



Department of State
Office for New Americans

NEW YORK STATE OFFICE FOR NEW AMERICANS



THE NEW YORK STATE OFFICE FOR NEW AMERICANS (ONA) WAS CREATED IN 2012 TO WELCOME IMMIGRANTS AND TO HELP THEM IN ACHIEVING THEIR AMERICAN DREAM.

OCTOBER 1, 2025

About NYS ONA

- The New York State Office for New Americans (ONA), founded in 2012, is the nation's first statutorily created immigrant services office.
- ONA assists all new Americans with accessing and navigating a variety of free services and supports through its statewide network of community-based providers.



Who Are New Americans?

New Americans are:

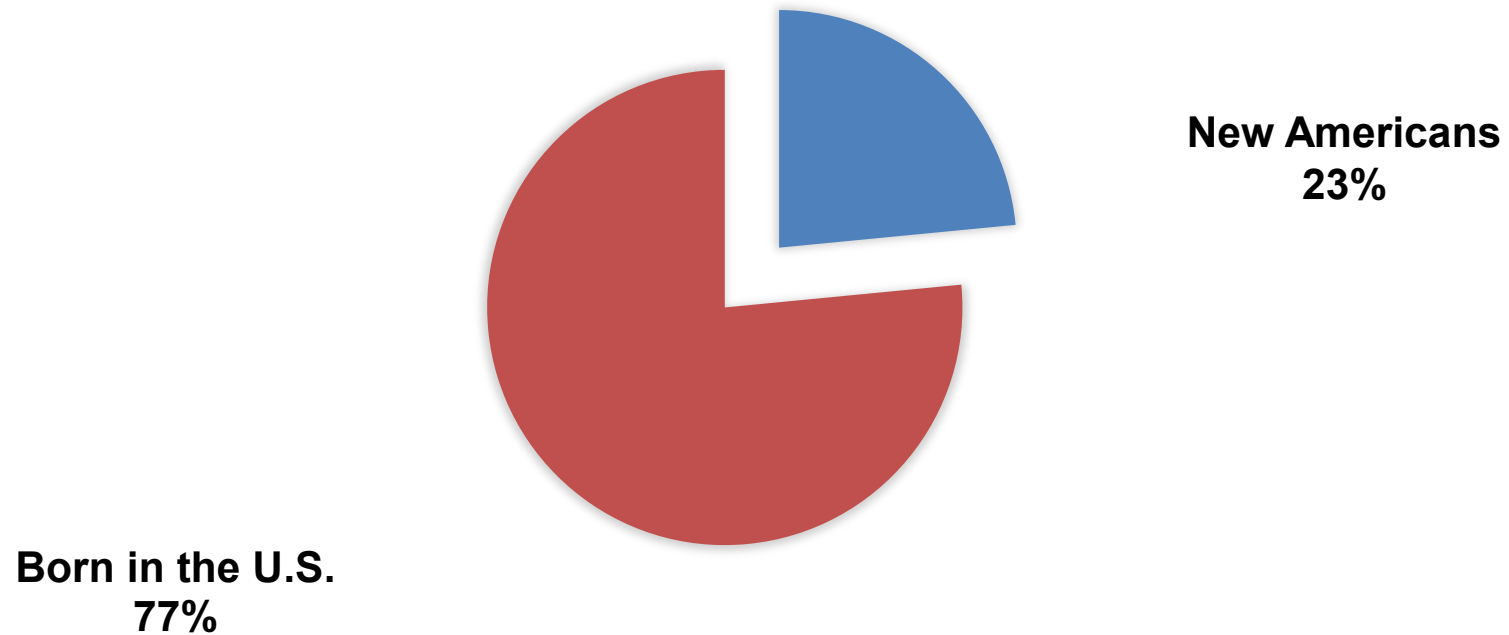
- Immigrants
- Refugees, asylees
- Undocumented Individuals
- All newcomers who reside in the U.S.

Many new American families are **mixed status** meaning different family members have different immigration statuses.

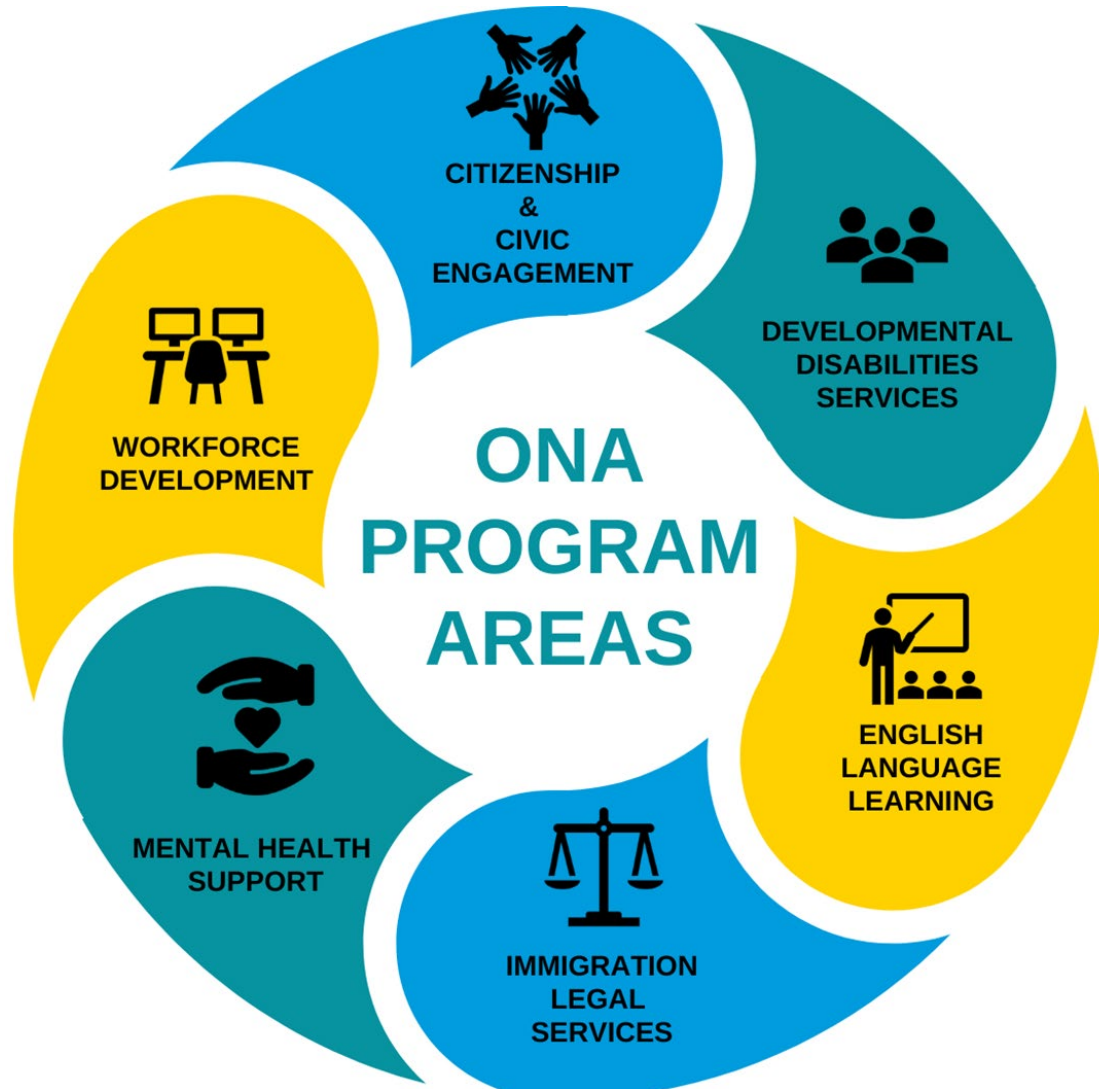


NYS New Americans

4.4 million immigrants, 19.45 million total New Yorkers



Who We Serve and What We Do



- Immigrants and refugees (4.4 million in NY State)
- ¼ of New York State residents
- 34% of business owners are immigrants
- Approximately 2.5 million New Yorkers with limited English proficiency (LEP)
- 89.7% of children with immigrant parents are U.S. citizens

ONA Opportunity Centers - Civics

- Citizenship Prep Classes
- Immigration Application Support
- Immigration Law Consultations
- Community Workshops
- Workforce Referrals

*All Centers are supported by a qualified immigration attorney



ONA's Role in Food Security for New Americans

Although ONA does not have a dedicated food and nutrition program for New Americans, it is committed to advancing food security in immigrant communities. ONA plays a crucial role in advocating and connecting New Americans with locally sourced healthy food and nutrition programs across the state. We aim to bridge the gaps in underserved communities, ensuring that all residents of NY have access to nutritious diets while supporting the state's locally grown and produced foods.

- ONA Outreach teams connect with local food bank and pantry systems and to ensure immigrants feel safe accessing food that is culturally appropriate.
- ONA partners with Ag and Markets to connect need with local food systems to create a holistic support for farmers, workers, and consumers.

Food Insecurity Among New Americans

1 in 10 New York households experienced food insecurity at some point between 2019-21. Food Insecurity disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable populations in New York, especially people of color, *immigrants*, and households with children according to the [NYS Comptroller](#).

Unique barriers to seeking help reported by the [National Immigration Law Center](#):

- Reporting to federal agencies
- Questions on forms
- Verification processes
- Language access
- Fear of being considered a “public charge”
- Confusion with eligibility

Available Supports

There are programs that provide food benefits to many New Americans:

- **Summer EBT:** helps qualifying low-income families with school-age children buy groceries during the summer when kids might not have access to school meals.
- **WIC:** some immigrants and undocumented people are eligible for WIC if they meet certain criteria.
- **School Meals and Summer Meals:** New York State is in the process of providing universal free school meals, and as of the 2025-2026 school year, all participating schools must offer reimbursable breakfast and lunch at no cost to students.



LGBTQ+ Barriers to Accessing Food

LGBTQ+ New Americans experience compounded discrimination, meaning they face challenges that both immigrants **and** LGBTQ+ populations face, **at the same time.**

- LGBTQ+ populations are twice as likely to face food insecurity, according to Feeding America, with trans people having even higher rates at 30%.
- Religious trauma may prevent LGBTQ+ communities from seeking out food pantries housed in houses of worship.
- Concerns around needing identification: “Will showing an ID cause discrimination? Will those offering food assistance deny me because my identity doesn’t match my ID?”

Increasing New American Food Security

- Provide quality language access and document translations to immigrants so that they can access and comprehensively understand food and nutrition programs.
- Increase language skills and cultural competency of the staff serving New Americans and their families.
- Support business owners and grocers through the process of accepting WIC and SNAP.
- Improve outreach, enrollment, and education initiatives of community and public agencies that serve immigrants to ensure that all immigrants are enrolled in food programs they are eligible for, and that they are fully aware of their rights.



Specific Examples

- Supporting pantries in knowing dietary needs of their New American communities such as halal, kosher, and culturally relevant produce. Replacing non-halal meats with lentils, providing rice instead of bread.
- Education around growing your own food, including fruits and veggies similar to what people might find from where they are from
- Supporting local grocers who offer ethnic foods, helping new businesses that sell culturally appropriate foods.
- Develop and launch communication campaigns that highlight the significant contributions of immigrants to the food system and agriculture infrastructure of New York State.

Federal Changes in Immigration Policy

- ONA and its partners are responding to federal changes in immigration policy by providing trusted information to the community through Know Your Rights (KYR) and Family Preparedness trainings and workshops
- ONA grantees are also offering legal consultations and family preparedness clinics
- ONA grantee KYR events can be found on our website: <https://dos.ny.gov/ona-events>
- ONA has also created a webpage with KYR information as well as other state resources available to the community: <https://dos.ny.gov/know-your-rights>

Federal Changes in Immigration Policy



[New York Immigration Coalition \(NYIC\) KYR Info](#)
[New York Immigration Coalition Benefits Chart](#)
Non-Citizen Eligibility: [Navigation Chart for Benefits](#)

[Documentation Guide for
Citizen and Non-Citizen
Eligibility for Health
Insurance Coverage in
New York State](#)

[NYS Office for New
Americans: Know Your
Rights, Know Your
Resources](#)

[Protecting Immigrant
Families: Resources](#)

New Americans Hotline

1-800-566-7636

- TOLL-FREE
- Operates from 9 am - 8 pm, Monday to Friday.
- Anyone can call for information and referrals, regardless of citizenship or immigration status.
- Calls are confidential and anonymous.
- Assistance available in 200+ languages.



Connect with ONA



NewAmericans@dos.ny.gov



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Questions?





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