

# Descriptive Study of the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program

## BACKGROUND

The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has awarded a contract to MEF Associates and its subcontractor, Child Trends, to conduct a study to better understand the range of child welfare services and benefits provided through the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) Program.

The URM Program serves refugees and other eligible youth within the U.S. who do not have a parent or relative available to care for them. The program is funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within ACF. The URM Program has served more than 13,000 minors since the program began. Each URM program parallels the child welfare systems in the states where they operate. Services provided include arranging foster care, group homes, independent living situations, or reunification with relatives in the U.S., as well as other child welfare services to promote their well-being. The program also includes services focused on integrating the youth into their new communities while preserving the youth's ethnic and religious heritage. However, providers' implementation of these services differs from program to program.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What do we know about how different URM programs administer benefits and services for refugee youth?
- What data are currently collected for the URM Program and what do they tell us about the extent that URM achieve self-sufficiency?
- What are the characteristics of populations served by the URM Program and how are services for each target population implemented?
- What would be the best evaluation design strategies for learning more about the effectiveness of the URM Program?

## STUDY COMPONENTS

The study is using the following components to answer these questions:

- **Online survey of program administrators.** To systematically document how the 22 different providers implement the URM Program, the research team will conduct a short online survey of State Refugee Coordinators, program administrators, and providers.
- **Site visits to six URM programs.** The team will interview managers and staff at select URM programs and partners in the community who also provide services to refugee youth and conduct focus groups with youth and foster families participating in the program. The team will also interview staff at public child welfare agencies to learn about the child welfare services in the community.
- **Analysis of program data.** The research team will explore the availability and quality of data on program participants and services, and at OPRE's request will conduct analyses of available data from currently available sources.

For more information, please reach out to OPRE's points of contact for this project, Tiffany McCormack ([tiffany.mccormack@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:tiffany.mccormack@acf.hhs.gov)), Gabrielle Newell ([gabrielle.newell@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:gabrielle.newell@acf.hhs.gov)), and Marie Lawrence ([catherinemarie.lawrence@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:catherinemarie.lawrence@acf.hhs.gov)), or MEF Associates' Project Director, Sam Elkin ([sam.elkin@mefassociates.com](mailto:sam.elkin@mefassociates.com)).