

NEW Ukrainian Refugee Program Details

In light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, displacing millions of Ukrainians, the U.S. government has created a humanitarian parole program called “Uniting for Ukraine”. Here are some important details.

The steps required to secure one of the 100,000 lifelines set aside for Ukrainian citizens begin with the U.S. sponsor completing an I-134 Declaration of Financial Support. That is a 13-page government form. There is also an 8-page set of instructions which accompanies the form. Any U.S. person can serve as a sponsor, needing only to qualify by demonstrating the financial ability and willingness to support Ukrainian refugees. The U.S. sponsor will need to gather proof of income and of assets.

The I-134 declaration will be allowed to be submitted online, only.

The basic steps for obtaining approval will be:

1. Filing of Form I-134 financial declaration with USCIS. The agency may accept the declaration as is, issue a request for additional evidence, or even require attending an interview.
2. After the sponsor’s declaration is accepted as sufficient, the sponsor will be scheduled for the taking of biometrics. This is for the government to determine that the sponsor has nothing adverse in their past as might indicate them not being law abiding or, worse yet, being a predator of Ukrainian refugees.
3. USCIS will next notify the Ukrainian beneficiary that the sponsorship has been accepted and that they should submit required information. That will include a valid Ukrainian passport being required. Also, the Ukrainian beneficiary will need to establish having been physically present in the Ukraine on February 11, 2022.
4. The Ukrainian beneficiary will also be required to pass certain background and biometric checks, as well as submitting proof of required vaccinations, such as first doses of measles, polio, and COVID-19 vaccines, plus pass a tuberculosis screening.
5. Assuming that the Ukrainian beneficiary completes those requirements, he or she will be notified by USCIS that they have been authorized to travel to the U.S. That authorization will be valid for 90 days. They will need to arrange their own commercial flights to the U.S.
6. Finally, when arriving at the U.S. airport, they will be interviewed by a Customs and Border Protection officer who will consider whether they qualify for being paroled into the United States. Parole is a status which is actually a non-status but allows a person to remain physically present in the U.S. Generally, they will be authorized for an initial period of two years. Also, not to be minimized, they will also be permitted to apply for employment authorization.

Some questions have not yet been answered. Will there be a limit on how many refugees can be sponsored by each U.S. financial sponsor? What amounts, measured in income and/or assets, will be deemed sufficient to allow the U.S. sponsor to serve as the financial sponsor? How long will USCIS take to approve applications for employment authorization?

This process, beginning with the I-134 filings, became available on April 27.

We will provide updates as they become available. Please feel free to contact an attorney in our immigration law group at Jaffe if you should have questions.

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