

Unaccompanied Refugee Minors

Program Goal

Through its network of caretakers, the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program helps unaccompanied minor refugees develop appropriate skills to enter adulthood and to achieve social self-sufficiency.

General Background

The State Department identifies refugee children overseas who are eligible for resettlement in the U.S., but do not have a parent or a relative available and committed to providing for their long term care. Upon arrival in the U.S., these refugee children are placed into the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) program and receive refugee foster care services and benefits.

The program was originally developed in the 1980s to address the needs of thousands of children in Southeast Asia without a parent or guardian to care for them. Since 1980, almost 13,000 minors have entered the URM program. At its peak in 1985, ORR provided protection to 3,828 children in care. Now in various States, ORR has about 700 children in care. While most children are placed in licensed foster homes, other licensed care settings are utilized according to children's individual needs, such as therapeutic foster care, group homes, residential treatment centers, and independent living programs.

Program Description

The program establishes legal responsibility, under State law, to ensure that unaccompanied minor refugees and entrants receive the full range of assistance, care, and services which are available to all foster children in the State; a legal authority is designated to act in place of the child's unavailable parent(s). Reunification of children with their parents or other appropriate adult relatives is encouraged, through family tracing and coordination with local refugee resettlement agencies. Additional services provided include: indirect financial support for housing, food, clothing, medical care and other necessities; intensive case management by social workers; independent living skills training; educational supports; English language training; career/college counseling and training; mental health services; assistance adjusting immigration status; cultural activities; recreational opportunities; support for social integration; and cultural and religious preservation.

Refugee children who enter the U.S. with family but experience a family breakdown may be eligible to participate in the URM program. ORR's State Letters on [reclassification](#) to URM status provide the standards used to determine if such a child may access the program.

Children eligible for the URM Program are under age 18, are unaccompanied, and are:

- Refugees
- Entrants
- Asylees
- Victims of Trafficking

Two lead [voluntary agencies](#)— Lutheran Immigration Refugee Service (LIRS) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) – help ORR with the unaccompanied refugee minor program.

These agencies conduct several important functions for the URM program. They identify eligible children in need of URM services; provide technical assistance in the reclassification process; determine appropriate placements for children among their national networks of affiliated agencies; and conduct

training, research and technical assistance on URM services.

Geographic Locations

Phoenix, AZ; Southern California; San Jose, CA; Denver, CO; Washington, DC; Miami, FL; Boston/Worcester, MA; Lansing, MI; Grand Rapids, MI; Jackson, MS; Fargo, ND; Rochester, NY; Syracuse, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Dallas/Fort Worth, TX; Houston, TX; Salt Lake City, UT; Richmond, VA; Tacoma, WA; Seattle, WA.

For more information, contact the appropriate [State Refugee Coordinator](#).

Policy Information

- 45 CFR Part 400, Subpart H Child Welfare Services;
- Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) section 412 (a) (6);
- INA section 412 (d) (2) (A);
- INA section 412 (d) (2) (B);
- Title V of the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980;
- [State Letter #01-27](#) Policy Issuance: Re-classification to Unaccompanied Minor Program
- [State Letter #02-07](#) Reclassification of Unaccompanied Minors
- [Statement of Goals, Priorities, Standards, and Guidelines](#)
- [State Letter #09-09](#) Clarification of Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) Eligibility for Chafee (Independent Living) Funds and Education and Training Vouchers (ETV)

Key: Office of Refugee Resettlement

DRA - Division of Refugee Assistance
DCR - Division of Community Resettlement
OFM - Office of Financial Management
DBPDA - Division of Budget, Policy, and Data Analysis

Funding Opportunities

[Click here for information.](#)

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