



Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services

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**Serving Foreign-Born Foster Children:
A Resource for Meeting the Special Needs of Refugee Youth
and Children**

By

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BRYCS is a joint project of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) and
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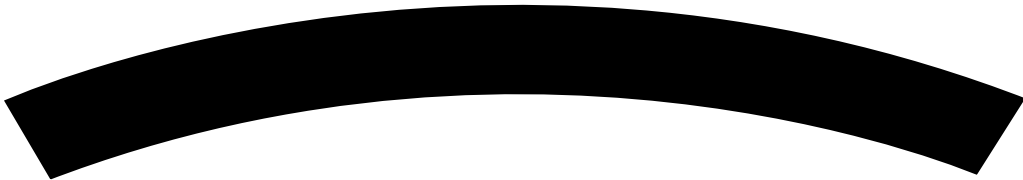
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Executive Summary

The United States becomes more diverse every day, in part because our nation offers refuge to certain foreign-born persons who escape from persecution and war. When such children need a refuge of their own, however, we are often unprepared to serve them appropriately.

Serving Refugee and Foreign-Born Foster Children addresses the special needs of refugee children in the U.S. public foster care system. It introduces service providers to challenges and opportunities for interagency and interorganizational collaboration and highlights salient issues concerning foster care service for refugee children. The paper provides resources as well as lessons learned from technical assistance efforts related to refugee child welfare and from the specialized refugee foster care system funded by the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Through information sharing and collaboration, public foster care services, refugee community associations, and other service providers can ensure that the needs of refugee children are not overlooked. Combining the strengths of these various organizations and institutions offers great potential for fresh approaches and programming that benefit refugee foster children.

Working With Refugee Children in the Public Foster Care System

Refugee children come from a wide range of countries of origin, yet they have in common early experiences with war, persecution, trauma, loss, separation, and uncertainty. If child welfare and foster care workers are to effectively assess and meet this group's special needs, they must first identify them as refugees and learn about each child's unique path both to the United States and to service by the public agency.

Identifying a child's refugee status early on can cue the agency to look into the child's possible past experience with war or persecution and associated social, emotional, and psychological processes. It also can help the agency identify the full range of state- and federally funded services for which a child is eligible and the particular service providers and community representatives who can play important roles in supporting the child.

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), Administration on Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, funds specialized social services for refugees. In addition, it provides services to eligible foreign-born persons in several specific categories: asylees, Cuban or Haitian entrants, Amerasians, victims of torture, and victims of severe forms of human trafficking. Most ORR-funded services are designed to support the development of self-sufficiency among refugees and other eligible populations for up to 5 years after arrival; ORR also supports a specialized refugee foster care system and discretionary programs. The care of undocumented minors in federal custody is also a responsibility of ORR, although such children are not eligible for all of the same services as refugees.

Child welfare agencies may find that linking a child and his or her family to such services can be a critical intervention for the child, one that is in line with both the agency's mission of supporting the safety and well-being of children and ORR's mission to promote self-sufficiency. Taking the time to identify and procure appropriate resources for foreign-born children who may not have refugee status but who fall into one of ORR's special categories can make a significant difference in children's lives and outcomes.

Assessing the Needs of Refugee and Other Foreign-Born Children

Many factors can influence the adjustment of refugee children and families. It is important to conduct an in-depth assessment of the unique circumstances, experiences, and background of each refugee child and any family members. Child welfare workers should avoid making assumptions about a particular child's

needs on the basis of knowledge about other people from the same ethnic group or country of origin. Agencies can avoid complicating their service delivery by approaching each case on an individual basis and continually testing cultural and other assumptions through a comprehensive assessment process.

Foreign-born children and youth face the daunting task of developing a positive sense of self while adjusting to a new culture and navigating the developmental transition to adulthood. Therefore, while helping refugee children navigate relationships and systems in their new environment, service providers must also ensure that refugee children have support in developing their cultural, ethnic, and religious identities. In doing so, they promote development of a positive bicultural identity. Child welfare workers should consider the following factors in determining foster placements and other resources for refugee children:

- **Role of family and community.** Kinship care arrangements are an important placement option for refugee children. Some of the current trends in child welfare practice, such as family- or community-centered practices, are promising in that they empower and draw upon resources already within the family and community. Many refugee cultures rely heavily on extended family and community involvement in childrearing.
- **Meeting children’s cultural needs.** Placement in refugee foster homes or homes that otherwise help children draw on their own cultures while they adjust to life in the United States can be critical.
- **Family dispersal and possibilities for reunification.** Child welfare workers should keep in mind that the war and persecution that cause people to flee their homelands often result in family members dispersing amid chaotic conditions. It is not unusual for parents and children to be separated for years; however, family members lost to a refugee child may be located and may be able to resettle in the United States.
- **Secondary migration.** Secondary migration refers to refugees’ migration from their point of first resettlement to another location in the United States. As a result of this mobility, the social support and community resources available to a refugee foster child may vary significantly.
- **Possibilities for independent living.** Despite the benefits of foster families, independent or semi-independent living programs may be more suitable for some older refugee youth, particularly if a youth was separated from caregivers for an extended period of time while fleeing his or her country of origin or while waiting for the opportunity to resettle in the United States.
- **Specialized programs.** The specialized refugee foster care programs funded by ORR were designed to meet the needs of unaccompanied refugee minors (URMs)—that is, refugee children who arrive in the United States unaccompanied by parents or other caregivers. Some refugee children experiencing family breakdowns and those in the special categories listed earlier may be reclassified to URM status in order to receive services from the ORR-funded refugee foster care system.

Developing Refugee Foster Families and Other Supports for Refugee Children

Developing refugee foster families and other sources of support within refugee communities holds great promise for bolstering refugee children’s existing strengths in the areas of culture, religion, language, and ethnic ties. However, developing this type of foster family can be a complex and resource-intensive endeavor that calls for a strategic approach to recruiting, training, licensing, and retaining refugee families as foster families. Working with refugee foster families may involve the following challenges:

- Building trust and relationships with the leadership in each of the target communities is a critical early step, one that takes persistence and patience. In addition, it is important for foster care agencies to learn about unique opportunities for conducting outreach with each community.

- Refugee families willing to provide shelter to a child may approach the task with operating assumptions that differ from those of the agency. It is important that the training process anticipate and address cultural differences.
- Refugees face the challenge of providing home environments consistent with their own cultures while achieving standards of childrearing consistent with agency requirements.
- Refugee families often maintain busy schedules while juggling the demands of caring for their own children, adjusting to a new culture, and becoming economically stable. Thus, families' availability for the duration of the training and licensing process can be an issue.
- Other challenges include explaining foster care in a culturally relevant manner and devoting the staff time and resources necessary to help bridge cultural and language barriers.

Given the complexity and time involved in developing foster families and other supports for refugee children, **public agencies may do well to collaborate with community-based refugee organizations and other refugee-serving agencies.** Not only do such organizations have access to families and individuals who may make excellent resources for children, they also can be a source of information to the agency about the communities that they serve. Finally, when conducting permanency planning for refugee children, agencies may find it useful to consider resources in the wider cultural, linguistic, and religious communities to which a child belongs.

Conclusion

It is often said that refugees who migrate to the United States from other hemispheres are true survivors with great strengths. Many refugees left their countries of origin because their cultures were under attack. As a result, they may feel a responsibility to help raise children from their own community to preserve traditions that might otherwise be lost to the children. Such families may be challenging for public agencies to locate or develop as foster care resources, but they may provide an unequalled service to refugee foster children with special linguistic, cultural, or other needs. Thus, it is important to have refugee families in any pool of foster placement options.

1. Overview

The United States of America becomes more diverse every day, in part because our nation offers refuge to certain foreign-born persons who escape from persecution and war. When such children need a refuge of their own, however, we are often unprepared to serve them appropriately. In many ways we are richer for our diversity, yet our public agencies, including various child welfare services, often struggle to serve new constituencies. This publication addresses the special needs of refugee children in the U.S. public foster care system. It also provides resources to help foster care agencies better serve the refugee children in their care.

Through information sharing and collaboration, public foster care services, refugee communities and other service providers can ensure that the needs of this important population are not overlooked. Combining the strengths of these various organizations and institutions offers great potential for fresh approaches to services that benefit refugee foster children.

Refugees

International agreements define refugees as people who are outside their home country and cannot return as a result of a well-founded fear of persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Refugees in the United States are people who fit this description and have received legal refugee status from the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security¹ prior to resettling in this country.

Although it is true that refugee children have special needs, they also have many of the same needs as other foreign-born children in the United States. Readers will find that much of the information in this paper applies to their work with foreign-born children who do not have refugee status. It also applies to work with foreign-born families who have the potential to become foster families and to community members who are able to serve as companions and mentors.

Contents

This paper is intended for public foster care administrators and workers who are responsible for meeting the needs of children in foster care. It is also likely to be a valuable resource for refugee institutions interested in serving as resources to children in need, such as ethnic community organizations and mutual assistance associations (MAAs). Houses of worship attended by refugees, resettlement and other refugee-serving agencies, and offices of state coordinators of refugee resettlement may also find this guide useful.

As far as we know, this is the first document to highlight the needs of refugee children in the U.S. public foster care system and to describe opportunities for service collaboration. Thus, it is a first step in what is likely to be a complex and lengthy process of gathering information, generating program ideas, implementing and evaluating new approaches, and refining the service response. This paper does not seek to be an exhaustive source on any of the topics addressed; rather, its aim is to raise awareness and provide suggestions for further exploration. It does not address the specific needs of particular refugee groups, and it focuses more on foster care placement than on permanency planning issues. As an introduction to the issues, this paper may raise more questions than it answers. Its main purpose is to help service providers begin exploring opportunities for meeting the needs of local refugee foster children.

This paper introduces service providers to challenges and opportunities for interagency and interorganizational collaboration and highlights salient issues concerning foster care service for refugee

¹ Prior to the creation of the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service held this responsibility.

children, cultural competence, and the U.S. refugee social service system. The paper provides resource ideas as well as lessons learned from technical assistance efforts related to refugee child welfare, the specialized refugee foster care system, and results of a roundtable discussion between refugee community and foster care representatives. It is hoped that this document will support local exploration of partnerships and programming to benefit refugee foster children.

Sources

This paper synthesizes information gathered through several technical assistance and resource development projects conducted between 2001 and 2003 by Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (BRYCS), a partnership designed to expand the scope of information sharing and collaboration among service providers for refugee youth and children and their families. The document compiles information from sources as varied as literature reviews, case consultations, focus groups, community meetings, in-depth discussions with service providers, online assessments, interagency meetings and trainings, and the practice wisdom of BRYCS staff and the children's services departments of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS). Appendix 3 includes a list of source projects for this document. More information, including the full lists of resources resulting from several projects, can be found on the BRYCS Web site (www.brycs.org).

The results of an original BRYCS information-gathering effort are presented in Section 7 and in Appendices 1 and 2; these sections highlight promising practices suggested by the specialized refugee foster care programs through in-depth individual discussions.

2. Child Welfare and Foster Care: Refugee-Specific Considerations

Refugee children come from a wide range of countries of origin, yet they have in common early experiences with war, persecution, trauma, loss, separation, and uncertainty. If child welfare and foster care workers are to effectively assess and meet this group's special needs, they must first identify them as refugees and learn about each child's unique path both to the United States and to service by the public agency.

This section describes special considerations in delivering child welfare and foster care services to refugee children: identifying children as refugees; assessing the needs of refugee children; considering placement options; developing refugee foster families; and permanency planning in the face of sometimes unknowable factors, such as the existence or whereabouts of relatives.

Identifying Children as Refugees or as Eligible for Refugee-Oriented Services

When foreign-born children are identified as needing public child welfare services, many agencies find that the first step—that is, identifying the family's country of origin and language—can be challenging, particularly when the population in question is new to the agency. It is important to take measures to secure the linguistic and cultural resources necessary to support a full assessment of the child's circumstances and needs.

Identifying a child's refugee status early on can cue the agency to look into a child's possible past experience with war or persecution and the child's associated social, emotional, and psychological processes. It also can help the agency identify the full range of state- and federally funded services for which a child and his or her family are eligible as well as locate particular service providers and community representatives who can play important roles in supporting the child.

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, funds social services for refugees for the purpose of promoting refugee self-sufficiency. In addition, several specific categories of foreign-born persons may be eligible for the social services available to refugees: asylees,² Cuban or Haitian entrants, Amerasians, victims of torture, and victims of severe forms of human trafficking. Children in these categories may be eligible for ORR's discretionary programs or ORR-funded specialized refugee foster care services. The care of undocumented minors in federal custody is also an ORR responsibility, although such children are not eligible for all of the same services as refugees.

Child welfare agencies may find that linking a child and his or her family to specialized services can be a critical intervention for the child, one that is in line with both the agency's mission of supporting the

Resources: Eligibility for ORR Services

For definitions and information on eligibility for services, see the following Office of Refugee Resettlement Web pages:

- www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/index.htm
- www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/benefits/index.htm

² Refugees (including refugee children) receive their protective legal status in a foreign country before resettling in the United States. Asylees enter the country without such status and successfully make a case for protection after arrival.

safety and well-being of children and ORR's mission of promoting self-sufficiency. For example, additional supports in the short term may enable the development of a stable home environment, allowing for family reunification and preservation, and may help the family function without continued reliance on public child welfare services. However, if it turns out that family reunification is not feasible, specialized refugee foster care services may equip the child for self-sufficiency in preparation for adulthood.

In many ways, determining the status of and services available to refugee children is easier than for other foreign-born children. The journey of a refugee to the United States involves considerable documentation by international and U.S. agencies. Refugees all receive reception and placement services for a minimum of 90 days upon arrival; adult family members should be able to name the assisting agency in their initial city of resettlement. Through contact with local resettlement agencies, it may be possible, when confidentiality policies allow, to gain information critical to assessment and placement decisions, such as contacts for other family or ethnic community members in the United States.

Taking additional time to identify and procure appropriate resources for foreign-born children who may not have refugee status but who are asylees, Cuban or Haitian entrants, Amerasians, victims of torture, victims of severe forms of human trafficking, or undocumented minors in federal custody can make a significant difference in children's lives and outcomes. Cuban and Haitian entrants, victims of trafficking, undocumented minors, and some victims of torture face immigration proceedings when attempting to adjust their immigration status or, in the case of undocumented minors, after coming to the attention of federal authorities. Children should never have to represent themselves in legal cases, including immigration cases; they should have access to legal help. Child welfare agencies can play an important role in the long-term safety, stability, and self-sufficiency of such children by linking them with appropriate attorneys, in addition to providing targeted assessment and intervention.

In March 2003, undocumented children in federal custody were placed under the jurisdiction of ORR's new Division of Unaccompanied Children's Services (DUCS). At this writing, ORR was in the process of developing procedures for the care of such children. Note that these children are not eligible for the same benefits and services as children with refugee status. Children under the care of DUCS are simultaneously undergoing court proceedings with the Executive Office for Immigration Review. Such proceedings can ultimately lead to deportation, so timely and appropriate legal assistance is critical for such children.

Undocumented minors who are not in federal custody but who come to the attention of child welfare agencies may include children who are victims of human trafficking but have not yet been identified as such. Note that the personal security of trafficked children is of considerable concern for assessment,

Resources: Refugees, Asylees, Trafficking Victims, and Undocumented Minors in Federal Custody

- For a fact sheet explaining the differences between refugees and asylees, see the National Immigration Forum's Web site: <http://www.brycs.org/clearinghouse/clearinghouse-resource.cfm?docnum=0085>
- If you are working with an asylee *who has recently been granted asylum*, ORR provides an Asylee Hotline for more information on applicable services in each state. Call 800.354.0365.
- For information on steps to take if you believe you have identified a minor who is a victim of severe forms of human trafficking, such as labor or sexual exploitation, see Appendix 4.
- If you encounter an undocumented minor in federal custody in your work, call ORR's Division of Unaccompanied Children's Services Hotline, at 202.401.5709.

intervention, and follow up. The population of undocumented children also includes children who, with the proper legal assistance, could present a credible case for asylum on the basis of prior experience in their country of origin and their reasons for coming to the United States. An immigration attorney is an essential resource for determining whether an undocumented child is eligible for services available to trafficked or asylee children.

Resources: Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

Some undocumented children may be eligible for an immigration status known as Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, which is available to children in need of long-term foster care, who are under the jurisdiction of a juvenile court, and for whom return to their country of origin is not in their best interest. Consult with an immigration attorney for more information. The Immigrant Legal Resource Center provides a Web-based manual on the topic at <http://www.brycs.org/clearinghouse/clearinghouse-resource.cfm?docnum=0523>.

Intervention by a public agency, along with appropriate legal assistance, may offer a child's best chance at receiving a protective designation and the resources for which he or she is eligible. Such action can mean the difference between a trafficked child being deported to uncertain or dangerous conditions, such as into the hands of traffickers, or the child receiving the full range of services and protection while cooperating with the prosecution's case against their traffickers.

By investing time and resources to find out basic information early in a foreign-born child's case, an agency can contribute to the safety and well-being of children by providing informed child welfare services.

Assessing the Needs of Refugee and Other Foreign-Born Children

Many factors can influence the adjustment of refugee children and families and certain foreign-born children (i.e., asylees, Cuban or Haitian entrants, Amerasians, victims of torture, victims of severe forms of human trafficking, and undocumented minors in federal custody). Appendix 5 lists some of those factors, provides a starting point for assessing the needs of foreign-born children, and lists potential similarities and differences between the groups.

Most refugee children have had direct personal experience with trauma, loss, and separation from loved ones, the scale and specific nature of which differ from what many child welfare and mental health providers generally see with American-born children. It is important to conduct an in-depth assessment of the unique circumstances, experiences, and background of each refugee child. Workers should avoid making assumptions about a particular child's needs on the basis of knowledge about other people from

Resources: Finding an Attorney

Below are resources for children in foster care who need legal assistance with immigration matters:

- American Bar Association www.abanet.org
 - ABA Directory of Pro Bono Programs: www.abanet.org/legalservices/probono/directory.html
 - ABA Commission on Immigration Policy, Practice and Pro Bono: 202.662.1008
- American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA): www.aila.org
 - Immigration Lawyer Referral Service: 800.954.0254
- Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.: (CLINIC): www.cliniclegal.org or 202.635.2556
- LIRS Immigration Service Providers: www.lirs.org/what/partners/ISPs.htm or www.lirs.org/what/partners/a&igrantees2003.htm or 410.230.2700

the same ethnic group or country of origin. Refugees persecuted on the basis of their membership in a particular social group may have very different needs and affiliations from those of other immigrants from the same country, individuals they may perceive as associated with their persecutors. Agencies can avoid complicating their service delivery by approaching each case on an individual basis and continually testing cultural and other assumptions through a comprehensive assessment process.

One challenge that all foreign-born children and youth face is that of developing a positive sense of self while adjusting to a new culture and navigating the developmental transition to adulthood. According to Casey Family Programs, positive ethnic identity formation is key to developing a coherent sense of self. Casey sees development of healthy ethnic identity as requiring the following elements:³

- Identifying with a particular group
- Understanding what membership in a particular group means
- Having positive relationships with members of that group
- Understanding racism and discrimination and developing appropriate coping strategies to mitigate their effects.

Therefore, while helping refugee children navigate relationships and systems in their new environment, service providers must ensure that refugee children have support in developing their cultural, ethnic, and religious identities, thus promoting a positive bicultural identity. Section 4 of this paper, Refugee Children in Public Foster Care, may be useful in preparing for the task of assessment.

Considerations in Determining Initial Foster Placements for Refugee Children

The following sections describe considerations for child welfare workers in determining foster placements for refugee children. Although the primary subject of this working paper is the population of refugee children in public foster care, some of the ideas listed below may apply to other categories of foreign-born children.

Engage Family and Community

Kinship care arrangements are an important placement option for refugee children. In addition, some of the current trends in child welfare practice, such as family- or community-centered practices, family-group decision making, family conferencing, and neighborhood-based approaches, may be helpful in cases involving refugees. The approaches are promising for the same reasons they seem to work with American-born clients: They empower and draw upon resources already within the family and community. Many refugee cultures rely heavily on extended family and community involvement in childrearing.

The very nature of war and international migration almost guarantees separation and loss of social support; the process of adjusting to new circumstances can allow for traditions to be reinterpreted.

Family- and community-oriented approaches to child welfare tend to identify and coalesce sources of support that at first might not be obvious to the agency or families involved. By engaging extended family and community members in an exploration of a child's options, an agency may be able to facilitate a creative and fruitful process that allows the child to be served in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner.

Examine Possibilities for Meeting Children's Cultural Needs

Another promising approach is to place children in refugee foster homes or homes that otherwise help children draw on and remain connected to their own cultures (including languages, religions, and ethnic ties) while adjusting to life in the United States. ORR-funded refugee foster care programs have observed

³ Casey Family Programs. (2000). *A Conceptual Framework of Identity Formation in a Society of Multiple Cultures: Applying Theory to Practice*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. Available at: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED453325.pdf>

that a range of families are able to provide this important benefit to children, particularly families who share some facet of a child's identity, foreign-born families from other parts of the world, and American-born families who have lived abroad. These types of families all have had experience with adjusting to another culture and environment. As a result, they may have developed an understanding of the acculturation process and the importance of affirming and celebrating one's native culture. (See Section 7 and Appendices 1 and 2 for more recommendations on resource development.)

Assess Family Dispersal and Possibilities for Reunification

The war and persecution that cause people to flee their homelands often result in family members dispersing amid chaotic conditions. It is not unusual for parents and children (or sibling groups) to be separated for years. Individual family members may wind up in different countries of first asylum, with different chances for and paths to resettlement. Thus, family reunification always remains a possibility for refugee children who have been separated from family members.

Refugee parents or other relatives may very much want to care for children from whom they have been separated, but they may be caught on the other side of a war. This situation may be new for public agencies; with American-born children, it is generally possible to locate relatives, or at least to determine whether a child has any living relatives. Unlike in the United States, however, the relatives of a refugee child may, for an unknown period of time, be unable to come forward as a result of circumstances beyond their control. Communication systems are notoriously difficult in countries wracked by internal conflict and in nearby refugee camps. Circumstances do change, however, and family members who have been lost to a refugee child may be able to resettle in the United States through their own refugee claims or through family reunification processes.

Conduct Family Tracing

International family tracing has been effective in reuniting separated refugee children with parents, other caregivers, and siblings located overseas. This important element of child welfare service should be initiated early in applicable cases and maintained over time.

The American Red Cross, in conjunction with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and affiliated Red Cross and Red Crescent societies around the globe, offers services to link family members separated by conflict. Although conflict conditions affect family tracing efforts and limit what can be accomplished, the ICRC indicates that its efforts are adapted for different conflicts.

The International Social Service–United States of America Branch (ISS–USA), which works with affiliates in 150 countries, also offers family tracing services. If conditions permit, ISS–USA may be able to arrange for a home study to be conducted and for postplacement supervision if the child joins his or her relative abroad. ISS–USA holds contracts with some states, including Arizona, Florida, Louisiana and New Jersey; requests from other states operate on a fee-for-service basis.

Assess the Impact of Secondary Migration and Ongoing Resettlement

The term *secondary migration* refers to refugees' migration from their point of first resettlement

Resources: International Family Tracing

For international family tracing services, contact your local chapter of the American Red Cross. For information and a Web-based chapter locator, see www.redcross.org/where/chapts.asp.

Background information on family tracing efforts involving the International Committee of the Red Cross can be found at: www.icrc.org/eng/family_links#listanchor1.

The International Social Service–United States of America Branch (ISS–USA) also offers international family tracing services. Contact ISS–USA at 410.230.2734, issusa@lirs.org, or www.iss-usa.org.

to another location in the United States. They may travel to join other members of their ethnic community or because the new location offers good prospects for jobs, schools, and other important needs. As a result of this mobility, the social support and community resources available to a refugee child may change dramatically, depending on whether members of his or her community are entering or leaving the child's local area.

The ongoing resettlement and secondary migration of family members can significantly affect a refugee child's source of support over time. If it becomes necessary to assess or change a child's placement, it may be useful to assess whether recent resettlement or secondary migration of relatives may have changed local or other options for the child's care.

Examine Possibilities for Independent Living

Despite the benefits of foster families, independent or semi-independent living programs may be a more suitable option for some older refugee youth, particularly if a youth was separated from caregivers for an extended period of time while fleeing his or her country of origin or while waiting for the opportunity to resettle in the United States. Youth who have taken responsibility for younger siblings during such circumstances may find it particularly challenging to adjust to living with foster families. Separation from caregivers and responsibility for the care of younger siblings give refugee youth a crash course in survival, independence, responsibility, and navigation of systems. As a result, their skills in these areas may far exceed their expected developmental level.

Explore Specialized Programs

Finally, the ORR-funded specialized refugee foster care programs may be useful resources to refugee children who wind up in public foster care. This system was designed to meet the needs of unaccompanied refugee minors (URMs)—that is, refugee children who arrive in the United States unaccompanied by parents or other caregivers. Refugee children experiencing family breakdown and some children in the special categories listed earlier may be reclassified to URM status in order to receive services from the ORR-funded specialized foster care system. Reclassifications are made at the discretion of and according to criteria provided by the ORR director.

Licensed refugee foster care programs exist in 15 cities throughout the United States; they provide the full range of foster care services available under state law in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner. If local options do not seem appropriate for meeting a refugee child's needs, it may be worth exploring the possibility of placement in the ORR-funded foster care system.

Developing Refugee Foster Families and Other Supports for Refugee Children

To meet the unique cultural, linguistic, religious, and ethnic needs of specific refugee children, it makes sense to include refugee foster homes among placement options. Such families may be hard for public agencies to locate or difficult to develop as foster care resources, but they may provide an unequalled service to refugee children in need, thereby justifying extra efforts to work with them.

Resources: Specialized Refugee Foster Care

For more information on the ORR-funded specialized refugee foster care programs, see ORR's Web page on the Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) programs: <http://www.brycs.org/clearinghouse/clearinghouse-resource.cfm?docnum=0529>.

For a fact sheet and frequently asked questions (FAQ) document, go to:

- <http://www.brycs.org/clearinghouse/clearinghouse-resource.cfm?docnum=0529>
- <http://www.brycs.org/clearinghouse/clearinghouse-resource.cfm?docnum=0525>

It is often said that refugees who migrate to the United States from other hemispheres are true survivors with great strengths. Many left their countries of origin because their cultures were under attack. As a result, they may feel a responsibility to help raise children from their own community to preserve traditions that might otherwise be lost to the children. Developing refugee foster families⁴ and other sources of support within refugee communities holds great promise for bolstering refugee children's existing strengths in the areas of culture, religion, language, and ethnic ties. However, developing this type of foster family is a complex and resource-intensive endeavor that calls for a strategic approach to recruiting, training, licensing, and retaining refugee foster families.

Refugee families willing to provide shelter to a child may approach the task with operating assumptions that differ from those of the agency. It is important that the training process anticipate and address such differences as the following:

- Families around the world rise to the challenge of caring for needy children, but the concept of licensed and regulated foster care is new to many refugees resettling in the United States. For refugees who have experienced persecution at the hands of government employees in their country of origin, it may feel very threatening to expose their families and homes to the level of scrutiny required by a licensing process.
- When families in some countries take in an orphaned or abandoned child, it is not always expected that he or she will be treated in the same manner as other children in the household. For example, in some places it is an accepted practice to assign more household labor to the child.

Refugee foster families in the United States face great challenges. They are expected to provide home environments consistent with their own cultures, yet transcend cultural boundaries to achieve standards of childrearing consistent with agency regulations and licensing requirements. It is worth noting that many American-born families have trouble meeting such standards.

In addition, refugee families, particularly those from newly arrived groups, often maintain busy schedules while juggling the demands of caring for their own children, adjusting to a new culture, learning English, and becoming economically stable. Thus, availability for the duration of the training and licensing process can be an issue, as can resource and space constraints.

In developing a recruitment strategy, it is important to decide which communities to target, to set goals for the number of families to be recruited, and to dedicate a specific staff member for the effort. Building trust and relationships with the leadership in each of the target communities is a critical early step, as is learning about opportunities for conducting outreach with each community. For example, some communities have ethnic media, such as newspapers and radio stations, which may be useful for spreading the word. A simple message, such as “We want children in your community to remain connected to your community, so we need people from your community to become foster parents,” can be very effective.⁵

Other agency challenges in the training and licensing process include explaining foster care in a culturally relevant manner and devoting the staff time and resources necessary to help bridge cultural and language barriers. Given the complexity and time involved in developing foster families and other supporters for refugee children, public agencies may do well to collaborate or contract with refugee-serving agencies

⁴ In this report, references to developing “refugee foster families” generally refer to the process of working to recruit, train, license, and maintain refugees as foster parents. However, in the section “Lessons Learned From the Specialized Refugee Foster Programs” and in Appendices 1 and 2, the term “refugee foster families” is used more loosely to refer to foster parents who are either refugees or are otherwise foreign-born, such as asylees or immigrants.

⁵ This message and other suggestions in this paragraph were provided by Chak Ng, a consultant to BRYCS during a training in St. Louis, Missouri, on March 21, 2002. Ng is a former foster care recruiter for Lutheran Community Services in Seattle, Washington, who is now based at LIRS. For the training report, go to www.brycs.org/brycs_resources.htm.

and refugee communities. It may be particularly useful to develop working relationships with ethnic community associations or mutual assistance associations (MAAs) for particular refugee ethnic groups. The organizations not only have access to families and individuals who may make excellent resources for children but also can be a source of information to the agency about the communities that they serve.

Newly arriving refugee groups tend to be less established than groups that have been in the United States for years. To connect with groups for whom no existing associations exist, it may make sense for foster care agencies to develop relationships with community leaders and institutions frequented by community members, including houses of worship.

Resources: UNHCR Guidelines

See *Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care* (Geneva: UNHCR, 1994). See also www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home.

Permanency Planning for Refugee Children

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has issued guidelines for the development of long-term solutions for refugee children separated from their parents, given that the whereabouts of their biological relatives may be temporarily unknowable. The

nature of conflict and war means that it often takes time and considerable effort to determine whether relatives are alive, where they are located, and what their prospects are for resettlement in the United States. It is also important to assess whether joining those relatives overseas would be in the best interest of the child.

UNHCR's guidelines stress the importance of family tracing and reunification; the child's wishes; and the possibility of voluntary repatriation to the child's homeland, if conditions make doing so safe and feasible. They note that efforts to trace surviving family members should be conducted over a reasonable amount of time, such as two years, before exploring other permanent arrangements. The United States worked with UNHCR to devise and refine these guidelines, consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and international best practice in child welfare. These practices, in turn, are generally consistent with child welfare practices in the United States.

Rules and regulations for the U.S. Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997⁶ allow states to elect not to petition for the termination of parental rights if the child meets legal criteria as an unaccompanied refugee minor (URM). Due to the ever-present possibility that the parents or other relatives of a refugee child will be located, adoption is not always considered an appropriate permanency plan for URMs.

When conducting permanency planning for a refugee child, it may be useful to consider the wider cultural, linguistic, and religious communities to which the child belongs, in addition to options in the local

Resources: Specialized Foster Family Recruitment and Training

LIRS developed *Foster Care: A Fact Sheet for Prospective Muslim Families* to aid in the recruitment of Muslim foster families. It is available at www.brycs.org/documents/FOSTERCA.PDF.

A related document is *Caring for Muslim Minors: Guidelines for Non-Muslim Families*, available at www.brycs.org/documents/CARING~1.PDF

These documents can be used as models for reaching out to foster families from diverse backgrounds and for training families to foster children with particular religious or cultural needs.

⁶ *Federal Register* 65(16):4020-93. January 25, 2000. p. 4090. 45 CFR Parts 1355, 1356, and 1357.

community where he or she is physically located. For example, an agency might choose to use national adoption registries for a child with special needs or to advertise for adoptive homes in the national media of a particular cultural group, in addition to employing conventional local strategies for outreach. Remember, also, that a refugee child's sources of support may change over time as a result of resettlement, international family reunification, and secondary migration in the United States. Consider new options for permanency as changes come about.

Finally, consider whether reclassification to URM status and placement in the specialized ORR-funded refugee foster care system may be in the child's best interest. Such programs are actively involved in international family tracing and reunification activities and provide culturally sensitive foster care services.

Resources: Refugee Cultures and the Migration Process

- BRYCS Clearinghouse: www.brycs.org
- Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, U.S. Department of State: www.state.gov/g/prm
- Center for Applied Linguistics, Cultural Orientation Resource Center: www.cal.org/co/
- Office of Refugee Resettlement, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/index.htm
- Migration Policy Institute: www.migrationpolicy.org
- Minority Rights Group International: www.minorityrights.org
- Save the Children, UK: www.savethechildren.org.uk
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: www.unhcr.ch/
- U.S. Committee for Refugees: www.refugees.org

3. Linguistic and Cultural Competence: Federal and Professional Standards

As our communities become increasingly diverse, agencies struggle to appropriately serve new populations. Working effectively with refugee and other foreign-born populations requires special efforts to bridge language and cultural gaps between agencies and clients. Cases involving refugees often call for more than the usual allocations of staff time and resources. They thus require a level of commitment that can challenge public agencies already facing high caseloads, tight budgets, and the expectations of a wide range of stakeholders. Agencies' and caseworkers' commitment to bridging such language and cultural gaps not only stems from their fundamental professional values but also is a matter of federal law and policy. This section briefly notes some standards that support the pursuit of linguistic and cultural competence in child welfare practice with refugees.

Executive Order and Policy Guidance on Linguistic Access to Services

Federally funded family and child services agencies are required to follow Executive Order 13166, *Improving Access to Services for Persons With Limited English Proficiency (LEP) of 2000*, and associated policy guidance from the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of national origin, Executive Order 13166 requires recipients of federal funding to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to services for people with limited English ability. If a person with limited English proficiency faces barriers to services at federally funded agencies, the agencies could be in violation of the law.

Provisions promoting oral language access are particularly relevant for practice with refugees. As a result of life experience and cultural influence, some refugees are not disposed to find written documents a meaningful method of conveying important information. In addition, some refugee populations have relatively low literacy rates. It is important to assess and tailor agencies' efforts to the needs of the local refugee population. Many agencies will find that focusing on spoken communication is a better investment than translation of documents.

Federal Laws, Regulations, and Policy Guidance Regarding Foster Placement and Permanency Planning

As mentioned earlier, regulations stemming from the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 allow states to elect not to petition for the termination of parental rights if the child meets legal criteria as an unaccompanied refugee minor (URM). They also extend this option to cases in which adoption is not an appropriate permanency goal for the child, no grounds exist for terminating parental rights, international legal obligations or compelling foreign policy reasons dictate against termination, or a child is in the care of relatives.

Resources: Serving Clients of Limited English Proficiency

OCR's Web page on limited English proficiency (www.hhs.gov/ocr/lep) provides access to OCR's policy guidance, a fact sheet, and information on states that have enacted laws or regulations requiring language assistance.

The Interagency Working Group on Limited English Proficiency has representation from 35 federal agencies. Its Web site (www.lep.gov) provides access to information and guidance for federally funded activities as well as to demographic data on language use.

MEPA, IEAP, and Policy Guidance

Together, the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994⁷ and Section 1808 of the Small Business and Job Protection Act of 1996, commonly referred to as the “Interethnic Adoption Provisions” (IEAP),⁸ are relevant for practice with refugee children. The laws aim to ensure that federally funded foster and adoptive placements are not delayed or denied on the basis of race, color, or national origin—of either the child or the prospective parent—in accordance with the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

A 1997 memorandum from the OCR director and the ACF principal deputy assistant secretary advised regional OCR and ACF officers that “discrimination is not to be tolerated, whether it is directed toward adults who wish to serve as foster or adoptive parents, toward children who need safe and appropriate homes, or toward communities or populations which may heretofore have been under utilized as a resource for placing children.”⁹

The *Child Welfare Policy Manual* states:

Public agencies may not routinely consider race, national origin and ethnicity in making placement decisions. Any considerations of these factors must be done on an individualized basis where special circumstances indicate that their consideration is warranted. A practice of assessing all children for their needs in this area would be inconsistent with an approach of individually considering these factors only when specific circumstances indicate that it is warranted.¹⁰

Assessment of the needs of children in foster care, particularly of any special needs that could help to determine the most appropriate placement, is an essential element of social work practice for children in out-of-home care, one that is critical to an agency’s ability to achieve the best interests of the child.

Section 1808 of Public Law 104-188 (IEAP) addresses only race, color, and national origin and does not address the consideration of culture in placement decisions. Cultural needs may be important in certain placement decisions, as when a child has specific language needs. However, a public agency’s consideration of culture would raise Section 1808 issues if the agency used culture as a proxy for race, color, or national origin. Thus, although nothing in Section 1808 directly prohibits a public agency from assessing the cultural needs of all children in foster care, Section 1808 would prohibit an agency from using routine cultural assessments in a manner that would circumvent the law’s prohibition against the routine consideration of race, color or national origin.¹¹

Resources: MEPA, IEAP, and Policy Guidance

For more information on MEPA, IEAP, and associated federal policy guidance, see the following Web page and its linked pages:

- *Multiethnic Placement Act and Interethnic Adoption Provisions*: www.hhs.gov/ocr/mepa
- *Necessary Components of Effective Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment*: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/pi/1995/pi9523a4.htm

⁷ Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994. P.L. 103-382. Available at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/mepa94/index.htm>.

⁸ Small Business and Job Protection Act of 1996, Interethnic Adoption Provisions. P.L. 104-188. Available at: http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/general/legal/federal/pl104_188.cfm.

⁹ Hayashi, D., & Golden, O. (June 4, 1997). Interethnic Adoption Provisions of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996 [Memorandum]. p. 4. Available at: www.hhs.gov/ocr/iepguide.htm.

¹⁰ Children’s Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Child Welfare Policy Manual*. Available at: www.acf.hhs.gov/cwpm/programs/cb/laws_policies/laws/cwpm/index.jsp.

¹¹ Child Welfare Policy Manual, Section 4.3, MEPA/IEAP, Guidance for Compliance, Answer 3. Available at: www.acf.hhs.gov/cwpm/programs/cb/laws_policies/laws/cwpm/pdf/cwpm4.pdf.

OCR and ACF note that “only the most compelling reasons may serve to justify consideration of race and ethnicity as part of a placement decision. Such reasons are likely to emerge only in unique and individual circumstances. Accordingly, occasions where race or ethnicity lawfully may be considered in a placement decision will be correspondingly rare.”¹² Thus, it is important for workers to explore refugee children’s unique histories with persecution, flight, and resettlement early in the process to enable informed assessments of whether the child’s cultural, ethnic, and linguistic needs should be considered in foster placement decision making. Little guidance is available as to which “compelling reasons” justify consideration of either ethnicity or country of origin in placement decisions; OCR and ACF, however, note that “it is conceivable that an older child or adolescent might express an unwillingness to be placed with a family of a particular race . . . in such an individual situation . . . the child’s ideas of what would make her or him most comfortable should not be dismissed. . . .”¹³

Similarly, the *Child Welfare Policy Manual* states that “agencies are not prohibited from discussing with prospective adoptive and foster parents their feelings, capacities and preferences regarding caring for a child of a particular race or ethnicity, just as they discuss other individualized issues related to the child.”¹⁴ Such information may be incorporated in a “general placement decision, in which the strengths and weaknesses of prospective parents to meet all of a child’s needs are weighed so as to provide for the child’s best interests, and prospective parents are provided the information they need realistically to assess their capacity to parent a particular child.”¹⁵ The *Manual* also notes that “an agency may not rely on generalizations about the needs of children of a particular race or ethnicity or on generalizations about the abilities of prospective parents of one race or ethnicity to care for a child of another race or ethnicity.”¹⁶

MEPA also prohibits denials of the opportunity to become a foster or adoptive parent on the basis of race, color, or national origin. It amends Title IV(B) of the Social Security Act by adding the following language: “The State plan [for child welfare services] must provide for the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.”¹⁷ Accordingly, the *Manual* states,

[I]n order to achieve timely and appropriate placement of all children, placement agencies need an adequate pool of families capable of promoting each child’s development and case goals. This requires that each agency’s recruitment process focuses on developing a pool of potential foster and adoptive parents willing and able to foster or adopt the children needing placement. The failure to conduct recruitment in a manner that seeks to provide all children with the opportunity for placement, and all qualified members of the community an opportunity to adopt is inconsistent with the goals of MEPA and could create circumstances which would constitute a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and section 471(a)(18) of the Social Security Act.¹⁸

It also notes that comprehensive recruitment plans should include, among other factors, “a description of the characteristics of waiting children . . . specific strategies to reach all parts of the community . . . strategies for assuring that all prospective parents have access to the home study process, including location and hours of services that facilitate access by all members of the community . . . strategies for

¹² Hayashi and Golden, p. 3.

¹³ Hayashi and Golden, p. 3.

¹⁴ *Child Welfare Policy Manual*, Guidance for Compliance, Answer 2.

¹⁵ *Child Welfare Policy Manual*, Guidance for Compliance, Answer 2.

¹⁶ *Child Welfare Policy Manual*, Guidance for Compliance, Answer 2.

¹⁷ Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994. P.L. 103-382. Title V, Sec. 551 et seq. See also www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/mepa94/index.htm.

¹⁸ *Child Welfare Policy Manual*, Guidance for Compliance, Answer 1.

training staff to work with diverse cultural, racial and economic communities . . . [and] strategies for dealing with linguistic barriers. . .”¹⁹ The *Manual* allows for

targeted recruitment to increase the number of minority families in the pool of families available to provide adoptive or foster care. A State agency may conduct targeted recruitment activities for a special population itself and/or it may utilize the services of a private recruitment agency based on that agency’s understanding of the needs of a specific community. However, targeted recruitment activities cannot be the only vehicle used by a State for identifying families for minority children. The overall recruitment program of the State must be open to all qualified families regardless of race, color or national origin.²⁰

An attached document titled *Necessary Components of Effective Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment* notes that the information on which plans are based should include the following data for children in need of care: “age, gender, race, ethnicity, health status and history, educational level, special challenges and capabilities, and other relevant descriptors.”²¹ It calls for agencies to determine whether their policies, procedures, and practice are culturally competent and notes that successful recruitment strategies work with “natural community mechanisms”²² to develop recruitment messages. Moreover, it notes that successful agencies “have staff of the same cultural/racial heritage as the children and families [and have] staff able to communicate in the language and dialect of the community [and] seek blood and non-blood kin as potential resource families.”²³

Professional Standards

Standards of the Council on Accreditation include many cultural competence provisions. In particular, by applying the community needs assessment or self-study requirement of an accreditation process to local refugee populations, agencies can learn much about the specific needs of refugee children and families and identify useful resources available in the community.

The Child Welfare League of America’s (CWLA) Division of Cultural Competence provides guidance for developing cultural competence on an organizational level. In addition, CWLA’s *Standards of Excellence* are infused with cultural competence recommendations for particular areas of child welfare practice.

Resources: Cultural Competence

Child Welfare League of America (CWLA): www.cwla.org/programs/culturalcompetence

The following CWLA publications may be ordered at: www.cwla.org/pubs/default.htm:

- *Cultural Competence: A Guide for Human Service Agencies (Revised)*
- *Cultural Competence Agency Self-Assessment Instrument, Revised Edition*

National Association of Social Workers

- Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice: <http://www.brycs.org/clearinghouse/clearinghouse-resource.cfm?docnum=0163>

¹⁹ *Child Welfare Policy Manual*, Guidance for Compliance, Answer 1.

²⁰ *Child Welfare Policy Manual*, Guidance for Compliance, Answer 2.

²¹ Children’s Bureau, Administration for Children and Families. *Necessary Components of Effective Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment*. p. 2. Attachment D to *Policy Guidance on the Use of Race, Color or National Origin as Considerations in Adoption and Foster Care Placements*. Available at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/pi/1995/pi9523a4.htm.

²² *Necessary Components of Effective Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment*, p. 11.

²³ *Necessary Components of Effective Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment*, p. 12.

The *National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice* were approved by the NASW board of directors in 2001 and were endorsed by the Council on Social Work Education in 2003. The standards are based on the NASW Code of Ethics (1997) and a policy statement titled “Cultural Competence in the Social Work Profession” published in *Social Work Speaks: NASW Policy Statements* (2000). The 10 cultural competence standards provide guidance on ethics and values, self-awareness, cross-cultural knowledge, cross-cultural skills, service delivery, empowerment and advocacy, work force diversity, professional education, language diversity, and cross-cultural leadership. The document mentions several issues of particular importance for practice with refugees, including the stresses of immigration and acculturation.

NASW has also issued a policy statement, “Immigrants and Refugees,” which states that circumstances of refugees and immigrants must be “considered on the basis of human values and needs” and that “[s]ocial workers must take a forceful and sensitive stand to ensure that policies, programs and practices protect all individuals who reside in the United States.”²⁴

²⁴ Immigrants and refugees. Policy statement approved by the NASW Delegate Assembly, August 1996. In National Association of Social Workers. (2000). *Social Work Speaks: National Association of Social Workers Policy Statements 2000–2003* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: NASW Press.

4. Refugee Children in Public Foster Care

The clearest statement that can be made about refugee children in the U.S. public foster care system is that no information exists on this specific population. No mechanism currently exists for recording statistics on a national basis, and no consistent approach been developed for child welfare agencies to record refugee cases on the local level. In fact, as noted in Section 2, it often requires considerable energy on the part of public child welfare agencies to identify refugee children as refugees. Therefore, neither baseline measurements of refugee children in foster care nor data on their specific needs are available.

A considerable amount of information, however, *is* available to help agencies prepare for possible refugee cases. This section offers suggestions for finding resources on U.S. refugee populations; information on separated refugee children, a group thought to be particularly at risk; and reasons for refugee family breakdowns.

Refugee Families in the United States

Refugees in the United States comprise a diverse group of people from many countries and several continents. It is beyond the scope of this document to describe the national population or attempt to discuss a particular refugee group in depth. Factors that should be assessed are briefly noted in Appendix 5 and include country of origin; the nature of the conflict causing refugee emigration; language, culture, ethnicity, religion, tribal group, and other divisions within groups; traumatic history; educational and health status; traditional and existing sources of social support; time and migration history within the United States; and experience with adjustment.

Refugee journeys are arduous; many refugee parents and caregivers take grave risks to keep their families together while fleeing their country of origin and endure challenging conditions in refugee camps. Success requires personal and familial strengths. Refugee caregivers are frequently driven by safety concerns and the desire to raise their children according to their traditions—for which they may have been persecuted. Resettlement poses its own challenges, which many refugee families meet with flexibility, resilience, and hard work so that they can expand opportunities for their children. However, despite individual and family strengths, the fact remains that refugees experience great strain in the process of adjusting to a new country and a new life in the United States.

Caregiver Stresses

Families often find that their opportunities for social support in resettlement are different from those in their home countries or even in refugee camps or other settings in countries of first asylum. Caregivers who are used to receiving assistance from extended family or other community members may find the American system of out-of-home child care bewildering or even a risky environment for children. It takes time for new arrivals to develop a support network and to retool their childrearing approaches to the new environment. Parents and other caregivers must often take on the full weight of child care and supervision while immersing themselves in the challenging tasks of learning English and supporting the family.

The opportunities for and risks to refugee children in the United States may be very different from those in their home countries; caregivers learn

Resources: Statistics on Refugee Admissions

Statistical data on the number and nationality of refugees admitted between 2000 and 2007 can be found at: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/data/refugee_arrival_data.htm.

In the experience of LIRS and USCCB, two of the largest national resettlement agencies, approximately 40 percent of refugees resettled in any given year are children.

this gradually, through immersion in a new life. For example, some refugee families may be used to living in villages where an entire community participates in the supervision of children. Although all refugees receive orientation services when they first arrive, it is not possible for such services to cover the full range of issues that face families. In addition, the enormity of change in their lives makes it impossible for recently arrived caregivers to absorb all the information during an orientation period, let alone assess and prepare for upcoming difficulties.

Stresses on Youth and Children

War and persecution can disrupt even the most harmonious family life. Trauma, loss, and periods of separation can affect family bonding and damage a child's trust that parents or other primary caregivers will provide for him or her.

Most refugee families, regardless of country of origin, experience changes in family roles. The adaptability of children and youth, including their greater ability to learn new languages, tends to give them control over information and place them in positions of authority in the family, displacing parents' prerogative to make decisions for the family. Refugee children are known to have taken on significant adult responsibilities in order to help support the family and may even drop out of school in order to work. Teenagers, who are still children, sometimes do not handle these pressures well. Some have been known to take advantage of the situation by threatening, without cause, to call 911 and report that they are being abused in order to gain control over their parents.

In addition, refugee children and youth encounter an America that their parents often do not, through school and relationships with peers. As youth struggle with their new bicultural or multicultural identities, parents may perceive a threat to their traditions and the fabric of family life. An intergenerational cultural divide may develop between parents and youth, producing conflict.

Although refugee families often have many strengths, they face many challenges to family cohesion and functioning. It is therefore no surprise that, as with every segment of the population, abuse and neglect of children occurs in these families, as does family breakdown.

Separated Refugee Children

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines separated children as "children under 18 years of age who are separated from both parents or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver."²⁵ This definition includes children who are separated from their previous caregiver, even if they are accompanied by some other adult. It also encompasses children who are temporarily accompanied as well as those who are completely alone. As noted previously, a specialized refugee foster care system is funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement; it is designed to meet the needs of children who arrive in the United States unaccompanied or who are completely without family to care for them.

Separated refugee children, however, may enter the United States in the company of relatives other than their parents or may travel here alone in order to reunite with parents, other relatives, or an unrelated adult caregiver. Their circumstances prior to arrival may differ greatly: Some children have had to care for themselves and younger siblings for extended periods of time, whereas others may have been in the company of caregivers who afforded them a sense of security and protection. Separated children may have no

Resources: Separated Refugee Children

For more information on separated refugee children and available services, see the forthcoming BRYCS paper, *Separated Refugee Children in the United States: Current Challenges, Future Opportunities*.

²⁵ UNHCR and Save the Children—Sweden Action for the Rights of Children. (2001). *Separated Children* (Rev. ed.). Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR. p. 6. Available at: www.unhcr.org/.

prior bond or shared personal history with the relatives they join in the United States, beyond the critical connection of a common culture and family relationships.

Separated children who enter this country as refugees are eligible for basic resettlement services and specific family reunification services, such as a suitability assessment of the home environment in which they are expected to live and postarrival follow-up assessments. Thus, the services available are both like and unlike kinship care in the U.S. domestic system: Children and families may receive more services than in informal kinship care arrangements and fewer services than with formal kinship care placements.

Anecdotally, and on the basis of reclassifications of children as URM and their placement in the refugee foster care system, it seems that separated refugee children are at greater risk of experiencing family breakdown than their parent-accompanied counterparts are. In addition, well-documented family relationships can prove to be uncertain or different after resettlement, as the relationships are tested by the rigors of adjusting to a new life. The process of obtaining refugee status involves multiple interviews that serve to document and check family relationships. After a family arrives safely and experiences the challenges of adjustment, however, service providers may discover that one of the children is actually a niece, nephew, or someone else's child. Although this may only happen on occasion, it can be a serious situation if the adult is not committed and able to care for the child.

Separated children must adjust to new authority figures and new rules while adapting to a new culture, developing a positive bicultural identity, transitioning from childhood to adulthood, and coping with the loss of parents or customary caregivers. Although resettlement and family reunification typically provide them with more opportunities to thrive than would the insecure conditions of a refugee camp, the fact remains that these children and their caregivers face great challenges. Children in the following situations may face an increased risk of family breakdown:

- The relationship to the adult is distant, or the relationship is by marriage rather than blood.
- The child has not been living with the guardian prior to resettlement and must now adjust to a new parental figure.
- The youth (more likely an adolescent) has a high degree of independence prior to resettlement and must adjust to living with a new guardian.
- The child is an adolescent living with an adult guardian; tension may increase as the adolescent begins to seek more independence while his or her guardian seeks control over the youth's behavior.

Another anecdotal lesson is that many separated children who resettle in the United States do not have legal guardians, a situation of great concern to child welfare service providers. However, providers should be aware that caregivers may not have sought guardianship for minors in their care for a variety of reasons and that lack of guardianship does not necessarily indicate a lack of concern for the child. For instance, obtaining legal guardianship would require that newly arrived refugees develop mastery in dealing with the U.S. court system, an extremely difficult task in the face of language, cultural, and economic barriers. In addition, courts have been known to discourage pursuit of guardianship for separated refugee children, because the cases differ from more common circumstances in which a parent's whereabouts are known; for example, courts may indicate that guardianship is only necessary to protect a child's estate.

It also seems that the *nature* of the conflict causing refugees to leave their country affects the number of separated children and, perhaps, the ability of relatives to care for them. For instance, large-scale war, as opposed to targeted persecution of politically active persons, takes the lives of more primary caregivers and may do more damage to the fabric of family life. Service providers who notice differences in the number and care of separated children among different local refugee populations should guard against thinking that such differences are connected to the ethnicity or refugee groups involved; no research

supports such assumptions. Instead, differences may stem from the nature of the conflicts, social support available to families, dates of arrival in the United States, and current financial and adjustment status.

Refugee Family Breakdown and Referral to the Refugee Foster Care System

Family breakdowns tend to occur 6 months to 1 year after arrival, or even later. They often happen after an initial period of major adjustment winds down and funded resettlement services have ended. Families break down for many reasons, and financial difficulties may exacerbate existing family tensions. In addition, refugees who are presumed to be adults prior to resettlement are sometimes discovered to be minors after they arrive here; sometimes the reverse is also true.

Children have been referred to the refugee foster care system for a variety of reasons. Not all refugee children with similar experiences are ultimately placed in a refugee foster care program. This situation may arise when a family has been in the United States for some period of time and is no longer in contact with a resettlement agency that could facilitate the child's reclassification to URM status. It also happens when no refugee foster care program exists in the local area and it is in the child's best interest to remain in the same community. Thus, public child welfare agencies may become the first point of intervention in a refugee family crisis, or they may be contacted by an agency with a history of serving the family in question. The following issues have commonly led to refugee family breakdown, child welfare involvement, and/or foster care placement:

- Abandonment
- Abusive household labor required of a child
- Arranged marriages
- "Couch-surfing" from one friend or family member to another
- Delinquency by the minor
- Irresolvable tension with a caregiver (usually involving an adolescent)
- Lack of parenting skills or caregiving interest on the part of relatives (often a sibling of major age)
- Medical, mental health, or substance abuse issues for the adult relative or the minor
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Relationships that turn out to be uncertain or different from those documented in the resettlement process
- Relatives who are overwhelmed by the needs of their own biological children and do not sufficiently meet the needs of separated children in their care
- Running away.

5. The U.S. Refugee Service System

If the prospect of working with refugee children and families seems complex or daunting, remember that an extensive system of services is designed to help refugees become productive, self-sufficient members of society. Local agencies in most cities with significant refugee populations can serve as partners in information gathering and service delivery. Although it is beyond the scope of this document to provide an in-depth description of the services for which refugees are eligible, the following sections provide a brief overview and suggest additional sources of information.

Federal Level

Two federal agencies provide services to refugees once they arrive in the United States. The Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), U.S. Department of State, funds initial reception and placement services through an extensive network of national and local voluntary agencies. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides social services through a network of State Coordinators of Refugee Resettlement and through federal programs and direct agreements with service providers.

National Level

PRM-funded resettlement services are coordinated through nine national voluntary resettlement agencies, which have local affiliates, and the State of Iowa’s Bureau of Refugee Services. The national voluntary agencies, also known as “volags,” are Church World Service, Ethiopian Community Development Council, Episcopal Migration Ministries, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, International Rescue Committee, Immigration and Refugee Services of America, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS), and World Relief Corporation.

Other refugee-serving agencies maintain a national presence. They include many of ORR’s technical assistance providers; the Center for Applied Linguistics, which is contracted by PRM to develop cultural profiles of entering refugee groups; and other refugee-serving agencies. Many resettlement and other refugee-serving agencies are members of The Refugee Council USA.

National ethnic organizations support and coordinate with ethnic organizations at the local level. Such organizations tend to exist more for refugee ethnic groups that have been in this country for some time than for newly arriving refugee groups, because it takes time for communities to establish themselves.

Both formal, national networks and informal, local networks can have an influence on refugee children and families. For instance, refugee families in a particular area may have a variety of connections and communications with other members of their communities across the country. In addition, some of the media serving a particular ethnic or language group have a national reach.

State Level

Every state has a Coordinator of Refugee Resettlement, who manages state-awarded ORR social service funding; this function is administered in a variety of ways. State coordinators’ offices may be valuable sources of information for connecting with local organizations and refugee communities.

Resources: Federal Refugee Services

Office of Refugee Resettlement

- www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/
- Description of resettlement services in the United States: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/index.htm

Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration

- www.state.gov/g/prm/

Local Level

At the local level, a range of organizations may assist refugees, depending on whether the area in question is a resettlement site or primarily a city of secondary migration. Services designed for refugees are more likely to be available in cities in which refugees are first resettled.

Examples of organizations that provide services to refugees include resettlement agencies, mutual assistance associations (MAAs), and ethnic community-based organizations. Other refugee-serving agencies include refugee women's agencies; community- or neighborhood-based agencies; and large service providers that have developed services with refugee communities in mind, such as some health providers. Some schools have developed services for refugee children and families, including state-awarded ORR funds.

Different types of agencies may have different strengths as potential partners for foster care programs. Some agencies may be well established and have experience with partnering or contracting with public agencies; others may be less well established but may offer valuable connections to refugee families and individuals who could be interested in acting as foster families, mentors, or companions to refugee children in foster care. They may also provide entry to institutions that offer opportunities for worship, celebration, and other interactions with the child's community.

Refugee community associations and other refugee-serving agencies have the potential to offer a direct path to *bearers* of the cultures, languages, and religions that refugee children share. It is important for public agencies to recognize the value of such connections for refugee children and to assess which local organizations are best suited to provide those connections.

Resources:

State Coordinators of Refugee Resettlement

Your State Coordinator's office may be able to help connect you with refugee-serving agencies in your local area. To locate your State Coordinator's office, go to: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/partners/state_coordina.htm.

Resources: National Organizations

ORR Web site:

- National volags: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/partners/voluntary_agencies.htm
- Ethnic organizations, mutual assistance associations, and registered nonprofit organizations: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/partners/index.htm
- Technical assistance providers: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resources/tech_asst_providers.htm

Refugee Council USA Web site: www.refugeecouncilusa.org

Center for Applied Linguistics Web site:

- Cultural Orientation Resource Center: www.cal.org/co
- www.culturalorientation.net

6. Lessons Learned About Refugee Foster Care From BRYCS’s Technical Assistance on Refugee Child Welfare

BRYCS’s technical assistance interventions with public child welfare agencies and representatives of a variety of refugee communities have revealed several themes that may help agencies and communities work together to become better resources for refugee children in care.

During the technical assistance interventions, several public agencies expressed concerns about meeting the special needs of refugee children in foster care, the difficulty of finding appropriate placements for refugee children, a desire to support foster parents to meet the needs of foster children from different ethnic backgrounds, and an interest in having a dialogue with refugee communities. Refugee communities, in turn, have expressed concerns about refugee children becoming disconnected from their communities, cultures, and religions while in foster care as well as a desire to have direct communication with public child welfare agencies.

Collaboration Between Public Child Welfare Agencies and Refugee Communities

Too often, the catalyst for communication between agencies and refugee communities comes after a child has been removed from a refugee family. Depending on how the determination of risks to the child was made and the cultural and linguistic appropriateness of services (as experienced by both the caregivers and the child), such a situation may end up polarizing communications between the public agency and the refugee community, making it harder to develop collaborative solutions for children in care. For this reason, it is important to take a proactive approach to meeting the needs of refugee children who may wind up in the public foster care system; such an approach can allow all parties to be better resources when children do end up in care.

Another observation is that because refugee community associations may be less established than other refugee service providers, such as resettlement agencies, they may be used to social service agencies acting as intermediaries on their behalf in collaborations with other entities. Although that strategy may be useful for several purposes, it may also result in refugee communities being less connected to the work of such collaborations or even experiencing a sense of alienation. Because the goal of child protective and foster care services—to safeguard the well-being of children—goes to the heart of a refugee community’s concerns, partnering directly with refugee community leaders and associations may be a useful strategy for public agencies.

Some of the following lessons learned from BRYCS’s technical assistance interventions may be useful for public agencies seeking to develop refugee foster families or other resources among local refugee communities.

Cross-Service Training

In several communities, BRYCS has noted that the interest, resources, and organizational framework exist for improved collaboration between public child welfare and refugee communities. However, communities often need a catalyst or facilitator to help the parties educate each other and establish a mechanism for ongoing communication.

Resources: Cross-Service Training

Communities often need a catalyst or facilitator to help the parties educate each other and establish a mechanism for ongoing communication. BRYCS’s cross-service training for local service providers can help stimulate action on the local level.

For more information and to obtain copies of BRYCS’s *Building Bridges: A Guide to Planning and Implementing Cross-Service Training*, go to www.brycs.org/brycs_resources.htm.

Resources: BRYCS Projects

To obtain copies of *Community Conversations Summary* and *Strengthening Services to Refugee Parents: Guidelines and Resources* (executive summary), go to www.brycs.org/brycs_resources.htm

In response, BRYCS developed a curriculum that local service providers, such as child welfare and refugee-serving agencies, can use to cross-train each other and develop pathways for future collaboration. The curriculum is designed to help stimulate action on the local level. BRYCS encourages agencies to build on the lessons learned and to consider initiating their own local cross-service trainings.

Community Conversations

In 2001 BRYCS conducted a project called Community Conversations, which recorded challenges that child welfare agencies face when serving refugee families as well as those that refugee families raising children in the United States face. Many of the lessons from this project have been integrated elsewhere in this document; following are some additional factors for public agencies to consider when seeking to develop collaborative relationships and foster care resources in refugee communities:

- In working with refugee families, foster care departments may face the same challenges as Child Protective Service workers, including limited availability of appropriately trained interpreters, lack of information on refugees, and few contacts in refugee communities. They may also be confronted with procedural difficulties, high caseloads, and high staff turnover.
- Refugee parents expressed frustration with interpretation, particularly with the inappropriate use of their own children as interpreters, and limited availability of English language instruction. They talked about reduced childrearing support, loss of elders, and loss of community support. Another issue of considerable importance was loss of parental authority and alienation from their teenage children. They desired more opportunities for cultural reinforcement for their children.

An important issue is that Child Protective Services (CPS) holds great mystique for many refugee families—and engenders fear. Refugee parents hear early on, sometimes even in refugee camps prior to resettlement, that CPS has the power to take children away from their families. This concept is threatening, as it is for American families. When combined with their children’s faster rate of adjustment and English language acquisition, refugee parents feel this threat in a palpable way. They frequently do not understand the purpose of CPS or how to effectively interact with such an agency. Children have been known to threaten to call 911, without cause, as a way to exert control over their parents. Through the Community Conversations project, BRYCS learned that parents’ fear actually affects childrearing practices and family structures. Such dynamics tend to disempower parents and reduce their self-sufficiency in guiding and raising their own children.

In recruiting refugee foster families and other volunteers or resources for children in care, foster care departments may find that this dynamic has a significant impact on their work. Providing community education about the purpose and functioning of the child welfare agency, along with developing dialogue with the refugee communities, may be important steps in attempting to make such connections.

Refugee Parent Services

Through its 2-year refugee parent services project, BRYCS gathered and analyzed information on existing parent services to refugees and other newcomers to the United States. This research included in-depth discussions with 28 agencies providing services in 13 states. A relationship may exist between refugees’ adaptation of their childrearing skills to the U.S. environment and the ability to serve as foster families for other refugee children. Lessons from the BRYCS parent services project may help foster care recruiters and other resource developers plan for effective work with refugee families.

Refugee parent services—whether preventive, therapeutic, or supportive—seem to work best when they draw on a range of wisdom and experience from refugee services and curriculum materials developed and tested by others. In addition, they should be sensitive to and knowledgeable about the particular needs of the community. Program developers should be aware of the following challenges:

- Program planners need to involve and listen to the refugees they want to serve at every stage of planning. They should learn all they can about the group’s cultural values, practices, and problems in America. The focus should be on the strengths of that culture.
- It is essential to assess the language and literacy levels of potential participants and plan a curriculum that will be appropriately tailored to the audience.
- Recruitment and training of staff for cultural competency is an ongoing need as new populations arrive. Continued vigilance about unexamined values concerning acculturation, assumptions, and expectations among staff is also important to ensure effective communication.
- Services can become duplicative or outdated if contact and collaboration with other community organizations serving refugees are not maintained.
- Outreach strategies, ranging from focus groups to radio to referral sources, need to be revised as community populations and needs change.
- Services can become irrelevant if they are not responsive to refugees’ concerns. Attention to these procedures helps maximize the impact and flexibility of services and ensure that they remain relevant.

Foster care providers who want to begin a dialogue with refugee community associations and other refugee service providers in anticipation of a cross-service training may wish to refer to Appendix 6, which lists a few questions to start such conversations.

7. Lessons Learned From the Specialized Refugee Foster Care Programs

BRYCS gathered information for two information sheets (Appendices 1 and 2) through discussions with 15 specialized refugee foster care programs funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) have responsibility for placing unaccompanied refugee minors (URMs) in those programs: They identify children in need of program benefits and recommend, research, and plan program services. The ORR-funded refugee foster care programs are licensed by their states and provide refugee clients with a full range of foster care services in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner.

Discussions centered on the techniques used in the recruitment, training, and retention of refugee foster families and other newcomer families in the United States (see the discussion questions in Appendix 7). The goal was to develop a resource for public child welfare agencies that face barriers in recruiting foster families from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. The discussions also addressed other useful strategies for supporting the cultural, linguistic, and religious needs of refugee youth in foster care, particularly use of the resources available within the local refugee communities.

The refugee foster care programs frequently spoke of the need to ensure cultural competency of staff and foster parents and to cultivate the bicultural adjustment and ethnic identity formation of children in care. To serve a wide variety of purposes related to refugee children’s cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious needs, the programs recommended approaches including use of bicultural staff; development of refugee foster families²⁶ and other appropriate families; use of mentors and companions from refugee communities; and cultivation of connections with refugee communities.

Cultural Competence Training Components

Each ORR-funded specialized program had a specific strategy for ensuring that staff members are culturally competent and sensitive to the cultural needs of the refugee youth in their care. Such training generally includes the following components:

- Ongoing training in valuing diversity
- Specific trainings on the cultural norms of particular groups
- Trainings enhanced by the experiences and language capacities of the bicultural and multicultural staff in the program
- Trainings designed around specific needs of the youth in the program.

Information Sheets

The information sheets in Appendices 1 and 2 are designed to be detached for ready reference and may be freely shared with other agencies and workers. Refugee foster care programs are located in the following cities; the programs

Resources: Refugee Foster Care System

BRYCS Web site:

- *URM Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):* <http://www.brycs.org/clearinghouse/clearinghouse-resource.cfm?docnum=0525>

ORR Web site:

- URM program information: <http://www.brycs.org/clearinghouse/clearinghouse-resource.cfm?docnum=0529>

²⁶ In this paper, the term *refugee foster families* refers to foster families in which the parents are refugees. However, discussions with the ORR-funded refugee foster care programs included their experience in working with other foreign-born foster caregivers, such as asylees and immigrants. Thus, references to refugee foster families in this section may also refer to such caregivers. Both types of families can offer similar benefits, depending on the needs of the children.

generously shared their own experiences, innovative ideas, and lessons learned with BRYCS to help create the information sheets:

- Phoenix, Arizona
- Washington, DC
- Boston, Massachusetts
- Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Lansing, Michigan
- Jackson, Mississippi
- Fargo, North Dakota
- Newark, New Jersey
- Rochester, New York
- Syracuse, New York
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Houston, Texas
- Richmond, Virginia
- Seattle, Washington
- Tacoma, Washington.

Appendix 1

Developing Refugee Foster Families: A Worthwhile Investment

Refugee and other foreign-born children in foster care have many special needs. As they adjust to living in a new family or another setting, they are also adjusting to a whole new culture in America and sometimes a new language. In addition to processing their own personal tragedies and experience with persecution or war, refugee children may struggle to develop a healthy and positive sense of self.

This information sheet compiles suggestions for recruiting, training, licensing, and retaining refugee foster families. Although most of the information contained in this information sheet applies to minors of all ages, most children in the specialized refugee foster care system funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement are adolescents. The term “youth” is used for instances that apply more to adolescents than to children. The term “bicultural staff” is used loosely to refer to staff of the same ethnic group or country of origin as the children in care as well as to those who share some facet of the culture, language, or religion of a refugee group. Most bicultural staff have personal experience adjusting to a new culture and draw on that experience in helping refugee children do the same. Similarly, for brevity the term “refugee foster families” refers to foster families in which the parents are refugees or other foreign-born persons, such as asylees or immigrants.

Developing refugee foster families can be an important strategy for serving refugee children. Including refugee families in the pool of foster care placement options increases the likelihood of being able to make an appropriate placement if a refugee child is found to have special needs relating to his or her language, culture or ethnicity. It can help such refugee children draw on their cultures, languages, ethnic affiliations, and religious faith as supportive and protective factors while they adjust to life in the United States.

For more suggestions on how to meet the needs of refugee children in foster care, see the BRYCS information sheet *Serving Refugee Children in Foster Care: Fundamental Considerations*.

Benefits in Having Refugee Foster Families Among Placement Options

Many refugee families become foster parents because they understand the pain of family separation and upheaval, experiences that are common to most refugees. Most refugee foster families have a desire to help their own community, and they feel compassion for the children who have lost or have been separated from their own parents. In situations in which refugee children have been placed with refugee foster families, the following benefits have frequently been observed (note that other types of families can provide these benefits as well; this information can serve to provide goals for placement of children with specific needs):

- Better communication and less misinterpretation due to language or cultural barriers
- Better reactions to certain negative behaviors
- A strong ethnic identity
- Familiarity with food, language, and customs
- More emotional support
- Increased stability of placement when there is a shared common culture
- Awareness of the situation in the child’s country of origin
- Reduced need for caseworker intervention due to cultural or linguistic misunderstandings.

Every child is different, and the most appropriate placement will ultimately depend on the needs of the individual child and the strengths of the individual placement.

Differences in Adjustment Attributed to Same-Culture Placements

- Many refugee children are more comfortable in same-culture placements because of similar history, understanding, and philosophy of life.

- The initial emotional transition has been smoother for some children in refugee foster families.
- It may be easier for children to maintain their language, culture, and ethnic ties in same-culture placements.
- When children and families have a shared faith, attending church, mosque, or temple together provides good family time; this time can be vital for religious minority children.

Types of Families Best Suited to Fostering Refugee Children

The most eager families are not necessarily the best suited to serving as foster families for refugee children. Agencies report that families with the following characteristics seem to make good foster families:

- Open minded
- Interested in expanding their world and learning about other cultures
- Interested in two-way learning, instead of seeing themselves as rescuing the child
- Nurturing
- Able to be good advocates
- Willing to teach the child skills for independence
- Willing to help the child stay connected to family in the home country.

Community Resources for Recruiting Refugee Families

Agencies can use various methods to recruit refugee and other newcomer foster families. The most successful technique appears to be *word of mouth from foster families who have had positive experiences*. It may take more effort to recruit the first refugee family, but that initial family can help the agency recruit additional families from the same ethnic community.

Generally Effective Outreach Methods

- Establish linkages with ethnic community-based organizations, also known as mutual assistance associations (MAAs). These organizations can be found by contacting the office of your State Refugee Coordinator or a local refugee resettlement program.
- Establish linkages with refugee resettlement programs and English as a second language (ESL) programs.
- Establish linkages with ethnically based and non-ethnically based houses of worship. Use presentations about the need for diverse foster families; fliers in bulletins; and relationships with religious, spiritual, or other leadership.
- Use ethnic media, such as radio, television, and newspapers targeting a particular group.
- Encourage bicultural staff to recruit within their own community.
- Develop brochures and translate materials into the language of the group you are trying to reach.
- Use resource fairs to disseminate information in refugee communities.
- Interact directly with the community you hope to reach by participating in community activities or meeting with community leaders.
- Develop public service announcements for mainstream radio or television.
- Recruit through local schools.
- Work with civic groups and other community-based organizations involved in local government.
- Offer a finder's fee to encourage more word-of-mouth recruitment.

Generally Ineffective Outreach Methods

- Group information sessions: Language, religious, or cultural barriers may keep refugee foster families from participating in such activities.
- Mass mailings or merely distributing written information: Such techniques are rarely effective because even literate refugees often value verbal communication more highly than written materials.

Tailoring Outreach Methods to Specific Groups

Some outreach methods will be effective with a particular group but will not work with others. Below are some tips for appropriately tailoring your outreach methods:

- Learn about the ethnic communities in your area, such as their history of migration to the United States, where they are concentrated, and what divisions exist.
- Look for connections or common interests with existing community institutions. For example, some groups might feel a connection due to religious beliefs, cultural history, or language.
- Do some research about appropriate cultural practices. Can men and women shake hands or sit next to one another? How is eye contact perceived? Is it customary for women to cover their heads in the home or for everyone to remove shoes upon entering the home? Remember that some cultures respond better to face-to-face contact.
- Coordinate with and use the knowledge base of the following entities:
 - Mutual assistance associations (MAAs): civic groups that are locally organized to provide mutual aid within a particular ethnic community. Such groups may receive state or federal financial support.
 - State Refugee Coordinators: the designated state entity or individual that oversees resettlement of refugees in a state.
 - Refugee Resettlement Programs: private voluntary agencies that contract with the U.S. Department of State to provide resettlement services to newly arriving refugees.
 - Informal ethnic community networks or institutions: locally organized groups serving a subgroup of an ethnic community, such as a house of worship or sports club.

If you do not know how to locate such groups in your area, start with the office of your State Refugee Coordinator. A list of State Refugee Coordinators is available on the Office of Refugee Resettlement Web site (www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/partners/state_coordina.htm).

Agency Resources for Recruiting Refugee Families

Bicultural staff act as cultural brokers for refugee children, program staff, and foster parents. They help explain the unspoken mores and standards within a culture that can only be fully understood by a person living in it. They are valuable to children because they understand the cultural context of the child and have made an adjustment to life in the United States themselves. Bicultural workers assist mainstream workers by bridging the gap between the cultures; they interface with leaders within their communities and help create opportunities for children to develop positive ethnic identities by staying connected to their cultures, languages, and religions.

Bicultural staff can greatly assist with the adjustment of refugee and refugee children. They help build strong alliances with local ethnic communities and increase the cultural sensitivity of a program. In addition, they serve as positive role models for children, having balanced their culture of origin and the culture of their adoptive home. In the words of one foster care program employing bicultural staff, “We could not function without them.”

Keys to Training and Retaining Bicultural Workers

- If English is not the worker’s first language, allow more time for or assistance with paperwork.
- Provide good supervisory support.
- Value bicultural staff equally with other staff; recognize the contribution they can make to the team (i.e., do not limit their work to language interpretation).
- Be flexible with work schedules so that bicultural staff can pursue training or continuing education to qualify for higher level positions; offer assistance in finding financial aid resources.
- When possible, have more than one bicultural staff member on the team for support.

Recruiting, Training, and Licensing Issues

A variety of issues face agencies that seek to recruit refugee foster families, including building rapport and trust with families, the licensing process itself, postlicensing problems, and family burnout.

Rapport and Trust

- Refugees may be slow to develop trust as a result of broken promises and mistreatment during their refugee experience.
- Building rapport and trust may be more difficult with refugee families due to language and cultural barriers.
- Developing trust is most difficult with the first foster family in any refugee community.

The Licensing Process

- Families may find it strange to talk about intimate family details with a stranger.
- Newly arrived refugees may have difficulty meeting physical space and financial stability requirements.
- Some families will struggle with the logistics of obtaining medical clearances for all family members.
- Families may be unable to follow through with paperwork due to lack of English proficiency or lack of familiarity with terminology associated with the licensing process.
- Families may be uncomfortable during the training process due to language barriers.
- Muslim families may have concerns about modesty in the home for women, especially in considering placements for adolescent males.
- Like many American-born families, some refugee families may only want to foster a child from the same ethnic or tribal group.
- Families may find certain licensing requirements culturally insensitive, such as the common requirement prohibiting children older than age 2 from sleeping with parents.
- Work schedules may be barriers to families following through with the licensing process, because refugees often work multiple jobs.
- In many refugee and immigrant families, the legal status of family members may vary; family members may therefore be ineligible for or fearful of the licensing process.
- Families may be unable to obtain sufficient references unless they have roots in the community.

Postlicensing Problems

After a family is licensed, certain problems commonly arise; resolving them generally requires additional staff time for explanation and facilitation. The following issues commonly arise:

- Busy work schedules of refugee families
- Authority issues with adolescents (Some refugee families may be less disposed to work through these negative experiences because they often have many other tasks to fulfill.)
- Impatience with certain problematic behaviors (Families may expect children to obey, and they may be intolerant of American adolescent behavior because such behavior was not accepted in their country of origin.)
- Lack of follow-through with training schedule
- Rigid expectations of male and female roles (For example, females may be expected to clean the house and care for children; male foster children may not be taught those skills in preparation for independence.)
- Expectations that the child will follow the foster parent's path to success; lack of acceptance of individuality in youth
- Reluctance to take advantage of mental health services for refugee children.

Family Burnout

Burnout can be a problem for refugee foster families. Below are some steps that can guard against the problem:

- Keep caseloads low so that workers can be in the home frequently.

- Provide counseling.
- Use mentors, tutors, and volunteers.
- Be easily accessible even after normal business hours. Provide cell phones for caseworkers; often, a phone call can calm a situation until the worker can physically come to the home.
- Identify issues before they escalate.
- Provide fun activities with food to allow foster families to meet informally.
- Provide child care and mileage reimbursement to encourage participation in group activities.

For more information on the specialized refugee foster care programs funded by ORR that provided information for this document, search the BRYCS clearinghouse (www.brycs.org) using the term “Unaccompanied Refugee Minor.”

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Appendix 2

Serving Refugee Children in Foster Care: Fundamental Considerations

Refugee and other foreign-born children in foster care have many special needs. As they adjust to living in a new family or other setting, they are also adjusting to a whole new culture in America and, sometimes, to a new language. In addition to processing their personal tragedies and experience with persecution or war, refugee children may struggle to develop a healthy and positive sense of self.

This information sheet contains suggestions for meeting the special needs of refugee children in out-of-home care; that is, ways to help them draw on their culture, language, ethnic tradition, and religious faith as supportive and protective factors while they adjust to a new life in the United States. Although most of the information contained in this information sheet applies to minors of all ages, most children in the specialized refugee foster care system funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) are adolescents. The term “youth” is used for instances that apply more to adolescents than to children. The phrase “bicultural staff” is used loosely to refer to staff of the same ethnic group or country of origin as the children in care as well as those who share some facet of the culture, language, or religion of a refugee group. Most bicultural staff have personal experience adjusting to a new culture and draw on that experience in helping refugee children do the same. Similarly, for brevity the term “refugee foster families” refers to foster families in which the parents are refugees or other foreign-born persons, such as asylees or immigrants.

For more suggestions on how to meet the needs of refugee children in foster care, see the BRYCS Information Sheet *Developing Refugee Foster Families: A Worthwhile Investment*.

Factors Affecting Refugee Children’s Adjustment to Foster Care

Before Arrival

- Mental health of the child
- Level of trauma from war and flight
- Physical health conditions following war and flight
- Type of care received during flight and refugee camp (e.g., care by a relative, institutional care, or no adult supervision)
- Location and safety of the child’s immediate relatives
- Developmental stage at time of trauma, flight, and resettlement (e.g., circumstances of child during onset of puberty or the age of the child at the death of a parent or sibling)
- Strength of child’s family system in home country (e.g., a child from a strong and loving family may be able to adjust better to a home environment in the United States; a child who lived on the street may have more difficulty adjusting to a family system here)
- Child’s birth order (e.g., the oldest child may struggle more with guilt or a sense of responsibility about the care and condition of younger siblings).

After Arrival

- Foster family’s knowledge of child’s past experience
- Foster family’s cultural sensitivity and level of acceptance of the child
- Child’s ability to maintain contact with family, friends, and peers from refugee camp or home country (residing in either in the United States or overseas)
- Amount of contact between caseworker and the child and foster family
- Cultural competence of foster care staff
- Reception from and influence of American-born peers.

Characteristics of Foster Families That Are Appropriate for Refugee Children

- Open minded
- Interested in world affairs and in learning about other cultures
- Interested in two-way learning, instead of seeing themselves as rescuing the child
- Nurturing
- Able to be good advocates (e.g., within educational or health systems)
- Willing to teach the child (especially adolescents) skills for independence
- Willing to help the child stay connected to his or her culture of origin and birth family, including family members overseas
- Able to maintain confidentiality about the child's situation (especially important for foster families from the same ethnic community).

Key Components of Successful Child Welfare Services for Refugee Children

Bicultural and Culturally Competent Staff

Bicultural staff can uniquely understand the adjustment challenges faced by refugee children in foster care. They can help ease the adjustment of a refugee child while bridging cultural differences with staff and foster families. In addition, such staff have the following assets:

- They have experienced cultural adjustment firsthand.
- They can act as cultural brokers between children, foster families, and program staff.
- They can serve as valuable role models for refugee children and help them develop a positive ethnic identity.
- They can work with ethnic community leaders to create opportunities for positive ethnic identity development and help maintain cultural, linguistic, and religious connections.

Bicultural and Culturally Competent Foster Homes

Foster families from the same cultural background as a refugee child can greatly ease his or her adjustment to foster care and life in the United States. Other types of foster families may also be able to meet a refugee child's unique adjustment and cultural needs; this information can serve to provide goals for placements of children with specific needs. Foster families with the same cultural background, or who are culturally sensitive, have been noted to have the following attributes:

- They understand what the refugee child has experienced during war and flight.
- They have an interest in the culture and background of the refugee child.
- They can enable better communication and less misinterpretation due to language or cultural barriers.
- They provide familiar food, language, and customs.
- They provide religious continuity and support, when the family is of the same faith. This trait can be especially important for religious minorities and religiously observant children.

It may be easier for children to maintain their language, culture, and ethnic ties in same-culture placements. Every child is different, however, and the most appropriate placement will ultimately depend on the needs of the individual child. Some children may prefer an American-born family in order to learn English faster, whereas other refugee children may feel most comfortable with a family of the same cultural background.

The Importance of Ethnic Identity Formation: Helping Children Maintain and Integrate Their Two Cultural Identities

In addition to becoming licensed foster parents, many refugee families help meet the needs of refugee children in other ways, including mentoring, tutoring, interpreting and translating, recruiting children for local cultural activities or ethnic organizations (e.g., a Sudanese youth choir or a Latino soccer league), and supporting youth in independent living programs. As with any volunteers working with foster care children, families should be appropriately screened and trained before involving them in the lives of these children.

Local Universities and Houses of Worship

Local universities and houses of worship can also be a source of diverse volunteers. Partnering and collaborating with a local university may also be useful for the following activities:

- Engaging college students as “big brothers” or “big sisters”
- Recruiting college students to earn credit for volunteer work with refugee children (such as community service or foreign language conversation)
- Involving professors in trainings, grant writing, or research or connecting with academics who are knowledgeable about a particular language or culture.

For more information on the specialized refugee foster care programs funded by ORR that provided information for this document, search the BRYCS clearinghouse (www.brycs.org) using the term “Unaccompanied Refugee Minor.”

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Appendix 3

BRYCS Source Projects

Below are brief descriptions of several BRYCS projects that took place between 2001 and 2003 and served as sources of information and analysis for this paper. Each description is followed by the title of related documents that are available at www.brycs.org/brycs_resources.htm.

Foster Care Training

A foster care recruiter for one of the specialized refugee foster care programs presented lessons learned to public agency participants in St. Louis, Missouri.

- *Foster Care Training Report, St. Louis*

Refugee Parent Services Project

This research endeavor involved more than a year of analysis, review of existing resources, and discussions with 28 agencies in 13 states offering parenting or parent support services to refugees and other foreign-born parents.

- *Strengthening Services for Refugee Parents: Guidelines and Resources*

Community Conversations Project

BRYCS held discussions with newly arrived refugee parents, refugee-serving agencies, and child protective services in Baltimore, Maryland; Omaha, Nebraska; and Seattle, Washington.

- *Community Conversations Summary*

Cross-Service Training Project

In collaboration with local agencies in Atlanta, Georgia, and St. Louis, Missouri, BRYCS developed methodology for cross-service trainings involving public child welfare agencies, refugee service providers, and refugee community representatives. Agencies educated each other about their operating structures and objectives, shared resources, and developed pathways for future cross-agency communication. The goal was to increase all parties' effectiveness in serving refugee families and children.

- *Cross-Service Training Guide*
- *Cross-Service Training Newsletter*
- *Cross-Service Training Report, Atlanta*
- *Cross-Service Training Report, St. Louis*

Targeted Local Training

BRYCS held discussions with child welfare and other human service administrators, sponsored community meetings with refugee parents, and provided training for child welfare and human service staff in Portland and Lewiston, Maine.

- *Local Service Delivery Strategies Report*

Separated Refugee Children Project

This project involved review of existing documents and discussions with agencies in the United States and abroad about supportive services for separated children internationally and children in domestic kinship care arrangements. The project considered whether the existing service model for separated refugee children reunifying with family members in the United States is sufficient to support family preservation.

- *Separated Refugee Children in the United States: Current Challenges, Future Opportunities* (forthcoming)

Guardianship Project

BRYCS reviewed and analyzed existing resources on guardianship and held discussions with national experts and local refugee service providers to develop an essential fact sheet on refugees and the guardianship process.

- Guardianship: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): <http://www.brycs.org/clearinghouse/clearinghouse-resource.cfm?docnum=527>
- Guardianship FAQ Summary (2 pages): <http://www.brycs.org/clearinghouse/clearinghouse-resource.cfm?docnum=528>

Child Welfare Standards Project

BRYCS reviewed existing laws, regulations, professional standards, and promising practices guiding public child welfare in the United States and identified those that were relevant for practice with refugees. The project also identified gaps in policy.

- *Child Welfare Standards Summary*

Additional Agency Experience

Serving Foreign-Born Foster Children was informed by the ongoing experience of LIRS and USCCB/MRS with the 15 specialized refugee foster care programs around the United States. LIRS and USCCB/MRS coordinate with and provide technical assistance to the programs and make decisions about which program is best suited for each child.

- *Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) Foster Care Program*
- *URM Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)*

Appendix 4

Steps to Take When You Think You Have Identified a Trafficked Child



Migration and Refugee Services
Office of Refugee Programs
3211 4th Street NE, Washington, D.C. 20017-1194
Tel. 202.541.3170 • Fax: 202.722.8750
E-mail: refprog@usccb.org Web site: www.usccb.org/mrs

Trafficking in persons is a crime that crosses national borders and affects hundreds of thousands of people annually. Its victims, predominantly women and children, are forced into unpaid labor, debt bondage, coerced prostitution, or sexual servitude, often under the direction of international organized crime rings. An estimated 800,000 to 900,000 people worldwide each year fall victim to international traffickers; approximately 18,000 to 20,000 are believed to be trafficked into the United States annually. Some are lured with the promise of paid employment in legitimate jobs; others are abducted or purchased from family members. Their movements are restricted by traffickers, who take their legal documents and threaten physical violence against them or their family members. Told that police will arrest them for prostitution or immigration violations, they are often afraid to seek help. Children who are moved across international boundaries to find themselves enslaved for prostitution or other forms of forced labor are among the most vulnerable of trafficking victims.

In the United States, legislation dealing with this phenomenon and its victims was passed in October 2000. The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act of 2000* contains provisions designed to prevent trafficking and protect the victims. For children, that means they may enter an unaccompanied refugee minor (URM) foster care program through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS). Unfortunately, few children have been determined by government agencies to be victims of trafficking. Among the many complex reasons for the low referral numbers is the fact that it can be difficult to identify a trafficked child. Trafficked children's movements may be restricted so they cannot seek out help; children may be told by the traffickers to say that they are over 18 if picked up by police or immigration officials; and victims may be afraid to admit to having been trafficked because of fears of retribution against their families. It will take efforts by concerned community members throughout the United States to help uncover trafficked children and ensure that they get the care they need.

If you believe you have located a child trafficking victim, you can take several steps:

- **Call the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR): Shereen Faraj, Children's Services Specialist, 202.401.4631.** ORR can assist you in locating the proper federal law enforcement representatives so the child may be referred for ORR-funded services.
- **Call the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS): 202.541.3352.** USCCB/MRS can help you find local social service agencies that can assist in providing services for the trafficked child; USCCB/MRS can also help you understand the federal antitrafficking law, the special needs of trafficked children, and the benefits for which a trafficked child may be eligible.
- **Help the child locate a reputable pro bono attorney to advise the child on legal issues related to immigration.** (Caution: some traffickers provide attorneys for trafficking victims in order to get the victims released back to the traffickers.)
- **Call the Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation Task Force Complaint Line (888-428-7581).** Take this step in consultation with ORR. This step will get the case logged with federal law enforcement representatives.

* Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. P.L. 106-386. Division A, 114 Stat. 1464 (2000).

- Determine whether the case needs to be reported to the appropriate local child welfare authorities, in accordance with your state's mandatory reporting laws.

Definition of Severe Forms of Trafficking in Persons

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 defines severe forms of trafficking in persons as follows:

- sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or
- the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.*

Services for Unaccompanied Trafficked Children

Unaccompanied trafficked children may be eligible for placement in specialized URM programs that provide foster care, group homes or independent living arrangements, appropriate to the youth's developmental needs. These services are provided by two voluntary agencies, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services, which have worked with unaccompanied refugee youth for more than 25 years. These agencies work through a network of licensed child welfare agencies to provide appropriate support services, including the following:

- Indirect financial support for housing, food, clothing, and other necessities
- Medical care
- Mental health services
- Intensive case management by a social worker
- Independent living skills training
- Education such as English as a second language (ESL)
- Tutoring/mentoring
- Special educational services, where needed
- Job skills training and career/college counseling
- Family reunification, where possible
- Cultural activities/recreation
- Legal assistance.

* For more information, see <http://www.brycs.org/clearinghouse/clearinghouse-resource.cfm?docnum=1872>

Appendix 5

Foreign-Born Populations of Concern to ORR and Public Child Welfare: Areas for Assessment

Public child welfare providers working with foreign-born children in need of special services can best assist them by identifying early whether they fit into any of the following categories:

- Asylees
- Amerasians
- Cuban and Haitian entrants
- Refugees
- Undocumented minors in federal custody.
- Victims of torture (born here or abroad)
- Victims of trafficking.

The above foreign-born populations are or may be eligible for services from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), Administration for Children in Families, Department of Health and Human Services. Most ORR-funded social services are designed to support the development of self-sufficiency among refugees and certain other populations for up to 5 years after arrival; ORR also supports a specialized refugee foster care system and discretionary programs. Different services are available to undocumented minors in federal custody and to refugees. See the following Web sites for program and eligibility information: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/index.htm and www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/index.htm.

Child welfare agencies may find that linking a child and his or her family to such services can be a critical intervention for the child, one that is in line with both the agency's mission of supporting the safety and well-being of children and ORR's mission of promoting self-sufficiency. For example, additional supports in the short term may enable the development of a stable home environment, allowing for family reunification and preservation, and helping the family to function without continued reliance on public child welfare services. If it turns out that family reunification is not feasible, specialized refugee foster care services may equip the child for self-sufficiency when he or she becomes an adult. Taking additional time to identify and procure appropriate resources for these children can make a significant difference in children's lives and outcomes.

Undocumented minors who are *not* in federal custody but who come to the attention of child welfare agencies may include children who are victims of human trafficking but have not yet been identified as such. The population of undocumented children also includes children who, with the proper legal assistance, could present a credible case for asylum on the basis of prior experience in their country of origin and their reasons for coming to the United States. An immigration attorney may be your best resource for determining whether an undocumented child is eligible for services available to trafficked or asylee children. Child welfare agencies can play an important role in the long-term safety, stability, and self-sufficiency of undocumented children by providing informed and targeted assessment and intervention, and by linking children who have immigration needs with appropriate attorneys.

The following table lists some important factors that can greatly influence the process of engaging a child or family; assessing a child's needs; service planning; decision making about placement, services, and supports; and long-term planning for a child. These factors are only a starting point and are provided to help service providers determine which topics may be relevant for information-gathering for a particular child. As with all children, foreign-born children of concern to ORR have unique personal experiences and needs.

Some Factors Influencing Child Welfare Processes for Children of Concern to ORR

<i>Category</i>	<i>Factor</i>
Factors that groups of concern to ORR are likely to have in common	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language barriers • Cultural change • Adjustment challenges • Need for orientation to new environment, norms, and laws • Need for cultural brokering • Parent–child role changes and intergenerational stress • Separation and loss: familiar environment, social norms, culture, language, possessions, home, social support, loved ones, identity • Experience of trauma • Need for legal assistance • Documentation issues: family, education, medical history • Confusion and delay when gathering information overseas
Factors that vary across the groups of concern to ORR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precipitating reason for international migration • Experience in migration (can include encampment, different effects on different generations) • Nature and extent of separation and loss • Nature of traumatic experiences • Personal security • The risks parents take to keep a family together, such as colluding with organized crime • Experience with authorities • Perspective on child protective services • Legal status in United States • Legal process and mechanisms • Service eligibility and availability • Hopes, dreams, expectations
Other factors involved in working with foreign-born and refugee children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country of origin, ethnicity, culture, religion, and language • Prior medical care • Educational status • Socioeconomic and housing status • Experience with discrimination in the United States • Length of time in the United States • Desire to be in this country • Existence or knowledge of relatives overseas • How child comes to attention of child welfare • Personal strengths

Appendix 6

Discussion Questions for Local Refugee Communities and Refugee-Serving Agencies

Below are some questions that a public child welfare agency could initially ask of local refugee community associations and resettlement agencies in order to begin a dialogue that could support the agency's efforts at assessment and recruitment of foster families, mentors, or companions or otherwise help refugee children in care stay connected to their communities and cultures.

BRYCS advises organizing a formal cross-service training for the three groups of service providers; such trainings should include other stakeholders that are critical for meeting the needs of refugee children. This list represents a starting point; cross-service trainings may take some time to organize. For a copy of the BRYCS *Cross-Service Training Guide*, go to www.brycs.org/brycs_resources.htm.

- What refugee communities are represented in our city?
- How long have they been here?
- What can you tell me about reasons for leaving their countries of origin? What are some examples of what each community might have experienced prior to resettling in this country?
- Is the community largely a site of first resettlement or of secondary migration?
- What stressors do refugee families face here? Which are related specifically to this city?
- Which languages do we need to have capacity for?
- Which refugee populations and languages should we plan for?
- Which ethnic or tribal groups and religions are represented in our local refugee population?
- What do you know about how these groups or subgroups get along with each other?
- What do these groups identify as important factors for raising children?
- Who does the childrearing? What roles do different family and community members play in childrearing, according to tradition and in practice in our city? What changes have caregivers experienced in the social supports available to them?
- What are some common hallmarks of childhood and child development in the refugee communities?
- Is there a formal or informal tradition of fostering children? What is it like?
- What impression might the refugee communities in this city have of the child welfare system in general? Of foster care?

Appendix 7

Discussion Guidelines: URM Program Approaches to Developing Refugee Foster Families and Supporting Refugee Children

Overview of BRYCS and the Refugees and Foster Care Project

The following outline was used in BRYCS's discussions with refugee foster care programs providing services to unaccompanied refugee minors. It is included here as a sample of an approach to compiling information on practices used in serving refugee children.

Outline for Discussions With Refugee Foster Care Programs

- I. Introduction
- II. General data and statistical information on the URM program
- III. Staff
 - Demographics
 - Recruitment
 - Training
 - Professional development
 - Retention
- IV. Foster parents
 - Recruitment of refugee foster parents
 - Training and licensing of refugee foster parents
 - Retention of refugee foster parents
- V. Adjustment and feedback of URM's

Introduction

Many variables exist in the complex relationships between foster families and children. The ethnicities, languages, and religions of all parties are variables that may support a successful placement. We understand that your agency may have many strategies and means for helping unaccompanied refugee minors (URMs) reinforce or preserve their cultures, languages, and religions, many of which will go beyond state and federal requirements. Although much of our discussion will focus on family-based placements, it will also address other such strategies. Feel free to bring these other ideas up during our discussion. The goal of this project is to provide public agencies with promising practices for supporting the cultural, linguistic and religious needs of refugee children in their care.

Information obtained from this discussion will be used to aid public child welfare agencies in their efforts to recruit ethnically and linguistically diverse families and to provide culturally competent services to refugees being served by the public child welfare system. Currently, overburdened child welfare agencies face many barriers in recruiting foster families from diverse ethnicities and languages and thus may benefit from learning about your efforts. Ultimately, the information obtained will be used to develop a resource for public child welfare agencies. Your participation in this discussion is greatly appreciated.

General Data and Statistical Information on the URM Program

Name and position of person(s) in discussion:

Date of discussion: _____

Name of the agency: _____

Location of the agency: _____

- In what year did your program start?
- Which ethnic groups are currently served by your program?
- What other groups have you served in the past?
- How many children are currently in your refugee foster care program, by ethnicity?

Staff

Composition of Program Staff

- Number of staff: _____ Women: _____ Men: _____
- How many staff are full time?
- How many staff have a percentage of their time charged to the program?

Demographics

- Languages spoken: _____
- Positions held: _____
- Educational levels of staff: _____
 - Follow-up: Which positions have which degrees?
- What are the ethnicities represented by the staff of your program?
- How many bicultural workers are employed by this program?
- How many bilingual workers are employed by your program?
- Follow up: Are there any multilingual staff in your program?

Recruitment

- How does your agency recruit bilingual or bicultural staff?
- How are the bilingual and bicultural workers used in staff recruitment?
- What special efforts must be made in recruiting and training bilingual or bicultural staff?

Training and Professional Development

- How does staff training for this program differ from staff training for domestic foster care programs?
- Does the work stress of bicultural workers differ from work stress of other staff in the program? (i.e., boundaries, burnout, reporting problematic youth behavior, keeping up with paperwork, etc.)
- How does this agency assist bilingual and bicultural workers to obtain training necessary to qualify for positions based on state standards?
- What efforts does your office make to retain bilingual and bicultural staff? How successful are these efforts?
- How do bilingual and bicultural staff affect the overall effectiveness of your program?
- What is the average caseload of the URM caseworkers in your program? What is the ideal?
- What is the expected frequency of contact between the caseworker and the foster parent?
- What is the expected frequency of contact between the URM and the caseworker?
- How does this program develop, maintain, and evaluate cultural competency in staff?
- What could this program do differently to better prepare staff for the challenges of working with URMs?

Foster Parents

For the purpose of this project, refugee foster families are defined as ethnically and linguistically diverse families and individuals who entered the country as refugees either recently or many years ago. We are also interested in your work with other bilingual and bicultural foster families, such as ethnically and linguistically diverse families and individuals who entered the United States as immigrants or asylees, for example. For this project, we are focusing on those who arrived in the past few years as well as those who have been in this country for many years.

Recruitment

- What is the foster parent recruitment goal or plan?

- How many foster families do you currently have?
- What is your program's message to the community?
- What kind of families does your program want to recruit?

In this question and subsequent questions, let us know if your answers differ for refugee and newcomer foster families.

- How does your program recruit refugee and other newcomer foster families?
 - Which types of media does your agency use to recruit foster families to this program?
 - How do you use mainstream and ethnic media?
 - How do you involve mutual assistance associations or other refugee-serving agencies?
 - How are religious organizations used in these efforts? (If examples are given for a specific religious group, ask for examples that are used with other groups.)
 - What types of activities does your program sponsor or host to recruit refugee and newcomer foster families?
 - What outreach tools have you translated into other languages? (Do you have copies that you could send to me?)
- Is developing rapport and trust more (or less) of an issue with refugee or other newcomer families than it is with U.S.-born families?
- For the ethnic groups served by your agency, what are the most effective ways to reach out to community leaders?
- What outreach techniques have you found are least effective in reaching a particular ethnic community?
- How have your outreach methods varied by ethnic group?
- How have various refugee and other newcomer communities responded to the request for foster parents?
 - What reasons have people given you for becoming foster parents?
 - What keeps them from becoming foster parents?
- Do your program needs justify the costs or efforts involved in recruiting, training, and licensing ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse families?
- Does your program recruit American-born foster families with international experience? If so, how do you find these families, and how helpful is that type of experience in the success of the placement?
- What advice would you give other foster care programs in their efforts to recruit more diverse foster families?

Training and Licensing

- What examples does your program use to explain foster care in a culturally relevant manner?
- What assessment tools do you use in assessing refugee or other newcomer families?
- What problems or issues have come up for refugees or other newcomer families completing the home study process (i.e.: references, legal status, size of home)?
- How is training tailored for refugee or other newcomer families, or should it be?
- What additional training topics, if any, need to be included when preparing refugees or other newcomers for foster parenting?
- What prevents potential refugee and other newcomer foster parents from becoming licensed?
- Are there procedural or structural changes in the licensing process that would enable more refugees to become foster families (i.e., looser home study requirements or waivers for certain criteria)?
- How useful are interpreters in the licensing and training process?

Retention

- What are some problems that have arisen for refugees and other newcomer families who become foster parents?
- How does the program support families who may be investigated for abuse or neglect of URMs in their care?
- What are some of the reasons refugee and other newcomer foster families have left your program or did not complete the licensing/training process?

- How does your program guard against burnout in refugee foster families?
- Does your program offer respite care as an option? Is it helpful?
- What kinds of opportunities are there for refugee foster families to come together to share foster parenting tips?
 - What has worked well or has been challenging for these sessions?
 - Is there an opportunity for seasoned foster families to mentor new families? Is it particularly helpful for refugee families?
- What are other ways in which ethnically diverse families are involved with youth, if not as foster parents (i.e., mentors, tutors volunteers, and others)?
 - What are the benefits or drawbacks of using diverse families in this way?
 - How does outreach and training of such families vary from outreach and training of foster families?
- How are mutual assistance associations, other refugee-serving, and religious organizations helpful in these efforts?

*Adjustment Issues and Feedback of URM*s

- How many youth are in homes with families of the same culture, language, religion, or ethnicity?
- What are the pros and cons of such placements?
- Have you noticed any difference in the adjustment of URM's that can be attributed to being in a placed with a family of the same culture, language, religion or ethnicity?
 - What difference, if any, has your program found in placing children in homes with newcomers who are not from the same ethnic or linguistic background (i.e., placing Sudanese youth with a Latino family or another African family)?
 - Has your program found any differences in the adjustment of URM's placed with other newcomer foster families versus URM's placed in U.S.-born foster families?
- What do youth say about being in homes with families of the same culture, language, religion, or ethnicity?
- Do you have any data on outcomes of children placed with families of the same culture, language, religion, or ethnicity, or with other newcomer families or U.S.-born families?
- What factors have the most influence on youths' adjustment to living with their foster families?
- Does your agency provide other opportunities to help URM's reinforce or preserve their cultures, languages and religions (i.e., activities sponsored by your agency, the provision of cultural resources on an ongoing basis, etc.)?
- Is there any additional information or advice that would help public child welfare agencies serve the needs of refugee youth?

Appendix 8

Resources

Publications

- BRYCS. *Guardianship: Frequently Asked Questions*. Available at: www.brycs.org/brycs_resources.htm.
- BRYCS. (Forthcoming). *Separated Refugee Children in the United States: Current Challenges, Future Opportunities*.
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- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees & Save the Children–Sweden Action for the Rights of Children. (2001). *Separated Children* (Rev. ed.). Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR. p. 6. Available at: www.unhcr.ch/.

Telephone Resources

Asylee Hotline: 800.354.0365

ORR's Asylee Hotline provides information on services in each state for asylees who have recently been granted asylum.

International Family Tracing Services: 410.230.2734

The International Social Service–United States of America Branch (ISS–USA) offers international family tracing services. Contact ISS-USA at issusa@lirs.org or www.iss-usa.org.

Division of Unaccompanied Children's Services Hotline: 202.401.5709

ORR's Division of Unaccompanied Children's Services Hotline offers assistance for those who encounter an undocumented minor in federal custody in the course of their work.

Information on Specific Topics

Cultural Competence

www.cwla.org/pubs/default.htm

International Family Tracing

- Contact your local chapter of the American Red Cross. For information and a Web-based chapter locator: www.redcross.org/services/intl/tracing.html. See also www.icrc.org/eng/family_links#listanchor1.
- The International Social Service–United States of America Branch (ISS–USA) also offers international family tracing services. Contact ISS-USA at 410.230.2734, issusa@lirs.org, or www.iss-usa.org.

MEPA, IEAP, and Policy Guidance

- www.hhs.gov/ocr/mepa
- *Necessary Components of Effective Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment*. Available at: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/pi/pi9523a4.htm
- *Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care* (Geneva: UNHCR, 1994) . Available at: www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home

Limited English Proficiency

- Interagency Working Group on Limited English Proficiency: www.lep.gov
- Office for Civil Rights, Administration for Children and Families: www.hhs.gov/ocr/lep

Professional Standards

- National Association of Social Workers: www.socialworkers.org/sections/credentials/cultural_comp.asp
- Child Welfare League of America: www.cwla.org/programs

Refugee Cultures and the Migration Process

- BRYCS Clearinghouse: www.brycs.org
- Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), U.S. Department of State: www.state.gov/g/prm
- Center for Applied Linguistics, Cultural Orientation Resource Center: www.cal.org/co

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status for Children Under Juvenile Court Jurisdiction

Immigrant Legal Resource Center: www.ilrc.org/resources/sijs/2005%20SIJS%20manual%20complete.pdf

Organizations

Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration: www.state.gov/g/prm

Center for Applied Linguistics Cultural Orientation Resource Center: www.cal.org/co.

See also www.culturalorientation.net.

Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb>

Migration Policy Institute: www.migrationpolicy.org

Minority Rights Group International: www.minorityrights.org

Office of Refugee Resettlement, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/index.htm
- Description of resettlement services in the United States: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/benefits/index.htm
- Eligibility for services: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/index.htm
- Ethnic organizations, mutual assistance associations, and registered nonprofit organizations: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/partners/index.htm
- National volunteers: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/partners/volunteer.htm
- Specialized refugee foster care programs: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/unaccompanied_refugee_minors.htm
- Technical assistance providers: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resources/tech_asst_providers.htm
- State Coordinators of Refugee Resettlement: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/partners/state_coordina.htm

Refugee Council USA: www.refugeecouncilusa.org

Save the Children, UK: www.savethechildren.org.uk

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: www.unhcr.ch/

U.S. Committee for Refugees: www.refugees.org

Appendix 9

Glossary

Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA): ASFA emphasizes the paramount importance of safety for children in any family preservation or reunion efforts and promotes greater permanency for children through more rapid adoption procedures. The regulations provide for certain exceptions that allow for additional considerations in determining whether to release unaccompanied refugee children for adoption.

Amerasians: Children who were born in Vietnam between January 1, 1962, and January 1, 1976, and fathered by a U.S. citizen. They were eligible for the ORR-funded refugee foster care program and other federal benefits.

Asylees: Asylees request refugee status after entry into the United States, in contrast to refugees, who receive this status before U.S. entry. An asylum seeker is someone who has come to the United States seeking protection; he or she must go through a legal process to gain asylum. Asylum is granted by either the Bureau for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security or by the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) of the U.S. Department of Justice. Like refugees, asylees must be found “unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of origin because of past persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution, based on the person’s race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.”

Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), U.S. Department of State: The agency within the U.S. Department of State that formulates, implements, and directs U.S. refugee and migration policies and programs. PRM is responsible for the management of the U.S. admissions program and the initial resettlement of refugees in the United States.

Child Protective Services (CPS): The designated social services agency (in most States) to receive reports, investigate, and provide intervention and treatment services to children and families in which child maltreatment has occurred. Frequently, this agency is located within larger public social service agencies, such as departments of social services.*

Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI: Legislation that prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, or national origin in employment and public accommodations.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): An international treaty laying out the basic human rights of children everywhere. The CRC is the most universally accepted treaty in the world. It has been ratified by 192 countries; Somalia and the United States are not among them. The CRC incorporates standards for the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of children. Two Optional Protocols have been added to the Convention: one on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and another on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Cuban/Haitian Entrants: Special legal status has been accorded to Cubans who entered the United States illegally between April 15 and October 10, 1980, and Haitians who entered the country illegally before January 1, 1981. Members of those groups who have continuously resided in the United States since before January 1, 1982, and who were known to the INS before that date are eligible to adjust to permanent residence status under the law.

Cultural competence: “The ability of individuals and systems to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and faiths or religions—in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, tribes, and communities, and protects and preserves the dignity of each.”**

Department of Unaccompanied Children’s Services (DUCS): A new division of the Office of Refugee Resettlement established in March 2003 that is responsible for undocumented children in federal custody. Children under the care of DUCS are simultaneously undergoing court proceedings with the Executive Office for Immigration Review.

* From the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Web site

** From the Child Welfare League of America Web site: www.cwla.org/programs/culturalcompetence.

English as a second language (ESL): A generic term describing courses that teach English to students whose first language is not English.

Ethnic community organizations: Ethnic organizations that provide culturally relevant and community-based services, such as child care, translation, and support groups, to immigrant and refugee families. See mutual assistance association.

Executive Office of Immigration Relief (EOIR): EOIR administers and interprets federal immigration laws and regulation through immigration court proceedings, appellate reviews, and administrative hearings in individual cases.

Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) of 2000: An executive order based on the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that requires agencies to eliminate barriers to accessing services that face people with limited English ability.

Family breakdown: A situation in which a family unit separates due to divorce, tension, stress, financial problems, or other reasons.

Family tracing: A variety of procedures used by refugees to find relatives who have been separated as a result of war or other emergencies. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) can sometimes assist with family tracing by delivering “Red Cross Messages” in war zones. Family tracing can take years and may rely on formal communication methods as well as word of mouth from other refugees.

Guardianship: The process of giving legal responsibility for the care of a child to an adult who is not the parent of the child. Guardianship allows the caretaker to make important decisions for a child that a parent would usually make, such as medical treatment and decisions about schooling. The guardianship process is intended to protect children and ensure that a responsible adult is looking after them; the main consideration is the best interest of the child.

Independent (and semi-independent) living: Programs for adolescents and young adults in foster care that prepare them to live on their own. Typical programming addresses issues such as job readiness, career counseling, personal finance management, housing, and health care.

Interethnic Adoption Provisions (IEAP): See Small Business and Job Protection Act of 1996.

Kinship care: Placements in which the foster parent is a nonparental relative of the child. Kinship care can refer to either formal foster care placements with government oversight or informal care of a relative’s child.

Limited English Proficient (LEP): Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.

Minor: A person younger than age 18.

Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994: Legislation that prohibits federally funded child welfare agencies from discriminating against children or foster or adoptive parents on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Agencies are not allowed to match children with families on the basis of ethnicity; they must assess all the needs of each child and then figure out the best placement to meet those needs. In addition, MEPA requires child welfare agencies to make an effort to recruit families of the same background as children in foster care.

Mutual assistance associations (MAAs): Ethnic organizations that provide culturally relevant and community-based services, such as child care, translation, and support groups, to immigrant and refugee families. See ethnic community organization.

Office for Civil Rights (OCR), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS): A division of HHS that issues guidance to help states and other public entities comply with federal civil rights laws as they implement HHS-related programs.

Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: The federal agency that funds services aimed at helping refugees achieve self-sufficiency after their

arrival in the United States through state-administered and voluntary refugee resettlement programs; it funds refugee cash and medical assistance, aid to unaccompanied refugee minors, supplementary welfare payments, demonstration and other special projects, English language instruction, employment services, and other support services.

Permanency planning: The process of determining a stable, long-term placement for a child in out-of-home care, generally overseen by a court. The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 created a greater emphasis on permanency at a more expedited pace. Concurrent planning for family reunification and for alternative long-term care, if family reunion is not feasible within mandated timelines, is now more common.

Reclassification: Refugee minors who arrive in the United States accompanied by adult relatives but who later are abandoned, neglected, or otherwise separated from their caregiver can be reclassified by ORR to unaccompanied refugee minor (URM) status. URMs are eligible for specialized refugee foster care services.

Refugee: Someone who is outside his or her country of origin and cannot return due to a well-founded fear of persecution on account of his or her race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Refugees in the United States are people who fit this description and have received legal status as a refugee from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security prior to resettling in this country.

Refugee foster care: This refers to a network of 15 specialized foster care programs for refugee children without a parent or guardian to care for them. These programs are federally funded by ORR and administered by affiliates of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS).

Refugee foster families: Refugees (or other newcomers) who are recruited, trained, and licensed to provide formal foster care.

Resettlement agencies: Private voluntary agencies that hold cooperative agreements with the federal government to provide reception, placement, and social services to refugees newly arrived in the United States.

Secondary migration: Voluntary relocation of refugees from the community in which they were originally resettled to a different community. Secondary migration can occur for a variety of reasons, including presence of family, friends, or clanspeople in another community; employment opportunities; availability of housing; and better climate.

Separated refugee child: The International Committee for the Red Cross defines a separated child as a child younger than age 18 or the legal age of majority who is separated from both parents, but not necessarily from other relatives. Other organizations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, use the term “separated children” instead of “unaccompanied children” to include any child separated from parents, whether cared for by other relatives or alone.

Severe form of trafficking: A term defined in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 as

- sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or
- the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

Small Business and Job Protection Act of 1996 Section 1808 (commonly referred to as the Interethnic Adoption Provisions (IEAP): Part of a set of laws that aim to ensure that federally funded foster and adoptive placements are not delayed or denied on the basis of race, color, or national origin—of either the child or the prospective parent—in accordance with the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS): An immigration visa available to foreign-born children in the United States who are deemed eligible for long-term foster care, have been declared dependent upon a juvenile court, and for whom it is not in their best interest to be returned to their country of origin.

State coordinator of refugee resettlement: A position established by federal legislation to administer refugee assistance programs in the states that have them. State refugee coordinators are responsible for overseeing a state's resettlement efforts and for providing reports on expenditures of federal refugee assistance funds and progress on outcome measures to ORR.

Title IV(B) of the Social Security Act: Legislation governing federally funded child welfare programs in the United States, including refugee assistance programs.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000: Legislation intended to combat trafficking in persons, a contemporary manifestation of slavery whose victims are predominantly women and children; the law includes provisions for punishing traffickers and protecting their victims. Full text of the law is available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/laws/vawo2000/stitle_a.htm.

Torture Victims/Survivors Program: An Office of Refugee Resettlement-funded program providing services to victims of torture, regardless of their immigration status; services may include mental or psychological services, legal and social services, and research and training for health care providers.

Unaccompanied refugee minor (URM): A refugee who is younger than age 18 and is outside the care of a parent or guardian; URMs are eligible for specialized foster care and child welfare services.

Undocumented minors: Children under age 18 who enter the United States without any legal status or permission. The Office of Refugee Resettlement has responsibility for the care and welfare of undocumented children who are unaccompanied by a parent or guardian and who are in federal custody.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): An office of the United Nations established in 1950 to provide international protection, care, and maintenance for refugees who fall within the scope of its mandate through voluntary repatriation, local integration in the country of first asylum, or resettlement in a third country. UNHCR also refers to the person in charge of that office.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security: A Cabinet-level department of the federal government established in 2002 to prevent terrorist attacks within the United States; reduce the vulnerability of the United States to terrorism; and minimize the damage, and assist in the recovery, from terrorist attacks that do occur within the United States. Refugees receive their legal status from the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security prior to resettling in this country.

U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service: The federal agency within the Department of Justice that formerly administered immigration law and gave final clearance for admission to the United States. The duties of the INS were divided between the Bureau for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Bureau for Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) of the Department of Homeland Security in 2003.

Volag (short for voluntary agency): One of 10 agencies (Church World Service, Ethiopian Community Development Council, Episcopal Migration Ministries, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, International Rescue Committee, Immigration and Refugee Services of America, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, State of Iowa, Bureau of Refugee Services, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services, and World Relief Corporation) holding cooperative agreements with the U.S. Department of State to resettle refugees admitted to the United States.