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# A guide to Safe Mobility Offices (SMOs) and how to get help

Safe Mobility Offices offer a new option to find legal and safe ways to migrate. SMOs help people apply for programs to travel to the USA and other places. Learn where they are located, who they can help, and the process.

Updated August 1, 2024

## What are Safe Mobility Offices (SMOs)?

Safe Mobility Offices, also known as SMOs, are part of a new program started in 2023. These offices offer lawful pathways for migration from Latin America.

SMOs help refugees and migrants in Central and South America find out if they are eligible to enter the United States or other countries. People from certain countries can apply for the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program and other protection pathways through SMOs.

This program was set up to help people avoid the dangerous journey to the Mexico border. The help that they offer is free.

## Where can I find an SMO?

Currently, SMO processing is available to migrants in the following countries in Latin America:

- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Ecuador
- Guatemala

## Can a SMO help me?

For an SMO to help you, you must be in one of the countries where they are located. Each office has its own rules for whom it helps. Your ability to use an SMO for help can depend on:

- Your country of origin
- The dates you have been in your host country
- Your legal status in that country

It is important to check the [Movilidad Segura website](#) for the most current information. **IRAP's eligibility tool** can also help you understand if you meet the requirements.

### Colombia SMO requirements

To be eligible for help you must:

- Be Cuban, Haitian, or Venezuelan
- Be in Colombia on or before June 11, 2023
- Be 18 or older
- Have regular status in Colombia (or be in the process of regularization in the country)

### Costa Rica SMO requirements

To be eligible for help you must:

- Be Nicaraguan, Venezuelan, or Ecuadorian
- Be in Costa Rica on or before June 12, 2023

### Ecuador SMO requirements

To be eligible for help you must:

- Be Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan, Venezuelan, or Colombian
- Be in Ecuador on or before October 18, 2023
- Have done **at least one** of the following by the time you apply:
  - Applied to Ecuador's regularization process
  - Registered as an asylum-seeker or refugee in Ecuador on or before October 18, 2023

### Guatemala SMO requirements

To be eligible for help you must:

- Be Guatemalan, Salvadoran, Honduran, or Nicaraguan
- Be in Guatemala before July 16, 2024

These are the minimum requirements to access SMO screening programs. Meeting these requirements does not mean you will be eligible for a legal pathway to the U.S. or other countries. Not everyone who applies for this program will travel to the United States.

## How can I get an appointment at an SMO?

To get an appointment at an SMO, you must file a free online application through the [Movilidad Segura portal](#). You can not go directly to an SMO without doing the online application first.

Some locations have a daily limit for applications or only accept applications on certain days of the week. Check the guidelines for your local program on the Movilidad Segura site to learn when to apply.

It is best to try early in the day. You may have to try more than once. If the form is closed, check the website at a later time to see if it opens again.

You will need to provide the following with your application:

- Valid email address and phone number
- Personal information such as your name and date of birth
- A clear photo of yourself
- Photo of your identification document
- Family member information

The Safe Mobility application is completely free. Be aware of anyone who asks you for money for your application.

## What happens after I apply?

SMO staff will review your application for eligibility. They will decide whether to request an in-person interview or respond with other guidance. You will receive notification by email.

If you qualify for a protection pathway, SMO staff will contact you for the next step. Note that in some countries, you will only hear back if you are eligible. It will take a few weeks for staff to contact you by phone to schedule a screening.

If you do not qualify for SMO help, you can contact other organizations that offer [international help](#).

## What is the screening process at an SMO?

The process can vary depending on your location. It typically includes an initial screening for humanitarian protection options, followed by further detailed screenings. These options are often called "pathways."

Depending on the options you are eligible for, you may be referred to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), or other partners supporting this process.

SMO staff will route you to either:

- Refugee protection
- Other lawful pathways

### Refugee protection

Most SMO applicants are routed to the refugee protection track. These are handled by the UNCHR. The UNHCR and NGO partners check if you are eligible and may refer you to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) for refugee resettlement. Learn about [refugee eligibility](#).

If you qualify for refugee protection, the UNHCR will schedule an interview. This can happen anytime from 2 weeks to several months after your screening. During this interview, you will discuss your situation in detail.

If you do not qualify for refugee protection during the screening, you will be transferred to the IOM for another screening. You will get an email notification if this happens.

### Other lawful pathways

Applications not eligible for refugee protection are reviewed for other lawful pathways by the IOM. These options include:

- [Parole processes for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans](#) offering a temporary stay in the USA to live and work
- [Family reunification](#) for those with family already in the U.S. with refugee or asylee status
- [Family immigration](#) for those with family in the USA that are U.S. citizens or Green Card holders
- [Family reunification parole](#) for those with family members who have already applied for their visa and are from specific countries
- [H-2A or H-2B visas](#) for those seeking seasonal or temporary employment (Guatemala only)
- [Asylum](#) in host country

If you qualify for one of these pathways, the IOM will set up a counseling session. This will take place 2-4 weeks after your screening. You can ask for more time if you are looking for a sponsor. The session will last 1 hour in their office and only provide eligibility and legal information.

## Next steps

### Refugee protection

If your case is referred to refugee resettlement, USRAP will take over processing your case. This process will be faster than the regular refugee resettlement process. It can take at least 3 months for you to arrive in the USA through this process.

If USRAP does not accept your case, USCIS may offer you humanitarian parole. This is on a case-by-case basis.

### Other lawful options

If you have an IOM counseling session, they will only share information but will **not** help you complete and file any of the applications. Most of the pathways generally require a petitioner or sponsor in the USA.

The IOM can help with local services, such as getting a passport or other documentation. In some cases, you may follow up with more questions.

SMOs do not directly issue visas but provide necessary screening, information, and referrals to appropriate migration channels. The U.S. government will make a final decision on whether you can enter the USA.

*Note: Safe Mobility Offices were originally called Regional Processing Centers.*



## Find help outside the USA

See a list of groups that help migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers worldwide. Learn where to get help by the Mexico border, help with sponsorship, and more.

Get help

## More resources

IRAP SMO Backgrounder

The information on this page comes from Movilidad Segura, U.S. Department of State, IRAP, and other trusted sources. We aim to offer easy to understand information that is updated regularly. This information is not legal advice.

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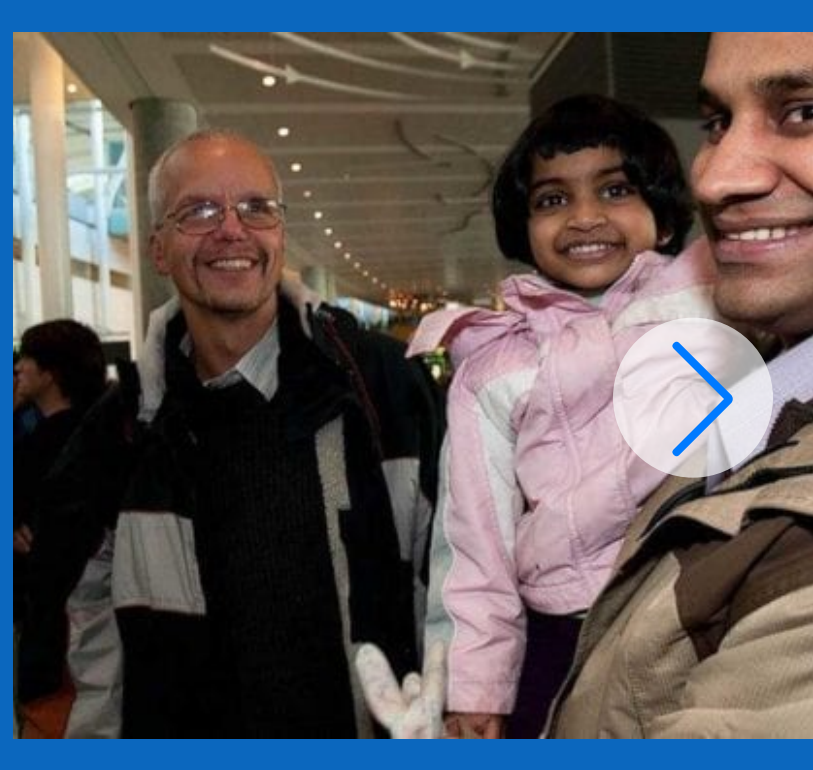
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