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ORR's Refugee Family Child Care Program Addresses Key Barrier to Employment and Serves Communities

Over the past three years, ORR's Refugee Family Child Care Microenterprise Development (RFCCMED) Program has helped approximately 600 refugees and other ORR-served populations establish family-based child care businesses that are licensed by the state.* The program, which began in fiscal year 2011, is a win-win for communities: it helps meet a need for affordable child care while providing employment opportunities that allow ORR-served populations to become self-sufficient.

Lack of access to child care is a major barrier to employment. Data from ORR's 2016 Annual Survey of Refugees indicates that child care or family responsibilities is a key reason working-aged refugees (aged 16 to 64 years) are not seeking work. Approximately 50 percent of working-aged women out of the labor force cited family responsibilities as a reason. *Gender analysis not shown.*

All individuals eligible for ORR refugee benefits and services and who have been in the United States for less than five years are eligible for this program.

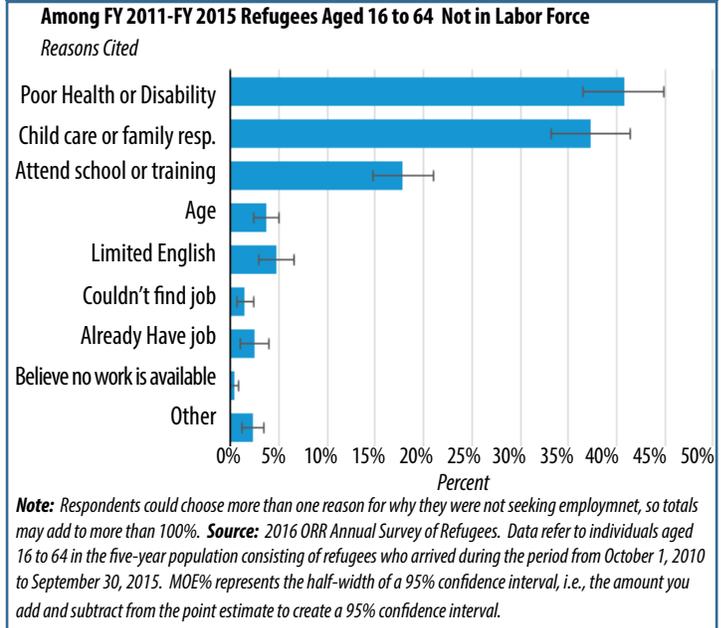
Child Care Needs for Refugee Families

Many ORR-served populations, particularly women, have few options for finding child care, which is often expensive and in limited supply. Local child care providers often lack the linguistic and cultural competency needed to appropriately serve refugee families.

The RFCCMED Program transforms lives by empowering participants to earn a reliable income and become business owners engaged in work they find meaningful. Over 250 individuals received training and technical assistance in support of establishing a family child care business through the RFCCMED Program in FY 2017. Of these, over 180 have obtained child care licenses and over 120 have opened businesses. Many who have not opened businesses are in the final stages of preparing their homes or applying for licenses, and expect to start operating in the current year.

*Note: Grantees voluntarily submit data as part of their reporting process to assist in showing progress towards annual goals. Data may not be representative of the entire program.

Working-Aged Refugee's Reasons for Not Seeking Employment



Meet Nasemeh Nazari

Nasemeh Nazari is one of the many RFCCMED participants who have gained skills and excelled in new areas. Nasemeh, a refugee from Afghanistan, lived for many years in Iran where she had no educational opportunities. In 2015, Opening Doors, an ORR RFCCMED grantee in Sacramento, California, trained her in providing child care services and in running a business.

As Nasemeh noted during a recent ORR visit, the program gave her "wings to fly."

Although most participants in the program begin by providing state-licensed child care services to families from their home country, some participants become so successful that they have expanded their child care businesses to the larger community. Nasemeh is now applying for a new license to expand and care for more children.

Cumulative Impact

Businesses established under the RFCCMED Program have created over 2,500* new child care slots since 2015. Child care businesses created through the RFCCMED Program create more access to child care and more access to child

care providers who can accommodate the linguistic and cultural needs of other working ORR-served families.

Participants also give credit to the program for helping them adjust to their new lives in the United States. For example, Beatrice Nyiramutuzo, a single mother from Rwanda, moved from being homeless to being self-sufficient enough to save money with the hope of eventually getting a college degree.

“The focus on child care services utilizes a large and deep skill set among participants, many of whom were formerly nurses, teachers, or worked in other areas compatible with providing quality child care.”

Kate Nelson, Director of Economic Opportunity, Jannus

Finding Innovative Ways to Address Challenges

RFCCMED grantees must find innovative ways to address barriers to success in the communities they serve. Child care regulations are complex and may change frequently, making it difficult for child care providers to be aware of requirements for operating a business. Property owners are often reluctant to grant permission for renters to operate child care businesses out of fear of liability or concern that child care businesses will cause disruptions and noise for other tenants. Local licensing agencies may not be familiar with the needs of refugees and unsure of how to provide necessary guidance.

RFCCMED grantees have implemented a number of successful strategies to overcome these barriers. For example, grantees have reached out to property managers to explain the potential benefits of allowing child care businesses to operate and to dispel misconceptions.

Participants in the RFCCMED Program face many personal challenges as well. Starting a business requires persistence and commitment among a population already facing the stressors connected with resettlement, such as enrolling children in school or finding a job for a spouse.

RFCCMED grantee Jannus in Boise, Idaho has taken a holistic approach toward meeting the spectrum of needs for each participating family. They developed a resource called the Self-Sufficiency Matrix which allows Jannus case managers to identify “trouble areas” to target areas of concerns so that Jannus can provide the required support.

For example, a matrix interview with one refugee helped a case manager find free family counseling services to help



ORR Grantee Jannus helped Beatrice Nyiramutuzo, above with her son, set up her licensed family child care business in Boise, Idaho. By removing barriers to success, the program empowers people to use “their existing talent, grit, and skills to thrive,” said Kate Nelson, Director of Economic Opportunity for Jannus. Photo Credit: Jannus/Courtney Barnard

the family address a teenager’s troubling behavior and allowed the RFCCMED participant to focus on getting her child care license.

Collaboration and Partnerships

RFCCMED grantees partner with local organizations supporting child care providers to ensure program participants have the knowledge and support required to succeed in their businesses.

The result is mutually beneficial to the participant, the grantee and the partner. The grantee learns more about helping ORR-served populations interested in becoming child care providers and the child care partner acquires experience working with participants from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

In Phoenix, the International Rescue Committee has developed a “Refugee 101” information session to help child care partners and licensing officials understand the needs of local populations served by ORR. The session promotes greater understanding and support for refugee communities who are finding success and self-sufficiency once they find ways to meet the important need for child care.

For more information, go to <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/refugee-family-child-care>