



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Office of Refugee Resettlement | 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20201
www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr

Changes to the Categorization of Refugee Resettlement Programs

Dear Colleague Letter 20-05

February 14, 2020

Dear Colleague:

This letter provides information about changes to the categorization of some refugee resettlement programs, which was effective as of October 1, 2019. Dear Colleague Letter 19-03 (DCL 19-03) initially announced these changes; this letter provides updated information and therefore supersedes DCL 19-03.

Background

In the majority of states in the U.S., the state government administers the ORR-funded Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP) and provides Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) based on the state's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program or through a Public Private Partnership (PPP). However, prior to October 1, 2019, in five states¹ where the state government withdrew from administering all or part of the RRP, ORR had selected various private non-profit agencies to serve as a Replacement Designee (RD)² to administer the RRP. In addition, in 12 states³ and San Diego County, CA, ORR had funded 13 grantees under the Wilson-Fish Alternative Program (WF), an alternative to traditional state-administered refugee resettlement programs for providing cash assistance and support services to ORR eligible populations. Of these 13 WF grantees, two⁴ were state governments; the remainder were private non-profit agencies.

States and RDs are funded through ORR's Cash and Medical Assistance (CMA) grant, which consists of Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA), Refugee Medical Screening (RMS), Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) services, and program coordination and planning. WF grantees were funded through the Administration for Children and Families' discretionary grant process.

¹ Kansas, Maine, Missouri, New Jersey, and Texas

² See ORR Policy Letter 18-03 for more information on Replacement Designees.

³ Alabama, Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Vermont

⁴ Colorado and Massachusetts

Changes to the Structure of the Refugee Resettlement Program

To increase cost efficiency and decrease the administrative burden of ORR’s administration of the national RRP, ORR designated eight of the private non-profit agencies that were WF grantees as RDs, effective October 1, 2019.⁵ Each of these agencies is now supported by CMA funding to administer specific areas of responsibility, as well as by Refugee Support Services (RSS), a grant that helps ORR eligible populations gain economic independence and successfully integrate into local communities.

The states of Colorado and Massachusetts, which were WF grantees, did not require designation as an RD, since an RD is, by definition, a private non-state entity. The state of Alabama will not receive refugee arrivals through the U.S. Department of State’s Reception and Placement program in Federal Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, so ORR did not designate the private non-profit agency administering the state-wide WF project there as an RD. In the case of the two private non-profit agencies that administered a WF project but did not coordinate a state-wide RRP, ORR directed CMA funding to the relevant state.

The following chart outlines the states and counties impacted by these changes in the structure of the RRP, and includes the delineation of how ORR-funded services are now provided in those states.

State/County	Replacement Designee	RD/Privately-administered ORR-funded Services	State-administered ORR-funded Services⁶
Alabama ⁷	None	Refugee benefits and services (including cash assistance) and RSS base and set-aside funds	RMA
Alaska	Catholic Social Services Inc.	RCA, RMS, RSS base and set-aside funds	None
California/ San Diego County ⁸	None	None	RCA, RMA, RMS, RSS base and set-aside funds, URM program

⁵ Alaska, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Tennessee

⁶ These changes did not affect administration of Unaccompanied Refugee Minor programs, in states where these programs exist.

⁷ For FY 2020, ORR is funding services for eligible refugees in Alabama through an extension of the WF project administered by Catholic Social Services of Mobile, Inc.

⁸ The State of California will resume coordination of the RRP within San Diego County, CA, as well as throughout the rest of the state.

Colorado	None	None	RCA, RMA, RMS, RSS base and set-aside funds, URM program
Idaho	Jannus Inc.	RCA, RSS base and set-aside funds	RMA, RMS
Kentucky	Catholic Charities of Louisville	RCA, RMS, RSS base and set-aside funds	None
Louisiana	Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge	RCA, RSS base and set-aside funds	RMA, RMS
Massachusetts	None	None	RCA, RMS, RSS base and set-aside funds, URM program
Nevada	Catholic Charities of Southern Nevada	RCA, RMS, RSS base and set-aside funds	None
North Dakota	Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota	RCA, RSS base and set-aside funds	RMA, RMS, URM program
South Dakota	Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota	RCA, RSS base and set-aside funds	RMA, RMS
Tennessee	Catholic Charities of Tennessee Inc.	RCA, RMA eligibility administration, ⁹ RMS	None
Vermont ¹⁰	None	None	RCA, RMA, RMS, RSS base and set-aside funds

Status of the Wilson-Fish Program

In addition to streamlining administration of the RRP nationwide, the designation of private non-profit agencies administering a statewide Refugee Resettlement Program as RDs will allow the WF program to be used to support innovative methods to address unmet needs or gaps in the refugee program nationwide. The WF program will be a competitive discretionary grant, rather than a mechanism for administering the RRP when a state withdraws from its administration. More information on the revised WF program can be found on Grants.gov.

⁹ The remainder of RMA in TN is administered through ORR’s Medical Replacement Designee, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants.

¹⁰ The State of Vermont now administers the full state-wide RRP, rather than selected elements of the program.

Process of Changes to the Structure

As of October 1, 2019, ORR began to support all states with an RRP through CMA funding (with the exception of Alabama, as noted previously) to the state government and/or one or more RDs. State governments administer CMA through the traditional publically-administered RCA program based on the state's TANF program or as a PPP. States that administer the program as a PPP and RDs are governed by ORR's PPP regulations, 45 C.F.R §§ 400.56 - 400.63.

For FY 2020, to receive funding to administer the RRP in their designated location, RDs, like state governments, were required to submit a state plan for ORR approval. Also like state governments, RDs were required to submit a budget estimate (known as an ORR-1) and budget justification to ORR.

For FY 2021, ORR will conduct an application process for the RDs. The details of this process are under review and will be communicated to the RDs at a later time.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about this Dear Colleague Letter, please contact Colleen Mahar-Piersma by email at Colleen.Mahar-Piersma@acf.hhs.gov.

Sincerely,

Jonathan H. Hayes
Director
Office of Refugee Resettlement