the local community to stand with refugees once again by filling this emergency need.

***TIMELINE OF FEDERAL ACTIONS IMPACTING REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS:**

1. On Monday, January 20, the Trump administration issued a [series of Executive Orders](#) targeting refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers, and humanitarian parolees—and the organizations that serve them. These Executive Orders closed asylum, revoked protections for humanitarian parolees, and suspended the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.
3. On Friday afternoon, January 24, the U.S. State Department issued a [stop-work order that suspended the Reception & Placement program](#). This program provides critical services to refugees who have arrived in the United States in the past 90 days. More than 390 refugees in North Carolina are at risk of losing housing, jobs, healthcare, food, and critical services.
5. On Monday, January 27, in an unprecedented action, [the Office of Management and Budget issued a memo](#) to pause all federal grant payments, targeting grant programs that support refugees and immigrants, climate action, LGBTQ+ communities, and DEI initiatives.
6. On Wednesday, January 29, following a court injunction, the OMB memo was rescinded. However, as stated by the White House Press Secretary, [the funding freeze remains in effect for organizations nationwide](#). The targets of the funding freeze align with those targeted by Executive Orders issued on January 20.
7. On Friday, January 31, [a second federal judge](#) has issued a temporary restraining order to block the Trump administration's attempt to freeze federal funding. In the meantime, CWS does not have adequate access to outstanding federal funding, including reimbursements for services and direct assistance already provided, no clarity on the reinstatement of those funds, and no expectation that the current administration will provide support for refugee and immigrant integration services in the future. The halting of reimbursement has severely impacted CWS's ability to retain staff and programming, with substantial organization-wide furloughs set to take effect beginning on Monday, February 3.

**timeline updated as of February 2, 2025*