



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Administration for Children and Families
Office of the Assistant Secretary, Suite 600
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20447

March 2014

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

TO: Lead Agencies administering child care programs under the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 1990, as amended; National, Regional, State and local refugee resettlement networks; and other interested parties.

FROM: Joint memorandum from the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care and Office of Refugee Resettlement.

SUBJECT: Refugee Resettlement and Child Care Partnerships: Partnering to Increase Refugee Families' Access to High-Quality Child Care

Summary

This Information Memorandum (IM) is a joint effort between the Offices of Child Care (Director, Shannon Rudisill) and Refugee Resettlement (Director, Eskinder Negash). The purpose of this memorandum is to create linkages between the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies and Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Funded Programs (refugee resettlement networks). In partnership, these two programs and networks can achieve the common goal of fostering resilient, safe, healthy, and economically secure lives for all, including refugee families and their children.

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) supports the development of coordinated systems of services to promote healthy growth and development of young children. States and local communities can facilitate coordination and alignment of early childhood and refugee programs when they:

- Prepare child care, Early Head Start, Head Start and Pre-K programs to better understand and serve refugee children and families.
- Help refugee resettlement agencies and other refugee service providers better understand the importance of continuity of caregiver relationships and high-quality early care and education for the families they serve.
- Improve refugee networks and agency capacity to help refugee families find high-quality child care through partnerships with local early childhood agencies and child care resource and referral agencies (CCR&Rs).
- Provide concrete, ongoing support for ORR-funded refugee home-based child care network grantees.

This IM is consistent with the ACF 2014 Strategic Plan, which reiterates ACF's view that supporting underserved and underrepresented populations, such as refugees, is a shared responsibility that is cross-cutting, involves linkages and partnerships across ACF offices, and informs all of ACF's work.

Background Information

Overview of the Offices of Child Care and Refugee Resettlement

The Office of Child Care (OCC) supports low-income working families through child care fee assistance (subsidies) for children age birth through 13 and promotes children's learning by improving the quality of early care and education and afterschool programs. Through Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) block grants to states, territories and tribes, nearly 500,000 child care providers serve 1.5 million low-income children who receive subsidies each month. States have significant flexibility in making key policy decisions in administering the subsidy program, such as setting eligibility requirements and priorities, payment rate levels, and family co-payment amounts. Each State designates a CCDF Lead Agency (e.g., Department of Social Services, Department of Early Learning, etc.) that is responsible for the subsidy program. The Lead Agency may administer the program directly or through other entities [e.g., local governments, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs), etc.]. States, territories, and tribes also spend approximately \$1 billion of their CCDF allotments each year to improve child care quality through teacher training, grants for educational materials and equipment, and monitoring of child care quality. Many states partner with CCR&Rs, community colleges, and local agencies to implement quality improvement technical assistance and training on how to start and manage center and home-based child care businesses. High quality early childhood programs build trusting relationships with families, provide continuity of care for children, have better child outcomes and reliable care so parents can work and become economically self-sufficient.

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) was established through the Refugee Act of 1980, which created the current framework of refugee resettlement in the U.S. Over the past 30 years, the U.S. has resettled more than 3 million refugees. ORR works with various stakeholders nationwide, including: states or voluntary agencies who administer refugee resettlement programs in a respective state; nine voluntary agencies (VOLAGs) with approximately 350 affiliates; and ethnic community based organizations (ECBOs). These entities make up the national resettlement network. ORR provides certain benefits and services to eligible persons from the following groups within their first five years of arrival/eligibility: *Refugees, Asylees, Cuban/Haitian Entrants, Certain Amerasians* (admitted as immigrants from Vietnam), *Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Holders from Iraq and Afghanistan*, and *Certified (foreign) Victims of Human Trafficking*.¹ ORR-funded services such as Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medical Assistance are limited to the first eight months of eligibility, while social services may continue for up to five years. Each state has a State Refugee Coordinator helping to oversee the

¹ **Note:** For purposes of this document, "refugee" includes all ORR-eligible populations listed here and the term "resettlement network" means all entities that receive funding from ORR as defined here.

administration and coordination of these services (similar to the role of the CCDF Administrators).

ORR provides targeted support for refugee women and families by building upon their strengths and linking them with equal opportunities to training, employment, and other critical resources to facilitate resettlement and maximize their potential. For example, ORR funds a microenterprise home-based child care grant program to help train primarily refugee women with transferrable skills to become child care providers and successful business owners, while also offering culturally-competent child care to other working refugee families. ORR also funds the Refugee School Impact program, which focuses on assisting refugee children (ages 5- up to 18) to improve their academic achievement through special curricular and extracurricular programs that facilitate their adjustment into the U.S. education system.

Intersection of Child Care and Refugee Resettlement

Upon arrival to the U.S., refugees and other ORR-eligible populations must immediately work to become economically self-sufficient. Although highly resilient and resourceful, many face distinct challenges during their transition to the U.S. such as: learning English, a new culture, social norms, and systems (i.e. financial, transportation, health, human services, child care, education, food, legal, etc.). Refugees must face these challenges while looking for employment and raising their families without the same social or cultural support systems previously afforded to them in their home country. As new members of the U.S. society, refugees can be considered in great need of culturally and linguistically competent systems, and refugee families and children can benefit greatly from placement in high quality child care.

Refugee families are incredibly strong survivors whose tenacity led them through a long journey to the U.S., overcoming many obstacles, exposure to threatening situations, and navigating complicated bureaucracies. Along their journey, refugees and their children may often experience separation from their families and displacement for extended periods in multiple relocations or camps away from home. Living in refugee camps often means waiting 5, 10, or even more than 20 years for a chance at resettlement.

Stability of child care is critical for the positive developmental growth of all children. Continuity of care is essential for refugee children and their families to gain the knowledge and establish the trusting relationships needed to thrive in the U.S. CCDF Administrators can prioritize child care subsidy eligibility for refugee families in high quality early childhood settings so children get the supports they need to succeed in school while their parents work and become economically self-sufficient.

Refugee resettlement is intended to occur in close cooperation and consultation with federal, state and local entities. Through these partnerships, the resettlement community can better support our nation's humanitarian commitments toward populations who have fled persecution and are granted protection by the U.S. government. As U.S.-citizens-in-waiting, refugees qualify for mainstream federal public benefit programs, such as TANF and CCDF, designed to assist underserved and vulnerable populations; they adjust their status to lawful permanent residents within a year of arrival and are eligible for citizenship after five years.

In order to promote refugees' health and socioeconomic well-being it is crucial to connect them to mainstream resources as soon as possible. Serving refugees requires a community-wide engagement across this nation, particularly for programs and agencies responding to the health and human service needs of low-income and underserved populations.

Strategies for Child Care – Refugee Network Partnerships

Referral and Service Strategies

ACF encourages local and state child care and refugee networks to enter into formal agreements, such as Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), with local and state early childhood agencies, after-school programs, and child care resource and referral agencies (CCR&Rs) to:

- Help refugee families find and use high quality early learning and afterschool services.
- Help child care providers better serve refugee children and families with culturally and linguistically responsive services.

Specific actions may include:

- Establish a referral process between resettlement agencies and the child care subsidy program to assure all eligible refugee children, families, and the child care providers who serve them have access to child care fee assistance programs.
- Share tools, best practices and resources about the importance of health, safety, consumer education, early childhood learning and brain development, and high-quality child care with refugee families, refugee child care service providers and refugee resettlement networks.
- Partner with State Refugee Coordinators and ORR Regional Representatives to develop strategies, share information and sponsor cross-training opportunities focused on the culture and language of refugee populations in your state and community with existing Early Head Start, Head Start, child care, Pre-K, CCR&Rs, early childhood education providers and child care subsidy staff.
- Translate outreach, training and technical assistance materials, and partner with refugee resettlement agencies to determine culturally and linguistically appropriate child care information for refugee consumers and service providers within state and local child care licensing and quality improvement programs.
- Partner to explore opportunities for refugees to become child care providers, particularly in areas with large resettled communities.

Policies That Support High Quality, Continuous Care For Refugee Children

OCC released an Information Memorandum on CCDF Continuity of Care on September 11, 2011, strongly encouraging CCDF Lead Agencies to develop and implement policies that: (1) promote continuity within the child care subsidy system and (2) are child-focused, family-friendly, and fair to providers. It also included a menu of policy options that CCDF lead agencies

can take into consideration when developing policies to support continuity of care for the children of refugee families. (Please see CCDF-ACF-IM-2011-06 for more detail at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/im2011-06>.)

Child care agencies and the refugee resettlement network should consider the policy recommendations in this IM as a starting point for coordination and partnerships.

Recommended subsidy policies include:

- Develop eligibility policies that are family-friendly, including establishing longer periods between eligibility redeterminations and prioritizing services for vulnerable populations such as refugee families.
- Allow for continued eligibility during changes in family circumstance, such as providing services during periods of job search and establishing tiered eligibility to allow for wage growth.
- Coordinate between agencies to increase stability of services, such as by aligning eligibility periods with other early education programs (e.g., Head Start) or sharing information about other benefit programs that may benefit refugee families.
- Review policies and strategies to jointly identify and target vulnerable refugee children for placement in high-quality child care.
- Embed these strategies and others, as appropriate, in quality rating and improvement systems.

Partnerships

CCDF lead agencies and their partners can facilitate the successful transition of refugees into U.S. society by ensuring that refugees and resettlement networks are considered throughout service programs, funding opportunity announcements, technical assistance, outreach and partnership initiatives and linkages with CCR&R networks. This includes helping refugees find high-quality, affordable early-learning opportunities; helping refugee child care providers to meet state and local requirements, including licensing, so that they can receive child care subsidies and federal, state or local funding opportunities to start or improve their child care programs.

To assure refugee families are considered in strategic planning efforts between state and local early childhood and school-age care systems, Office of Refugee Resettlement State Coordinators, its Regional Representatives and local grantee planners can invite partners from both refugee and early childhood systems to join their strategic planning efforts.

CCDF funded programs, Early Head Start, Head Start, CCR&R agencies, and shared services agencies can include refugee populations and stakeholders in:

- initiatives, discussions, events, agendas, or meetings with partners,
- strategic plans and other agency communication,
- public engagement, listservs, and outreach efforts,
- relevant boards, committees, events, and councils.

Please direct all inquiries to:

ORR's Regional Representatives and OCC's Regional Program Managers can work together to help facilitate introductory state/regional meetings between State Refugee Coordinators, resettlement agencies and CCDF agencies (and other relevant partners).

➤ The OCC Regional Program Manager within your corresponding ACF Regional Office:
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/contacts>;

➤ The ORR Regional Representative* within your corresponding ACF Regional Office:

Region IV—Faith Hurt, Faith.Hurt@acf.hhs.gov 404.562.2847

Region VIII—Dee Daniels Scriven, Dee.DanielsScriven@acf.hhs.gov 303.844.1147

***Note:** ORR's regional structure is currently undergoing expansion; ACF's Regional Administrators may also serve as resources/facilitators together with OCC's representatives in the pending regions (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/oro>).

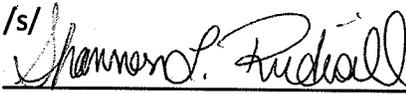
For more information please visit our websites:

Office of Refugee Resettlement: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr>

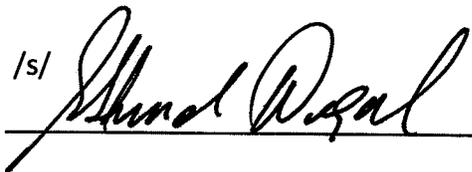
ACF Early Childhood Development: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd>

OCC: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/programs/child-care>

OHS: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/programs/head-start>

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Shannon L. Rudisill
Director
Office of Child Care

/s/ 

Eskinder Negash
Director
Office of Refugee Resettlement