

Ascentria Care Alliance

We are called to strengthen communities by empowering people to respond to life's challenges.



Ascentria Services
for Children and Families
A member of Ascentria Care Alliance



Unaccompanied Refugee Minors

If you wish to become a foster parent or mentor to a refugee child, or if you wish to volunteer, please contact:

Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program

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Worcester, MA 01605
phone: 774.243.3068
fax: 508.519.8310

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Waltham, MA 02451
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URM-info@ascentria.org
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In partnership with:
Massachusetts Office of Refugees and Immigrants
Massachusetts Department of Children and Families



Ascentria's Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program provides foster care services for refugee and migrant youth who have been:

- forced to flee their home due to war, natural disaster, violence.
- running from persecution due to religion, political, social group, or minority ethnic background.
- have been separated from parents; have no caregiver.
- neglected, abused, or abandoned.
- seeking safe environment and hope.

Since the late 1970s, the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program (URMP) in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF), has offered specialized foster care to unaccompanied refugee children. Ascentria's URMP program serves as an outstanding example of how refugee children can be welcomed into a receiving country's existing child welfare framework, while adapting services to meet the special needs of foreign-born children who have experienced forced migration.



There is an urgent need for foster parents willing to open their hearts and homes to refugee and migrant youth. These minors are in desperate need of a long term, stable and caring family willing to welcome them into their home and help guide them toward independence.

“My foster moms treat me like I am part of their family. They love me. I appreciate everything they do for me.”

~Melina, from Guatemala



Open your heart and home. Become a foster parent to a refugee minor.

ascentria.org/urm

Learn More!

 [@ascentriacare](https://www.facebook.com/ascentriacare)

 [@ascentria](https://twitter.com/ascentria)

 ascentria.org/urm

Refugee Minors

Ascentria Care Alliance is the only program in New England that serves refugee children and adolescents (up to age 22) who come to the U.S. without parents or guardians to care for them.

Ascentria Helps Refugee Minors with:

- Placement with stable loving foster families
- Placement in foster home, group homes, or residential settings, where they receive all the necessary support services
- Case management, health insurance benefits, education, independent living skills, and more

These placements offer unaccompanied refugee minors safety and personal care within a supportive environment

A Foster Parent Role Includes:

- Providing a safe, stable, and supportive home environment.
- Blending a foster minor into your family and offering emotional support as needed.
- Being open and willing to learn about the youth's culture and incorporating it into your home.
- Assisting the youth in planning for their future.
- Cooperating with the minor's caseworker in carrying out a permanency plan, including participating in that plan.



Basel, from Sudan



Basel* was a refugee from Sudan. At age 10, he was made the group leader for 36 children at his refugee camp. All of his charges were younger than he was. Basel worked 12 hours per day. After work, he rested for three hours before going to school. The money he received from

his work purchased food and clothing for his group. At the age of 15, Basel was granted refugee status in the U.S. Basel now lives with a foster family in Massachusetts and attends school. He is an active member of the community serving as a tutor and mentor to middle school kids. He volunteers at local nonprofits, and is in his second year of college.

Maria, from El Salvador



Maria's mother left her abusive husband when Maria* was five years old. Maria went from relative to relative for five years thereafter. At the age of ten, she was on her own selling tortillas and mangoes on the street. It was then that Maria heard that she could get help from

smugglers to enter the U.S. without paying upfront. With no one to fend for her, Maria reached out to the smugglers. No sooner had she crossed the border, the smugglers forced her to work for them to repay the \$3,000 she owed. Maria tried to escape numerous times, but was unsuccessful. She eventually managed to contact authorities and the smugglers were arrested. She was identified as a Victim of Trafficking and became eligible to enter Ascentria's Unaccompanied Refugee Minors program. Maria now lives with a foster family. She is now safe and a freshman in high school. She receives counseling through Ascentria to help her heal from her

traumatic past, and is very grateful to the U.S. and to her foster family for welcoming her into their home. "I don't know where I would be if it weren't for this opportunity. I have people that care for me, I have learned a lot in school, and will be able to go to college," she told us when asked about her experience in foster care.

Safiya, from Eritrea



Eritrea drafts every man and woman as young as 18 into a brutal system of military service that frequently lasts many years and can amount to slave labor at state-run industrial projects. To escape, hundreds of thousands of unaccompanied minors flee, often to refugee camps across the border

with Ethiopia. The camps currently house more than 1,500 unaccompanied minors. Safiya,* the youngest of four, is one of these minors. "I saw what happened to my brothers and sister; I saw my future," Safiya said when asked at more length about her journey.

Ahmed, from Somalia



When Ahmed* was 11 years old the Somali militia killed his father. At 16, the same faction attacked him on the street. He fled to a country where he had no legal protection or hope of resettlement. Ahmed was eventually granted refugee status to enter the U.S. Once matched to a foster home

through the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors program, Ahmed was not only able to achieve a level of safety he did not have before, but he was also able to go to school, join the school soccer team, and get a job. He soon began saving money to help care for his siblings back in Somalia.

**While their stories are true, client names and images may have been changed to protect their privacy.*

Foster Care

Adults who wish to become foster parents to a refugee child must complete a home study conducted by an Ascentria licensed social worker. Parents receive ongoing training and support from Ascentria and other experienced foster parents. Together, they build communities of care that support the refugee children's mental and physical health and meet their academic and social needs.

Whether in foster care, a group home, or residential care, Ascentria prepares the URMs for transition to independent living, continued schooling or vocational training. Ascentria works with the families and stakeholders. These placements offer unaccompanied refugee minors safety and personal care within a supportive environment to create a continuum of support for the minors. Many alumni of the Ascentria program maintain lifelong contact with their foster families, returning "home" for frequent visits.



“I don't think of them as foster parents. I think of them as mom and dad given from above. What we have is more than foster parent or foster kid, we have a family.”

~Mang, from Burma