

County of San Diego



Health and Human Services Agency

REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PLAN

July 2013 - June 2016

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *2013-2016 REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (RES) PLAN* provides the framework for the provision of employment services to refugees in San Diego County for the next three years. The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) has administrative responsibility for the RES program and manages the services through contracted service providers. Within HHS, the section that manages refugee functions and houses the County's Refugee Coordinator is the Office of Strategy and Innovation (OSI) division. OSI developed the RES plan with input collected throughout the year. Information was gathered at public hearings, focus groups and refugee and collaborative meetings. Although employment services are the primary focus of the RES Plan, extensive data gathered in the process, and over the years, indicated the need to consider other related services such as housing and transportation.

The California State Refugee Programs Bureau (RPB) Arrivals Information report indicates that over the last five Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) (October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2012) the County has resettled 15,158 newly arriving refugees. This makes San Diego the largest recipient of new arrivals in California during this period. During FFY 12 (ending September 30, 2012), San Diego County received fifty percent of the new refugees resettled in California. These statistics do not include secondary migration, where refugees who initially arrive in another county or state, move to San Diego for any reason.

The majority of these families reside in HHS's geographical services areas of Central and East regions. Seventy-six percent of the refugee arrivals during the last five FFYs are from Iraq and the majority of Iraqi refugees are settling in the city of El Cajon located in San Diego's East County where there is an established Iraqi community.

San Diego has a strong, vibrant refugee community. The rich cultural heritages of our newcomers contribute to the county's existing cultural diversity. The region also has a multitude of service agencies which individually and jointly, through strong collaboration, can and do provide services to the refugees. HHS is an active partner in these endeavors and the collaborative efforts result in many successes for our refugees. However, language and cultural barriers continue to impede refugees obtaining employment and achieving self-sufficiency.

Over the next three years, RES will offer the following components: Employment, English Language Training, On-the-Job Training/Skills Training, Translation and Interpretation Services, Childcare, Transportation, Skills Recertification, Microenterprise, Information and Referral Services, Outreach Services, Social Adjustment services, Case Management Services, Citizenship and Naturalization Preparation Services, and Elderly Refugee Services.

I. COUNTY REFUGEE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The Refugee Employment Services (RES) program is administered by the Office of Strategy and Innovation (OSI) of the County's Health and Human Services Agency (HHS). The County Refugee Coordinator reports to OSI executive management. OSI works closely with Eligibility Operations (EO). EO is the section within HHS that has administrative responsibility for the CalWORKs program and administers the Welfare to Work (WTW) contracts.

The County provides other services to refugees which include public health services. Communication and coordination with other HHS sections will continue to promote service integration and avoid duplication.

II. DESCRIPTION OF COUNTY'S REFUGEE PROGRAMS

A. Funding Sources

The County receives Refugee Social Service (RSS), Targeted Assistance (TA) formula, Targeted Assistance Discretionary Grant (TADG) and Older Refugee Discretionary Grant (ORDG) funding. Services included in the RES Plan incorporate all of these funding sources.

B. General Program Description

The primary intent of the program, in accordance with the Refugee Act, is to assist newly arrived refugees in obtaining employment and facilitate their transition to self-sufficiency as soon as possible. To achieve this goal, the County of San Diego's RES Plan for Fiscal Years 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 incorporates a comprehensive approach to address the employment needs of newly arrived refugees. The County will continue to provide RES in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner and in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and county laws, amendments, regulations, and guidelines for the next three fiscal years (2013 -2016).

The RES Plan's services are delivered through contracts with private providers. Refugee services are part of the array of services that comprise WTW. This inclusion facilitates close communication with planners and project managers of WTW resulting in more cohesive and effective services for refugee customers.

The description that follows addresses both RSS and TA allocations since the components are funded by both funding streams. These services will be contingent on the availability of funding.

1. At the family service level, The RES program consists of Program Administration and the following service components:
 - Employment is fully integrated with the CalWORKs WTW program and offers employment case management which includes assistance with applications, job search, interview coaching and acculturation
 - English Language Training to eliminate barriers to employment and/or provide job readiness training
 - On-the-Job Training/Skills Training programs will give refugees work experience in the United States and help them get the skills they need to find employment
 - Translation and Interpretation Services provides interpretation and translation to refugees to enable them to access employment and obtain other services to eliminate barriers and obtain self sufficiency
 - Childcare for children, when necessary for participation in employability services or for the acceptance or retention of employment
 - Transportation when necessary for participation in employability services or for the acceptance or retention of employment
 - Microenterprise implements a development project to assist eligible refugee individuals to develop small businesses and achieve self-sufficiency
 - Skills recertification will help refugees transfer their knowledge and experience from their country of origin to help them gain employment in the U.S. in their field
 - Information and Referral Services will provide refugees information and referral for existing service available to them
 - Outreach Services will be designed to familiarize refugees with available services, to explain the purpose of these services, and facilitate access to these services
 - Social Adjustment services will include assessment and short-term counseling, health-related services, and home management services to help refugees address these barriers to self sufficiency
 - Case Management services for a purpose other than in connection with employment or participation in employability services
 - Citizenship and Naturalization Preparation services to prepare refugees for citizenship
 - Elderly Refugee Services serves refugees 60 years or older by augmenting existing services to elderly refugees that reduce isolation/increase socialization and increase and maintain individual self-sufficiency

2. The Refugee Employment Services system provides employment related services for refugees who are receiving cash public assistance (e.g. CalWORKs) and those who are unemployed and employed refugees in need of services to retain employment or to attain economic independence

Participants eligible for program services possess the following required characteristics:

- In the United States for 60 months or less;
- Age 16 years or older;
- Individuals who have been granted special immigration status ("refugee status") by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) while outside the U.S. These refugees are unable to return to their country of origin because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion;
- Asylees are individuals who are in the U.S., either legally or without documents, and fear that they will be persecuted if they return to their home country. To become an asylee, the person must go through an immigration hearing or court process and be granted asylum either by a DHS/U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Asylum Office, or by the Immigration Court of the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR) of the U.S. Department of Justice;
- Cuban and Haitian Entrants are nationals of Cuba and Haiti who are in the U.S. and are granted a special status by DHS;
- Certain Amerasians from Vietnam who are admitted to the U.S. as immigrants pursuant to Section 584 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1988;
- Human Trafficking Victims are victims of modern-day slavery, which include young children, teenagers, men, and women. Victims of human trafficking are subjected to force, fraud, or coercion, for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 made adult victims of severe forms of trafficking who have been certified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services eligible for benefits and services to the same extent as refugees. The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003 made certain family members of trafficking victims also eligible for benefits and services to the same extent as refugees. Victims of severe forms of trafficking who are under 18 years of age are also eligible for benefits to the same extent as refugees but do not need to be certified; or
- Be a U.S. born minor whose parent(s) are refugees.

3. The eligibility criteria for Refugee Elderly Services are:

- Individuals who are 60 years or older; and
- Meet the criteria described above for Refugees, Asylees, Cuban and Haitian entrants, Human Certain Amerasians from Vietnam and Trafficking Victims.

C. CalWORKs and RCA Compliance

San Diego County assures that the provision of activities and services to mandatory and voluntary CalWORKs WTW participants and Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) recipients, funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) monies and allocated by California Department of Social Services (CDSS), will be expended in accordance with CalWORKs WTW and RCA requirements (including those regarding program participation flow, good cause determination, sanctioning, and supportive services) specified in the Manual of Policy and Procedures Sections 42-700 and 69-200, respectively, and other applicable CalWORKs and RCA policy guidance issued by CDSS.

Newly arrived RCA single refugees and couples who do not qualify for CalWORKs participate in the Wilson Fish Comprehensive Resettlement Collaborative for eight months and receive employment services for up to five years. Refugee families with children who are CalWORKs eligible enter the county's assistance program without first receiving cash or employment services from Wilson Fish.

D. County Planning Process

The 2013-2016 RES Plan was developed according to the County Guidelines published on RPB's website with respect to RES Plan requirements.

1. Participants involved in planning and providing input included Voluntary Resettlement Agencies (VOLAGs), Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs), community college district staff, school district staff, San Diego Workforce Partnership, East County Career Center, HHS management, members of the faith community and members from the refugee community.
2. The refugee arrivals have changed over the years. In the 1970s the majority of the refugees were from Southeast Asia. In the 1980s, refugees from Eastern Europe and East Africa began arriving here. In the early 1990s, following the breakup of Yugoslavia, refugees from its successor states, primarily Bosnia, arrived in the County. In the late 1990s, civil unrest in Africa created new waves of displaced persons and refugees from Somalia and Sudan.

The California State Refugee Programs Bureau Arrivals Information report indicates that over the last three Federal Fiscal Years (October 2009 through September 2012) the County has resettled 8,395 newly arriving refugees. Over the past three years, the largest arrival group's country of origin are Iraq, Burma and Iran with the largest numbers of arrivals from Iraq (6,392 or 76% of the total arrivals).

Refugees from Iraq are comprised of three main sub-groups: Kurds, Shiites, and Chaldeans. The majority of the refugees in San Diego County are Chaldeans.

Burma is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world including eight main ethnic groups and more than 130 distinctive subgroups. Refugees from Burma include the Karen, Chin and Karenni. Many of them fled through the hills and jungles of northeast Burma and across the border into Thailand where they were settled in refugee camps. The Chin population is a smaller one that originally entered Burma from China. Their mission of acquiring an independent cultural and political status within Burma has led to repression from military forces.

There are two main clusters of refugee populations in San Diego County. They are City Heights, located within the City of San Diego, and the City of El Cajon in East County.

3. In a normal, growing economy, there are difficulties with helping refugees achieve acculturation and obtain employment. When the economic downturn is factored in with some of the special characteristics of the newcomers, the challenges of placement are intensified.

Key findings of the Needs Assessment Process were the following barriers and activities to mitigate these barriers:

- Language Barriers
 - More Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) classes and VESL classes with training that covers job-specific training, skills and certifications
 - More ESL with instructor who speaks native language
 - Consistent use of language line or face-to-face interpreters at Family Resource Centers
- Lack of Employment History in the U.S.
 - Create opportunities to gain some type of work experience in the U.S. such as On-the-Job Training (OJT), Volunteer, CalWORKs Work Experience (WEX)
 - Skill development trainings
- Lack of Professional Certification
 - Increase recertification programs and provide assistance to refugees through this process

- Lack of available jobs
 - Educate employers on the benefits of hiring refugees
 - Work with small businesses to find jobs
 - Attract businesses to the region
 - Conduct Refugee career fairs to attract companies and business that would be likely to hire refugees
 - Microenterprise
 - Train member of their culture to provide childcare
 - Transportation
 - Increase bus routes/Reduced rate bus passes
 - Identify/provide vans or shuttles that take refugees to their most common destinations
 - Lack of Social Support
 - Engage mentors or sponsors to help them through the job search experience – resumes, online job search, interviewing. These persons can help to motivate and give hope by sharing their own successes. Can also help others navigate unfamiliar and complex systems
 - Provide ongoing acculturation training
 - Train refugees on U.S. systems and how to navigate these complex systems
 - Publicize available resources
 - Increase time of Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)
 - Cultural Barriers
 - Increase the amount of culturally and linguistically competent service providers
 - Provide cultural competency training
 - Affordable Housing
 - Mental Health Services
4. Statistics from the Labor Market Information Division of the State of California Employment Development Department (EDD) show that the unemployment rate in San Diego County in December was 8.1 percent, unemployment for the City of El Cajon is 11.1 percent. El Cajon has the largest number of refugees in the County.

The job market in San Diego County is growing slowly. Between December 2011 and December 2012, total nonfarm employment gained 20,300 jobs, or 1.6 percent. Agricultural employment remained unchanged over the year.

Professional and business services posted the greatest year-over gain, adding 7,000 jobs. Administrative and support and waste services increased by 5,100 jobs, followed by an additional 1,700 jobs in professional, scientific, and technical services. Management of companies and enterprises added 200 jobs. Seven other industries also added jobs over the year. The most significant came from trade, transportation, and utilities (up 4,300); educational and health services (up 3,500); and leisure and hospitality (up 2,800).

Manufacturing (down 2,000) was the only sector to post year-over job losses. Durable goods (down 1,400) accounted for most of the decline, followed by non-durable goods (down 600). (EDD Release, January 18, 2013)

Several sectors and subsectors had significant job growth over the past year:

Specialty trade contractors	+4.9%
Building foundation and exterior contractors	+6.2%
Ship and boat building	+6.5%
Building material and garden equipment	+6.0%
Clothing and clothing accessories	+4.8%
Administrative, support, and waste services	+6.6%
Amusement, gambling, and recreation	+7.5%

(EDD Release, January 18, 2013)

- The description of the local labor market demonstrates that there is no single strategy that can meet the needs of the diverse refugee population. Leisure and hospitality showed a slight improvement December 2011 and December 2012. This industry seems to continue to improve with the greatest month-over job gain, adding 3,300 jobs between January 2013 and February 2013. This is an industry which will be explored for placement of refugee customers. (EDD Release, March 29, 2013)

III. DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE COMPONENTS

The RES Plan includes the following specific service components:

A. Employment - Funded by RSS and TA

This component provides employment case management and is designed for public cash assistance clients and newly arrived refugees who are unemployed or under-employed. It focuses on one adult family member achieving early employment and/or all employable family members, including children age 16

and above, finding jobs. The aim is to use whatever approach is most likely to achieve family self-sufficiency. The Employment component prepares participants to obtain, retain and upgrade jobs.

For refugee participants who are also enrolled in the County's CalWORKs Welfare to Work program, supportive services such as child care and transportation are funded by CalWORKs.

Case management in the RES program will include, at minimum, a comprehensive assessment, an individually tailored plan, and elimination of employment barriers along with the provision of supportive services.

B. English Language Training - Funded by RSS and TA

The needs assessments consistently indicate that for most new refugees their foremost needs are English language training and acculturation. Therefore, the primary focus of the initial engagement with participants is to help them acquire these skills. Participants will be referred to the appropriate level of English language training based on their individual needs as indicated by the assessment. This may include Vocational English as a Second Language (VSEL) or other English as Second Language (ESL) trainings to eliminate barriers to employment and/or provide job readiness training. Participants may be paired with guides or role models from the same cultural background who share similar experiences to facilitate a quicker and more effective assimilation. These guides will assist participants in activities such as job search, resume creation, interviewing, job coaching, navigating the transportation system, navigating the healthcare system to overcome barriers to employment, etc. The job readiness trainings are all developed around the idea of employment. Job readiness topics may include financial literacy, computer literacy, career development, transportation and health on the job. This training will be funded by RSS and TA funds.

C. On-the-Job Training/Skills Training - Funded by RSS and TA

OJT will be used to help refugees gain work experience in the U.S. OJT provides an opportunity for employers to receive financial assistance for training refugees in the skills needed to find employment. Refugees will experience working at a job site and have the opportunity to learn new skills. The program's goal will be to find refugees unsubsidized employment.

D. Other Employability Services

a. Translation and Interpretation Services - Funded by RSS and TA

Limited English speaking refugees receive assistance accessing WTW services and other essential services to help overcome employment barriers and employment retention challenges by accessing needed mainstream services.

b. Childcare - Funded by TA

Childcare would be provided when necessary for participation in employability services or for the acceptance or retention of employment. Childcare would be provided for families who were had exceeded their 48 months of CalWORKs but were still eligible for RES and ineligible for any alternative childcare.

c. Transportation - Funded by TA

Transportation would be provided when necessary for participation in employability services or for the acceptance or retention of employment. Transportation would be provided for families who had exceeded their 48 months of CalWORKs but were still eligible for RES.

d. Microenterprise - Funded by TADG

Services under this component are subject to availability of funding. The County has implemented a microenterprise childcare development project to assist eligible refugee individuals to develop small businesses and achieve self-sufficiency.

The goal is to facilitate self-sufficiency for participants by providing appropriate guidance and support to assist them in starting a microenterprise business.

e. Skill Recertification - Funded by RSS and TA

Help professional refugees in need of professional refresher training and other recertification services in order to qualify to practice his or her profession in the U.S. This program is specifically intended to assist the professional in becoming relicensed in his or her profession; and, if completed, can realistically be expected to result in such relicensing. This training may only be made available to individuals who are employed.

E. Non-Employment Services

a. Translation and Interpretation Services - Funded by RSS and TA

Provide translation and interpreter services, when necessary for a purpose other than in connection with employment or participation in employability service including assistance accessing public services including CalWORKs.

b. Information and referral services - Funded by RSS and TA

Provide refugees information and referral for existing service available to them.

c. Outreach services - Funded by RSS and TA

Refugees and services providers have identified the difficulty of accessing and navigating complex systems as a barrier to employment. Outreach activities will be designed to familiarize refugees with available services, to explain the purpose of these services, and facilitate access to these services.

d. Social adjustment services - Funded by RSS and TA

1. Assessment and short-term counseling

Assessments and short-term counseling to persons or families in a perceived crisis and counseling to individuals or families to help them understand and identify their physical and mental health needs and maintain or improve their physical and mental health in order to gain self sufficiency.

2. Health-related services

Provide information; referral to appropriate resources; assistance in scheduling appointments and obtaining services; and counseling to individuals or families to help them understand and identify their physical and mental health needs and maintain or improve their physical and mental health

3. Home management services

Formal or informal instruction to individuals or families in management of household budgets, home maintenance, nutrition, housing standards, tenants' rights, and other consumer education services

e. Case management services - Funded by RSS and TA

Case Management services for a purpose other than in connection with employment or participation in employability services.

f. Citizenship and naturalization preparation services - Funded by RSS and TA

Civics instruction to prepare refugees for citizenship, application assistance for adjustment to legal permanent resident status and citizenship status, assistance to disabled refugees in obtaining disability waivers from English and civics requirements for naturalization, and the provision of interpreter services for the citizenship interview.

g. Elderly Refugee Services - Funded by ORDG

Services under this component are subject to availability of funding. The County's HHSA OSI division, Behavior Health Services (BHS) and AIS, partner to provide elderly refugees with culturally and linguistically competent behavioral health care outreach and engagement opportunities through peer-based services conducted in the community where seniors typically congregate.

This program provides multicultural outreach, education, advocacy, peer mentoring support and transportation services to seniors to enable timely identification of mental health issues and prevention of mental health issues, reduce inappropriate utilization of services such as hospital emergency rooms (ER) and inpatient hospital admissions, enhance timely access and engagement, enhance service utilization capacity and improve quality of care by providing culturally and linguistically effective services at senior housing, senior centers, faith-based organizations, and/or natural gathering places.

This program identifies clients that are in need of a range of services and supports and provides the following services:

- Provides seniors and their families with appropriate referral information such as community mental health, social services, self-help, housing and employment services, healthcare and referrals to mental health and other county operated contracted or private services.
- Screens seniors for benefits eligibility and assist them with enrollment and securing federal, state and private benefits programs such as healthcare, prescription medication, affordable housing, education and energy assistance.
- Provides counseling, support, and education on how to navigate the health care system.

- Offers on site and in community structured and semi-structured weekly site-based social and recreational activities to encourage the development of interpersonal relationships, community connections and other system supports.
- Provides integrated, door-to-door transportation services to improve access to care, reduce isolation and maintain self-sufficiency.
- Provides services in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way, including outreach, education and peer support.