

FACT SHEET



REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

Program Description

The California Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP) and the Cuban and Haitian Entrant Program (CHEP) are administered by the Refugee Programs Bureau (RPB) under the Child Care and Refugee Programs Branch, Welfare to Work Division. The RPB supervises county administration of the RRP and the CHEP within the parameters of federal regulations, state statutes, and the State Plan for Refugee/Entrant Assistance and Services.

The RPB is committed to leading California in the efficient administration of the RRP and CHEP and coordinating refugee programs and services to achieve successful refugee resettlement that fosters early employment and self-sufficiency. These efforts support the Department's priority goal of improving the state's work participation rate.

Who We Serve

Refugees are individuals who are unable to return to their country of origin because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

Cuban and Haitian Entrants are nationals of Cuba and Haiti who are in the United States (U.S.) and are granted a special status by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Asylees are individuals who are in the U.S., either legally or without documents, and fear that they will be persecuted if they return to their home country. To become classified as an asylee, the person must go through an immigration hearing or court process.

Certain Amerasians from Vietnam who are admitted to the U.S. as immigrants pursuant to Section 584 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1988.

Human Trafficking Victims are victims of modern-day slavery, which include young children, teenagers, men, and women that are subjected to force, fraud, or

coercion, for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 made adult victims who have been certified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services eligible for benefits and services to the same extent as refugees. The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003 made certain family members of trafficking victims eligible for benefits and services to the same extent as are refugees. Victims of severe forms of trafficking who are under 18 years of age are also eligible for benefits to the same extent as refugees but do not need to be certified.

When the term "refugee" is used in this fact sheet, it is intended to include all eligible populations as described above.

Effective January 1, 2007, Senate Bill (SB) 1569 was implemented that created a program which extends eligibility for state-funded public social services to non-citizen victims of human trafficking, domestic violence and other serious crimes to the same extent as refugees. For more information on SB 1569, please see the Human Trafficking fact sheet on the RPB website at www.cdss.ca.gov/refugeeprogram.

California's Refugee Population

California has received over 650,000 refugees* since 1975. The largest refugee groups are currently coming from the former Soviet Union, Southeast Asia, the former Yugoslavia, Iran, and Africa. Prior to 1990, refugees were primarily from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in connection with the Vietnam Conflict. The number of refugees arriving in California has been declining in the past few years mostly due to enhanced federal security and screening requirements and procedures. However, the number of asylees and trafficking victims eligible for services has increased.

*The term "refugees" in this section is limited to refugees and does not include other groups.

Benefits and Services

Cash Assistance

Refugees are eligible to apply for the same assistance programs as U.S. citizens, including the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Program, Food Stamps, Medi-Cal, Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment Program, and General Relief.

Single adults or couples who are not eligible for other welfare assistance may be eligible to receive Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) for their first eight months in the U.S. Eligibility for RCA primarily parallels that of the CalWORKs Program.

Counties must provide RCA benefits to refugees that apply for and are eligible to receive RCA and are not eligible for any other cash assistance. The RCA Program and related administrative costs are 100 percent federally-funded under the RRP.

Employment Services

Refugees who have been in the U.S. for five years or less are eligible to participate in employment services designed to help them become employed within one year or to retain employment after finding a job. These services are provided through the Refugee Social Services (RSS) and/or Targeted Assistance (TA) Programs.

Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) Program

The URM Program provides foster care services for refugee children who have come to the U.S. without parents or a close relative to care for them. The RPB, in coordination with Catholic Charities of San Jose, operates the URM Program in California.

Funding

Funding for refugee services is 100 percent federal and has the following components: Cash and Medical Administration (CMA), Formula RSS, Formula TA, Older Refugee Discretionary and the Refugee School Impact Grant.

CMA Funding

CMA funding is provided to the state for reimbursement of costs associated with administering the RCA and the URM programs. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) reimburses all counties' costs for administering the RCA program.

Formula RSS Funding

Formula RSS funding is awarded to the state by ORR based on refugee arrivals during the most recent three

federal fiscal years (FFYs). CDSS then allocates the Formula RSS funding to eligible counties. The eligible counties that receive Formula RSS funds for FFY 2007/08 are Alameda, Fresno, Los Angeles, Merced, Orange, Sacramento, San Diego*, San Francisco, San Joaquin, Santa Clara, and Yolo.

Funding is allocated to these counties based on the number of refugees currently receiving cash assistance in each county. For FFY 2007/08, California was awarded \$8,555,156.

*A voluntary agency in San Diego County receives Formula RSS funds directly from ORR to operate an alternative program to assist refugees.

Formula TA Funding

Formula TA funding is awarded to the state for specific counties with large refugee populations and high refugee concentrations to facilitate employment and self sufficiency. The counties are determined by ORR once every three years. ORR uses a formula that takes into consideration both the number of refugee arrivals during the most recent five FFYs and the percentage that refugee arrivals represent to the overall county's population to identify eligible counties.

There are four California counties currently eligible to receive Formula TA funding: Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Diego, and Santa Clara. The CDSS allocates funding to these counties based on the amounts determined by ORR. For FFY 2007/08, California was awarded \$4,080,571.

Older Refugee Discretionary Funding

Older Refugee Discretionary funding is awarded through a competitive application process for a five-year period, with subsequent years awarded on a non-competitive continuation basis.

Nine counties participate in this grant: Alameda, Fresno, Los Angeles, Merced, Orange, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, and Santa Clara. Projects provide outreach to the state's older refugee population to link them with mainstream programs for the elderly and provide assistance with the citizenship process.

Funding is allocated to participating counties based on the number of older refugees currently receiving cash assistance in each county. In FFY 2007/08, California competed for and was awarded \$263,125.

Refugee School Impact Grant

The Refugee School Impact Grant is awarded through a competitive application process and is potentially

eligible for a total of five years with the second through fifth year awards on a non-competitive continuation basis.

This grant promotes coordination among the refugee county coordinators, local school districts and community-based organizations to better serve refugee children in their communities. In coordination with the California Department of Education (CDE), funding is provided to local school districts through a Request for Proposal process in five counties designated by ORR: Alameda, Fresno, Los Angeles, Sacramento, and Santa Clara. For FFY 2007/08, California was awarded continuation funding in the amount of \$1.7 million.

Collaborative Partners

Successful refugee resettlement is a collaborative effort requiring the cooperation and coordination of a number of agencies both within and outside of state government. The following is a list of the agencies that the RPB collaborates with to coordinate services.

County Welfare Departments (CWDs)

California's welfare programs are supervised by the CDSS and administered in the 58 counties by the CWDs. These agencies accept applications for cash assistance, determine eligibility and need, deliver benefits and services, and make referrals to other agencies and providers when appropriate. The CWDs may also provide services to refugees directly or through subcontracts in counties eligible to receive RSS and TA.

Employment Services Providers

Providers of refugee employment services are selected by the counties through a competitive bid process. Many non-profit agencies, including refugee community-based organizations, have been formed specifically for the purpose of aiding refugee resettlement by providing linguistically and culturally appropriate services.

Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGs)

Resettlement services by the VOLAGs include core services provided within the first 90 days of arrival in the U.S. These services include reception and placement services; counseling and referral services in the areas of orientation, health, employment, and coordination with local services; and assistance to children separated from parents. Each VOLAG provides a variety of optional services beyond these core services as the individual agency's ability permits.

Private Foundations

A number of philanthropic foundations in California play an active role in refugee resettlement. They fund agencies to provide services and to perform functions for refugees that are not funded with public resources.

Advisory Groups

Many advisory groups currently in existence are directly involved in refugee issues. Refugee resettlement is the primary concern for these groups. They are: State Advisory Council on Refugee Assistance and Services, Local Forums on Refugee Affairs, and Joint Voluntary Agencies Committee of California.

State Agencies

The CDSS works with a number of State agencies to coordinate services for refugees. A description of these agencies and their responsibilities are listed below:

The California Department of Health Care Services administers the Medi-Cal Program, pursuant to the California State Plan for Medical Assistance and Title XIX of the Social Security Act. Refugee Medical Assistance\Entrant Medical Assistance is administered in conformity with the State Plan for Medical Assistance, with certain exceptions required by the Refugee Act of 1980.

The California Department of Public Health administers the Refugee Health Assessment Program, which funds refugee-impacted local health jurisdictions to provide comprehensive refugee health assessments.

The California Department of Aging provides information on services and resources for elderly refugees, which the CDSS disseminates to interested organizations and local governments through its website.

The CDSS provides the California Department of Mental Health (CDMH) with information on newly arriving refugee populations and their unique needs, such as language and cultural barriers to services. The CDSS and the CDMH coordinate to increase the access to mental health services by refugees.

The CDE provides a wide variety of educational services, including traditional kindergarten through twelfth grade, adult education, English-as-a-Second Language instruction, and vocational education. Since FFY 2005/06, the CDSS has partnered with the CDE on the Refugee School Impact Grant.