

# PROMOTING REFUGEE INTEGRATION IN CHALLENGING TIMES

## The Potential of Two-Generation Strategies



By Mark Greenberg, Julia Gelatt, Jessica Bolter,  
Essey Workie, and Isabelle Charo

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## Executive Summary

The refugee resettlement program in the United States is currently experiencing unprecedented challenges. Refugee arrivals in fiscal year 2018 fell to less than 23,000, well short of the already historically low ceiling of 45,000. Funding for both reception and placement services, and for other services that assist arriving refugees, have been reduced, causing a number of local affiliates of the nine national resettlement agencies to scale back or end their resettlement programs. The drop in arrivals and funding cuts threaten the refugee resettlement network's sustainability and capacity for larger-scale resettlement in the future. At the same time, this period of low arrivals and declining federal funding may provide an opportunity for state coordinators and service providers to step back and reconsider how programs serve the full spectrum of integration needs of refugee families while also looking to forge new partnerships to support and sustain refugee integration.

In 2017, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) launched a project to consider how a two-generation framework might strengthen refugee integration in the United States. This project builds on growing interest in “two-generation” or “whole-family” strategies among human services agencies across the country. These efforts are grounded in a recognition that addressing the needs of children is key to the success of their parents, and that strong and supportive families will promote better outcomes for children. A two-generation approach may include programs that explicitly serve both adults and children as well as those that focus on either group in ways that support the advancement of the whole family. Traditionally, U.S. refugee resettlement programs concentrate their services on helping adults find employment as quickly as possible. Although these programs dedicate some resources to supporting children and seniors, the federal framework for refugee resettlement strongly reflects this goal of rapid employment.

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In order to understand the extent to which two-generation models are already being used in refugee resettlement programming, and the extent to which they could be used, MPI researchers conducted interviews with voluntary resettlement agency staff and with state refugee coordinators from the ten states that have received the largest numbers of refugees in recent years, and with a number of additional coordinators from other states. These were followed by site visits to six states and a May 2018 meeting that brought together state refugee coordinators from a dozen states with experts in two-generation models, early care and education, school-age refugees, and refugee employment services.

Through these efforts, MPI identified promising practices for serving children and their parents, for helping adult refugees get into better jobs over time, and for meeting the broader integration needs of refugee families.

Such promising practices include services to support children and youth:

- **Microenterprise training for refugee parents to become child care providers.** Providers run such programs in Washington State, Michigan, and California. Licensed refugee-run child care facilities offer children safe, culturally competent environments and may make refugee parents more comfortable utilizing child care.



- **Family literacy programs.** Providers in several states offer literacy programs that teach both children and parents reading skills, while training parents to be teachers to their children.
- **Innovative Head Start partnerships.** Two nonprofits in Grand Rapids, Michigan, are operating two Early Head Start classrooms, and plan to add a Head Start classroom, with structures and curricula focused on refugee families. The organizations target 60 percent of slots to refugee children and children of refugees, and they aim to hire staff with refugee backgrounds to fill at least half of its positions.
- **A family- and community-engagement program.** The Cajon Valley school district in San Diego, California, has staff focused on training educators and families (refugee and nonrefugee alike) to build effective partnerships with each other to support student success.
- **Partnerships with university groups.** In Michigan and Virginia, service providers partner with college student groups that connect with refugee families and help them with college applications and planning.

This study also identified promising practices to help refugee parents find better jobs over time, which can enable them to better support their families' integration:

- **Specialized training to help refugees obtain job skills and professional certificates.** Utah's Refugee Education and Training Center, built specifically to provide training and other programming for refugees, has developed short-term, intensive trainings for refugees that lead to professional certificates.
- **Efforts to make mainstream workforce services accessible to refugees.** California is running an 18-month pilot to provide funding to place navigators in job centers run by the state workforce system, designated to help English Learners (ELs) (including refugees, immigrants, and U.S.-born people) utilize workforce and adult education services. In addition, grantees are expected to coordinate wrap-around services such as transportation and child care, partner with community-based organizations, and work to educate workforce boards about refugee resettlement.
- **Integrating English instruction with workforce training.** State funding is being used in Michigan to support new, creative methods of teaching English, such as an English program targeted to the construction trade, in which participants also obtained their forklift license and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certification, and a program providing English instruction tailored to the sewing industry.
- **Services to help higher-skilled refugees find jobs that fit their skills and training.** Washington's CLEVER (Career Ladders for Educated and Vocationally Experienced Refugees) program works with skilled refugees to develop a career plan for their short- and long-term goals in order to get back into their chosen careers. And, through a partnership with a Welcome Back Center, the program helps refugees get their foreign transcripts evaluated and design a pathway to obtain licenses necessary for their profession.

Finally, strategies for serving the broader needs of refugee families include:

- **Strategies for supporting refugees' mental health.** In Washington, all refugees age 14 and over are now screened for mental health conditions during their required health check using the Refugee Health Screener-15 (RHS-15), a tool developed in the state. Based on the results of the RHS-15, some refugees are referred to local providers for mental health evaluation, including diagnosis and recommended treatment, as needed.
- **Services for older refugees, who may otherwise experience social isolation.** In Colorado, services connect refugee seniors to their peers and to mental health supports; Area Agencies on Aging partner with refugee service providers and offer trainings on serving refugees to all of the service providers they contract with. They also identify community navigators from within the





largest refugee populations to connect with older refugees in order to identify those who need additional supports.

- ***Case management to identify and serve the needs of whole families.*** In Utah, all refugee families receive two years of case management. Case management services allow providers to identify family needs and add on services as needed, such as assistance with transportation, access to medical care, food assistance, or access to microloans or other help starting a business. Families receive regular assessments to gauge their progress along a range of outcome measures.
- ***Engaging volunteers and community groups to support refugee families' integration.*** In Michigan, Bethany Christian Services pairs all refugees they resettle who lack family ties in the community with cosponsor groups. These groups, made up of anywhere from five to 35 volunteers, often but not always from a church, make a six-month commitment to help resettle one refugee family.

Based on these findings, MPI has developed a series of recommendations for ways the federal government, state leadership and state refugee coordinators, and voluntary agencies can implement and support two-generation approaches to refugee integration. Mindful of the fact that funding cuts, reduced refugee arrivals, and the current political context may rule out initiatives that would require large funding increases, these recommendations center on steps that can be taken without significant additional funding. These include:

- Recommending that the Office of Refugee Resettlement/U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in consultation with state coordinators of refugee resettlement, revise outcome measures to include both child outcomes and adult outcomes beyond short-term employment, and develop policy guidelines around the needs of young children, school-age children, and youth transitioning to adulthood.
- Recommending that state refugee coordinators:
  - reach out to potential partners in the early childhood education and care field to establish relationships and identify areas for potential cooperation in linking families to services and improving the responsiveness of mainstream programs;
  - bring together partners in School Impact Grant-funded services to share information and perspectives about the effectiveness of current services, gaps in services, available data, research needs, and strategies for strengthening efforts; and
  - establish a working group of state and nonstate partners to examine existing services for refugee youth transitioning to adulthood, and to identify strategies for strengthening those services.
- Recommending that voluntary agencies identify existing best practices among offices and programs that reflect principles of two-generation strategies, ensure that they are shared across the organization, and elevate them to the attention of state refugee resettlement programs, both in the state where they operate and in others.

Taking these steps can establish a framework for the further development of two-generation strategies that can strength state and local efforts and provide important help to arriving families.

## I. Introduction

In recent years, human services agencies across the United States have shown a growing interest in “two-generation” or “whole-family” strategies. These efforts are grounded in a recognition that addressing



the needs of children is key to the success of their parents, and that strong and supportive families will promote better outcomes for children. Accordingly, even when an initiative principally serves adults or children, efforts to address the needs of all family members may be an important strategy for strengthening outcomes. Thus, a two-generation approach to refugee integration is one that may include programs that explicitly serve both adults and children, as well as those that focus on one or the other group in ways that support the whole family.

In 2017, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) initiated a project to examine how a two-generation framework might strengthen refugee resettlement and integration in the United States. The project has involved discussions with voluntary resettlement agency personnel and state refugee coordinators; site visits to six states, where researchers talked with state leaders, resettlement agencies, ethnic community-based organizations, and other service providers; and a May 2018 meeting that brought together content experts with a dozen state refugee coordinators. While this research has benefited from the insights of a wide range of actors, its focus was the potential role of the state refugee coordinator and the coordinator's office, because that office may have the greatest potential for setting refugee resettlement and integration policies that affect how services, overall, are delivered to refugees. Through this effort, MPI researchers have explored a range of two-generation strategies with particular attention to three types of services: services and supports for children and youth, efforts to assist refugees in securing better jobs, and approaches that take a broader, whole-family approach to integration.

The current fiscal and political context may make this appear an unusual time for this inquiry. The U.S. refugee resettlement program is facing an extraordinary set of pressures and challenges. Since entering office, the Trump administration has significantly lowered the refugee resettlement ceiling and slowed refugee arrivals. The number of refugees admitted to the United States fell from 84,995 in fiscal year (FY) 2016 to 22,491 in FY 2018.<sup>1</sup> With the decline in arrivals, voluntary organizations and state refugee resettlement programs have faced funding cuts and uncertainty about the future.

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*The U.S. refugee resettlement program is facing an extraordinary set of pressures and challenges.*

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At the same time, the reductions and instability in federal funding make this an important time to strengthen partnerships between state and local governments and nongovernmental organizations; state human services and workforce agencies; and philanthropic actors and community volunteers. Such partnerships present opportunities to ensure that resettlement and integration efforts identify and address broader family needs.

This report first provides an overview of refugee admissions to the United States, the U.S. refugee resettlement process, and background on the use of two-generation strategies in human services provision. It then explores the applicability of this approach to refugee resettlement, with particular attention to services that support children's development, adult employment, and broader family integration. The report concludes with a discussion of the current federal context and how it may affect these efforts, and with recommended next steps for service providers and policymakers interested in reaping the benefits of this approach.

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<sup>1</sup> Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Data Hub, "U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings and Number of Refugees Admitted, 1980-Present," accessed November 3, 2018, [www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-annual-refugee-resettlement-ceilings-and-number-refugees-admitted-united](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-annual-refugee-resettlement-ceilings-and-number-refugees-admitted-united).





## II. Refugee Resettlement in the United States

Under the *Refugee Act of 1980*, a refugee is defined as any person who is outside of their country and is unable or unwilling to return because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.<sup>2</sup> Refugees and individuals with certain other protected statuses—asylees,<sup>3</sup> parolees,<sup>4</sup> Cuban and Haitian entrants,<sup>5</sup> and holders of Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs)<sup>6</sup>—qualify for benefits and services funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

### A. Trends in Refugee Arrivals and Characteristics

The United States has admitted more than 3.2 million refugees since 1975.<sup>7</sup> Each year, the president establishes a cap on the number of refugees who can be admitted, though the actual number of arrivals may be less than the cap. The year with the highest number of refugee arrivals since 1975 was FY 1980, when more than 200,000 refugees, most from Southeast Asia, arrived. The lowest number came in FY 1977, when 19,946 were admitted. Refugee arrivals in FY 2018 represent the lowest number of annual arrivals since the modern refugee resettlement program began in 1980. While the presidential determination for refugee arrivals for FY 2018 was set at 45,000, only 22,491 were admitted.<sup>8</sup>

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The demographics of refugee arrivals have shifted over time. For nearly 30 years, the United States resettled refugees predominately from Asia and the former Soviet Union, until the late 1990s and early 2000s, when the U.S. resettlement program saw upticks in refugees from African and Near Eastern (Middle Eastern)/South Asian countries, respectively (see Figure 1). These increases continued and have largely been sustained since then.

2 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), “Refugee Timeline,” updated February 20, 2018, [www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/our-history/refugee-timeline](http://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/our-history/refugee-timeline).

3 Asylees must meet the same protection criteria as refugees but make their claims while already in the United States or by seeking admission at a port of entry. See USCIS, “Refugee & Asylum,” updated November 12, 2015, [www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-asylum](http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-asylum).

4 Under the *Immigration and Nationality Act*, the Secretary of Homeland Security has parole authority to temporarily permit a person to enter the United States. Traditionally, the United States paroles foreign nationals for humanitarian relief, medical care, family reunification, court proceedings, or other emergent needs. See USCIS, “Humanitarian or Significant Public Benefit Parole for Individuals outside the United States,” updated December 15, 2017, [www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/humanitarian-or-significant-public-benefit-parole-individuals-outside-united-states](http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/humanitarian-or-significant-public-benefit-parole-individuals-outside-united-states); USCIS, “Refugee Timeline.”

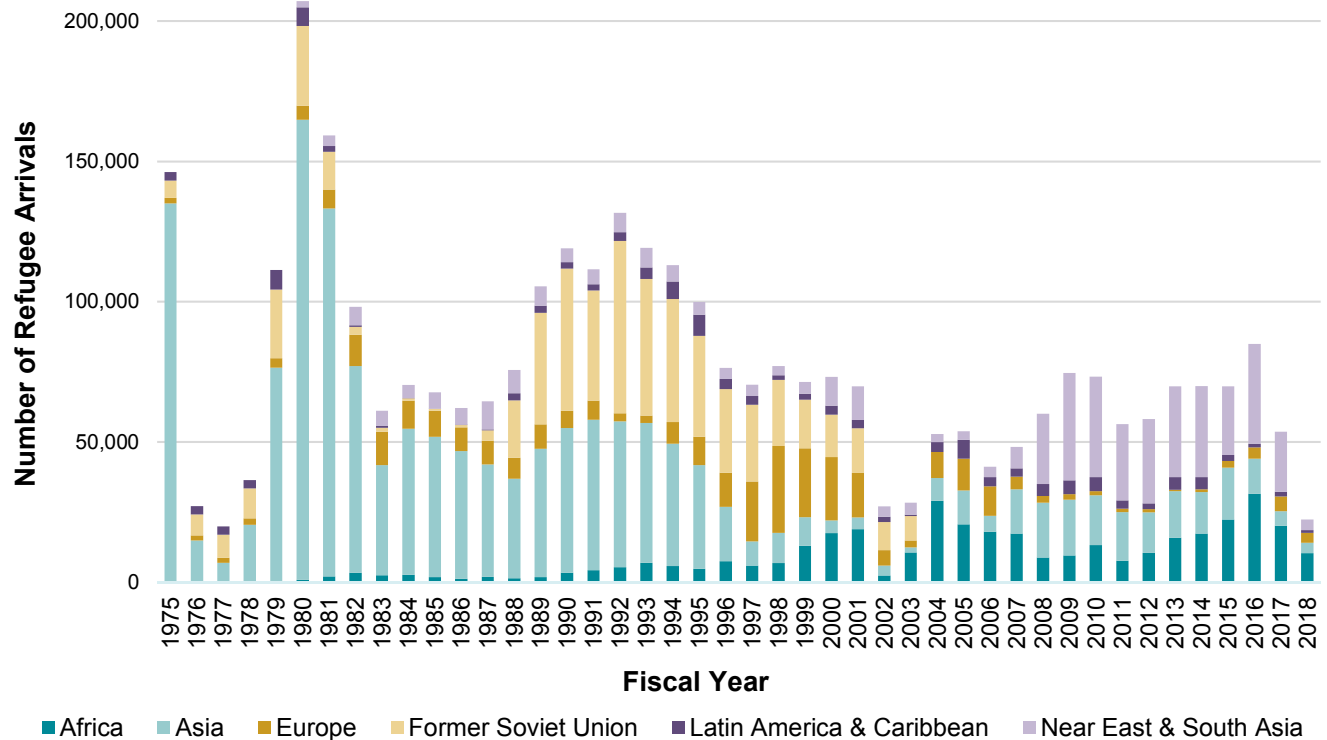
5 Under the *Refugee Education and Assistance Act of 1980*, Cuban and Haitian parolees and asylum seekers who are not in final removal proceedings meet the definition of a Cuban or Haitian entrant. See USCIS, “Cuban Haitian Entrant Program,” updated April 3, 2018, [www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/humanitarian-parole/cuban-haitian-entrant-program-chep](http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/humanitarian-parole/cuban-haitian-entrant-program-chep).

6 A series of programs authorized by the *National Defense Authorization Act*, as amended, established the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) for Iraqi and Afghan nationals. SIVs are available to Iraqi and Afghan professionals who worked for or on behalf of the U.S. government, including as interpreters and translators. See U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, “Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for Iraqi and Afghan Translators/Interpreters,” accessed April 3, 2018, <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/siv-iraqi-afghan-translators-interpreters.html>.

7 Testimony of Simon Henshaw, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Immigration and the National Interest, *Refugee Admissions FY 2017 and Refugee Security Screening: The National Interest*, 114th Cong., 2d sess., September 28, 2016, [www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/09-28-16%20Henshaw%20Testimony.pdf](http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/09-28-16%20Henshaw%20Testimony.pdf).

8 These data reflect refugees and do not include holders of other statuses. See U.S. Department of State, Refugee Processing Center, “Arrival Reports: Map - Arrivals by State and Nationality,” accessed October 31, 2018, <http://ireports.wrapsnet.org/>.

**Figure 1. Refugee Arrivals in the United States, by Region of Origin, FY 1975–2018**



*Source:* U.S. Department of State, Refugee Processing Center, “Admissions & Arrivals—Historical Arrivals Broken Down by Region (1975 – Present),” accessed November 13, 2018, [www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/](http://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/).

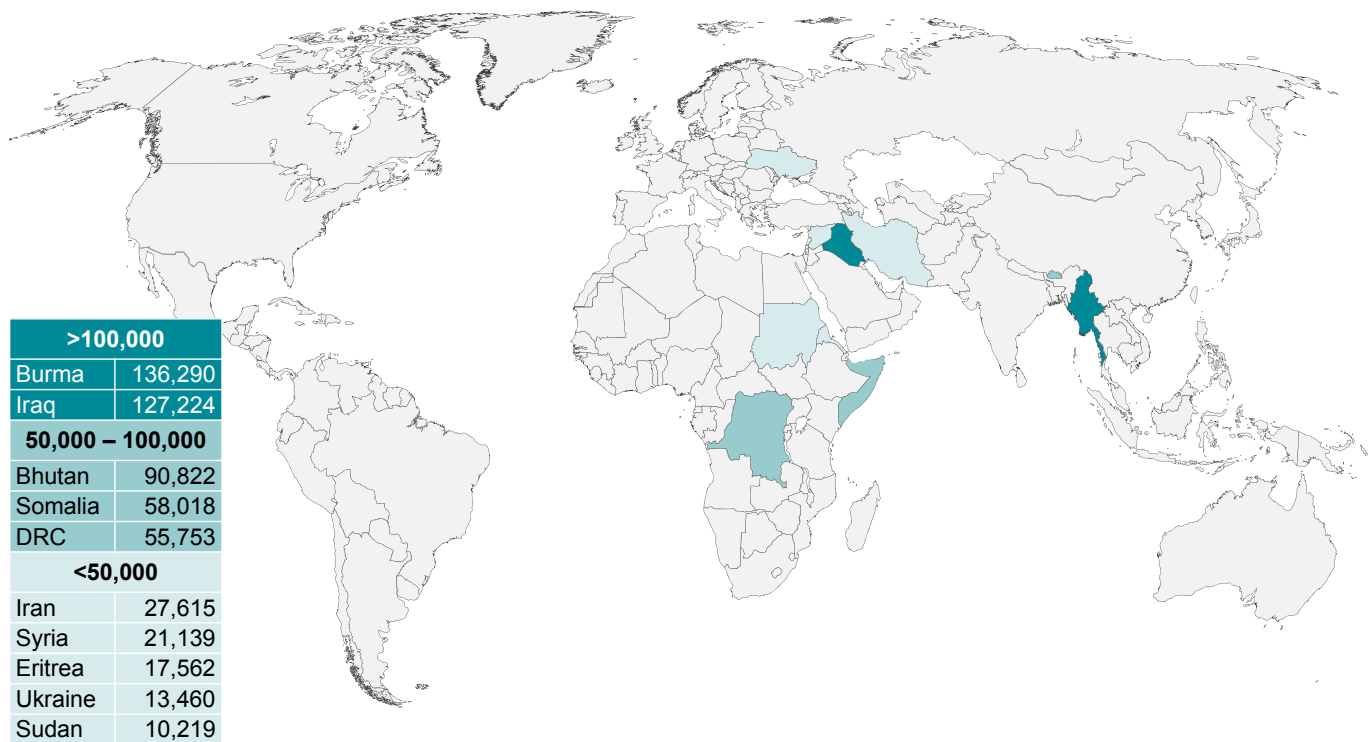
A closer look at recent arrival trends reveals the diversity of resettled refugees, with groups from major countries of origin differing along a variety of demographic characteristics, including primary languages, educational levels, and age at resettlement. Most refugees resettled in the United States between FY 2009 and FY 2018 are from one of ten countries spread across Asia, Africa, and the Near East/South Asia (see Figure 2).<sup>9</sup> Notably, there are often multiple common languages spoken by refugees from the same origin country (see Table 1), a level of linguistic diversity that has important implications for service providers who work with refugees after resettlement.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> These data reflect refugees and do not include Cuban entrants. See U.S. Department of State, Refugee Processing Center, “Arrival Reports: Map - Arrivals by State and Nationality.”

<sup>10</sup> The U.S. Department of State maintains a more general list of the top ten languages spoken by all refugees from fiscal year (FY) 2008 to FY 2017. See U.S. Department of State, Refugee Processing Center, “Arrival Reports: MX - Arrivals for a Demographic Profile,” accessed November 14, 2018, <http://ireports.wrapsnet.org/>; U.S. Department of State, Refugee Processing Center, “Top 10 Languages Spoken by Arrived Refugees,” accessed April 6, 2018, [www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/](http://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/).



**Figure 2. Top Ten Countries of Origin for Refugees Resettled to the United States, FY 2009–18**



DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Source: U.S. Department of State, Refugee Processing Center, “Arrival Reports: Map - Arrivals by State and Nationality,” accessed October 31, 2018, <http://ireports.wrapsnet.org/>.

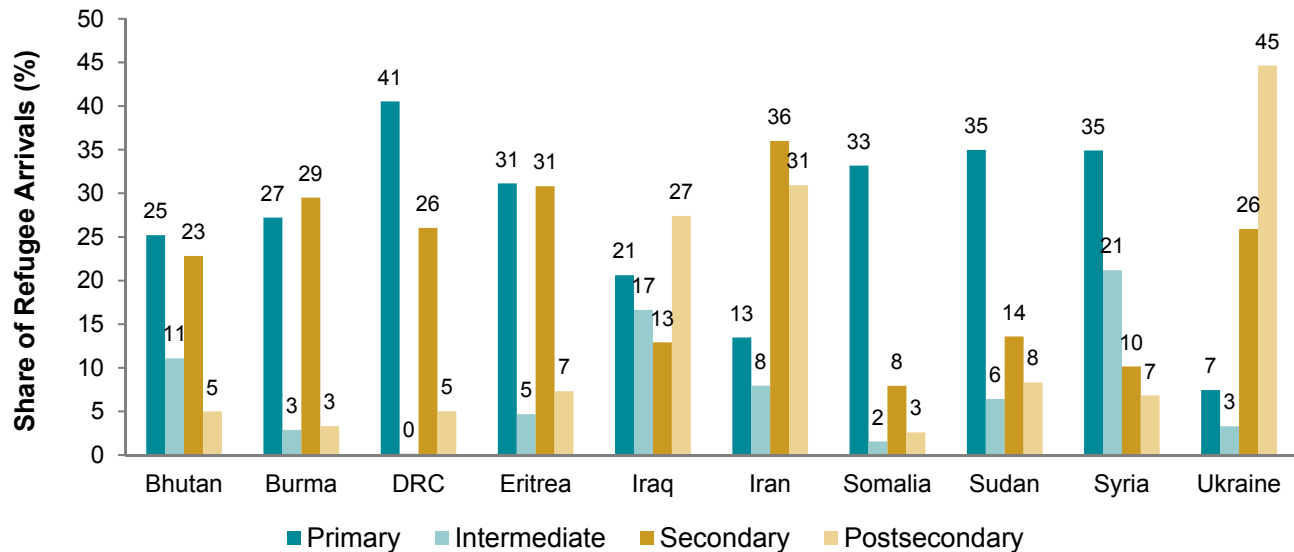
**Table 1. Most Common Languages Spoken by Resettled Refugees from Top Origin Countries, FY 2009–18**

Country of Origin	Common Languages
Bhutan	Nepali
Burma	Sgaw Karen, Burmese, Karenni
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Kiswahili, Kinyarwanda
Eritrea	Tigrinya
Iran	Farsi (Western), Armenian
Iraq	Arabic, Chaldean
Somalia	Somali
Sudan	Arabic, Massalit, Fur
Syria	Arabic
Ukraine	Ukrainian, Russian

Source: U.S. Department of State, Refugee Processing Center, “Arrival Reports: MX - Arrivals for a Demographic Profile,” accessed November 14, 2018, <http://ireports.wrapsnet.org/>.

Refugees' ages and educational levels at arrival also vary widely (see Figures 3 and 4).<sup>11</sup> For example, 70 percent of refugee arrivals from Iran from FY 2009 through FY 2018 were between the ages of 21 and 64, and 67 percent had a secondary or postsecondary education. But about one-third of the refugee arrivals from Syria, Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea—and 41 percent of those from the DRC—had only a primary school education. And while only 11 percent of arrivals from Iran were under age 14, more than 40 percent of arrivals from Syria and the DRC were children under age 14.

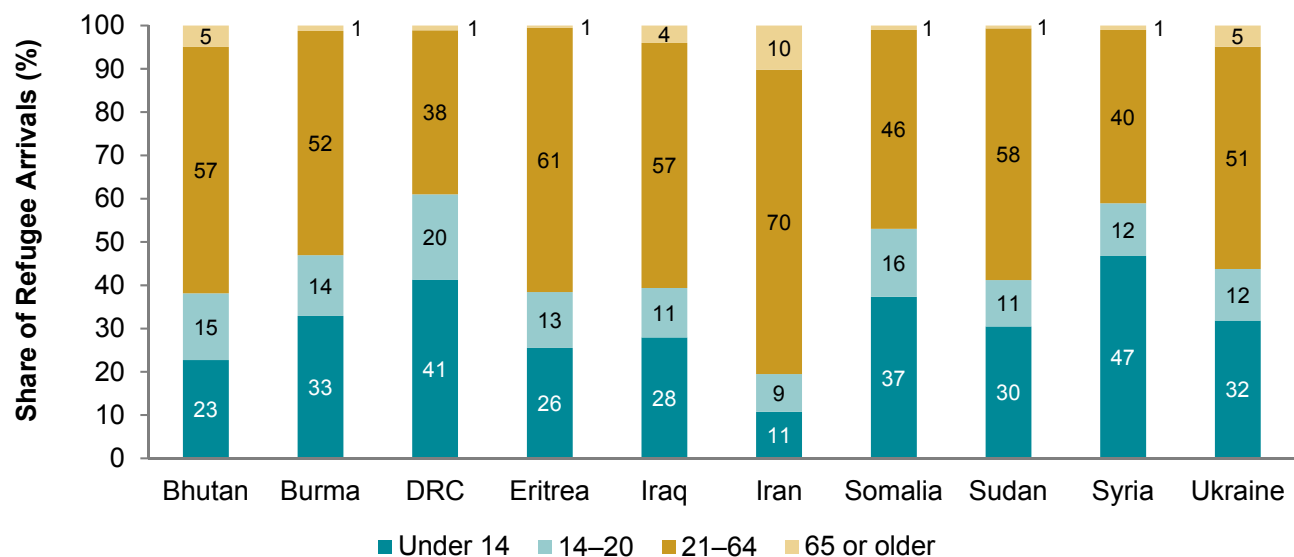
**Figure 3. Refugee Arrivals by Level of Education and Country of Origin, FY 2009–18**



DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Source: U.S. Department of State, Refugee Processing Center, "Arrival Reports: MX - Arrivals for a Demographic Profile."

**Figure 4. Refugee Arrivals by Age and Country of Origin, FY 2009–18**



DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Source: U.S. Department of State, Refugee Processing Center, "Arrival Reports: MX - Arrivals for a Demographic Profile."

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of State, Refugee Processing Center, "Arrival Reports: MX - Arrivals for a Demographic Profile."



## B. The Refugee Resettlement Service Framework

The United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) involves multiple governmental and nongovernmental partners stateside and abroad. When refugees arrive in the United States, federal, state, and local groups that make up the refugee resettlement network coordinate to deliver cash and health benefits, employment services, and a diverse set of integration programs. Different programs have specific rules, funding streams, and outcome measures that, when taken together, create the refugee resettlement service framework.<sup>12</sup>

### 1. Refugee Resettlement Network

The State Department and HHS fund, monitor, and coordinate with the refugee resettlement network. The State Department leads the initial reception and placement of refugees, while HHS oversees longer-term resettlement and integration programs. The network consists of the nine national resettlement agencies, state and local governments, ethnic community-based organizations (ECBOs), and technical assistance providers.<sup>13</sup> National resettlement agencies resettle and serve refugees through local offices across the country.<sup>14</sup> In each state, a refugee resettlement office within the state government or a resettlement agency charged with coordinating statewide programs is responsible for developing the operational plan for resettlement, supervising or directly administering the plan, and coordinating public and private resources.<sup>15</sup>

### 2. Refugee Resettlement Program

The domestic components of the USRAP begins with the Reception and Placement (R&P) Program. Under the R&P Program, resettlement agencies prepare for a refugee's arrival by renting a suitable home with basic furnishings. The agencies are charged with ensuring that refugees are greeted at the airport and taken to their new homes, where weather-ready clothing and a culturally familiar meal is waiting for their first night in the United States. In the ensuing days, staff members and volunteers help refugees apply for a Social Security card, go to the grocery store, make doctors' appointments, enroll children in school, and connect with English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.<sup>16</sup> R&P services are available for up to 90 days through a one-time per capita grant for each arriving refugee.<sup>17</sup>

12 U.S. Department of State, PRM, "The Reception and Placement Program," accessed May 3, 2018, [www.state.gov/j/prm/ra/receptionplacement/](http://www.state.gov/j/prm/ra/receptionplacement/); U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), "Refugees," updated January 28, 2016, [www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/refugees](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/refugees).

13 Ethnic community-based organizations (ECBOs) are refugee community groups that work to preserve culture, mobilize members, build businesses, and/or provide services, including resettlement services. ECBOs play a key role in refugee resettlement, often serving as interpreters, cultural brokers, and mentors for refugees and service providers. Similarly, technical assistance providers serve as subject matter experts in areas such as housing, employment, community engagement, and children and youth. See Donald Ranard, *Mutual Assistance Associations: Refugee Self-Help Groups Play a Key Role* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1990), 3–5, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED321552.pdf>; Kathleen Newland, Hiroyuki Tanaka, and Laura Barker, *Bridging Divides: The Role of Ethnic Community-Based Organizations in Refugee Integration* (Washington, DC: MPI and International Rescue Committee, 2007), 27–43, [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/bridging-divides-role-ethnic-community-based-organizations-refugee-integration](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/bridging-divides-role-ethnic-community-based-organizations-refugee-integration); HHS, ORR, "Training and Technical Assistance Providers," updated February 7, 2018, [www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/technical-assistance-providers-1](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/technical-assistance-providers-1); HHS, ORR, "About—What We Do," updated October 23, 2017, [www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about).

14 U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and HHS, *Proposed Refugee Admissions Program for FY 2019* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, DHS, and HHS, 2018), 16–17, [www.state.gov/documents/organization/286401.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/286401.pdf). The number of local offices through which refugees were resettled decreased by 18 percent between FY 2017, when there were 328 offices, and FY 2018. See U.S. Department of State, DHS, and HHS, *Proposed Refugee Admissions Program for FY 2018* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, DHS, and HHS, 2017), 18–25, [www.state.gov/documents/organization/274857.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/274857.pdf).

15 *The Refugee Act of 1980*, Public Law 96–212, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 94 (March 17, 1980): 102, [www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-94/pdf/STATUTE-94-Pg102.pdf](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-94/pdf/STATUTE-94-Pg102.pdf).

16 U.S. Department of State, PRM, "The Reception and Placement Program."

17 In FY 2018, the amount of the per capita grant was \$2,125, of which \$1,125 was to be used for direct costs such as rent and other basic expenses, and \$1,000 that could be used to pay for staff costs. See U.S. Department of State, PRM, "FY 2019 Notice of Funding Opportunity for Reception and Placement Program," updated March 15, 2018, [www.state.gov/j/prm/funding/fy2019/279289.htm](http://www.state.gov/j/prm/funding/fy2019/279289.htm); Author correspondence with Barbara Day, Chief, Domestic Resettlement, Refugee Admissions, PRM, U.S. Department of State, June 1, 2018.



Some arriving refugees are eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF, cash assistance for families) or Supplemental Security Income (cash assistance for people who are elderly, blind, or have disabilities). Refugees who are not eligible for these programs are generally eligible for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), paid for by ORR, for up to eight months. Refugees who are not eligible for Medicaid are generally eligible for Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA), also paid by ORR, for the same eight-month period.<sup>18</sup> Refugees who receive RCA are required to participate in work activities, such as job or language training, unless they meet exemption criteria set by the state.<sup>19</sup> While similar to cash assistance for families in its emphasis on early employment, RCA has more flexible work requirements and less of a focus on sanctions.<sup>20</sup>

Instead of receiving cash assistance, some refugees who are considered readily employable participate in the Matching Grant (MG) Program, an intensive employment program designed to help refugees earn more than the public assistance income threshold in the state within four to six months.<sup>21</sup> As of FY 2018, HHS provided \$2,500 in per capita funding for the MG Program and resettlement agencies were to secure \$1,250 per capita in match funding.<sup>22</sup> The MG Program is designed to give resettlement agencies more options when serving this group of refugees. For example, if a refugee lives with a sponsor, the money that would have been used for housing may be redirected toward another allowable expense. MG participants are eligible for intensive case management, employment services, assistance with English language instruction, housing, and other basic needs. In FY 2016, the most recent year for which data are available, there were 235 MG sites in 43 states.<sup>23</sup> Approximately 30 percent of refugees participate in the MG Program each year.<sup>24</sup>

### 3. Tracking Outcomes from ORR-Funded Services

ORR requires only limited reporting on the outcomes of refugees served by the programs it funds. States and resettlement agencies that coordinate statewide programs report outcome data from the previous year and performance targets for the upcoming year on a set of employment-related measures: number of refugees who entered employment, whether the employment offered health benefits, average hourly wage, termination and reduction of cash assistance benefits due to income, and employment retention at the 90-day point.<sup>25</sup> The state or resettlement agency must also submit a performance report that details health and employment indicators related to services delivered, such as the number of refugees who

18 Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) may be available for up to 36 months at ORR's discretion and subject to the availability of funds. See "Federal Funding for Cash Assistance," *Code of Federal Regulations* Title 45, Pt. 400.203, [www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/400.203](http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/400.203); "Federal Funding for Medical Assistance," *Code of Federal Regulations* Title 45, Pt. 400.204, [www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/400.204](http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/400.204); "Methodology to Be Used to Determine Time-Eligibility of Refugees," *Code of Federal Regulations* Title 45, Pt. 400.211, [www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/400.211](http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/400.211); HHS, ORR, "About Cash and Medical Assistance," updated May 14, 2018, [www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/cma/about](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/cma/about).

19 "Registration for Employment Services, Participation in Employability Service Programs and Targeted Assistance Programs, Going to Job Interviews, and Acceptance of Appropriate Offers of Employment," *Code of Federal Regulations* Title 45, Pt. 400.75, [www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/400.75](http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/400.75); "Criteria for Exemption from Registration for Employment Services, Participation in Employability Service Programs, and Acceptance of Appropriate Offers of Employment," *Code of Federal Regulations* Title 45, Pt. 400.76, [www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/400.76](http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/400.76).

20 Sam Elkin, Mary Farrell, Robin Koralek, and Hannah Engle, *Understanding the Intersection between TANF and Refugee Cash Assistance* (Washington, DC: HHS, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, 2018), 10, [www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/final\\_tanf\\_rca\\_report\\_revised\\_5\\_16\\_18\\_508.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/final_tanf_rca_report_revised_5_16_18_508.pdf); HHS, ORR, "About Cash and Medical Assistance."

21 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Refugee Assistance: Little Is Known about the Effectiveness of Different Approaches for Improving Refugees' Employment Outcomes* (Washington, DC: GAO, 2011), 4–9, [www.gao.gov/assets/320/317300.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/assets/320/317300.pdf).

22 Up to 20 percent of the resettlement agencies' match must be cash; the remainder may be cash, in-kind goods, or in-kind services. While Matching Grant (MG) funding is calculated and awarded on a per capita basis, resettlement agencies have the flexibility to tailor program spending as needed and are not tied to the per capita rate in terms of expenditures. See HHS, ORR, "About the Voluntary Agencies Matching Grant Programs," updated June 25, 2018, [www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/matching-grants/about](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/matching-grants/about).

23 HHS, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), *Annual Report to Congress: Office of Refugee Resettlement Fiscal Year 2016* (Washington, DC: HHS, 2018), [www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/arc\\_16\\_508.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/arc_16_508.pdf).

24 Author communication with ORR staff, June 19, 2018 and July 16, 2018.

25 Data from these reports are available in ORR's annual reports to Congress. See HHS, ORR, "Annual ORR Reports to Congress," updated June 14, 2018, [www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/annual-orr-reports-to-congress](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/annual-orr-reports-to-congress).





received a health screening and changes in employment status.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, resettlement programs that receive funding for providing refugee support services must report relevant outputs, such as the number of refugees receiving English language instruction, job training, and case management services.<sup>27</sup> Much of these data are not publicly available.

Agencies administering the MG Program must report the number of clients who achieved self-sufficiency within four months, defined as earning income that supports the household without the need for public assistance, as well as the number of clients who achieved and retained self-sufficiency at the six-month mark; MG data are published in ORR's publicly available *Annual Report to Congress*.<sup>28</sup>

### III. Two-Generation Strategies

In recent years, human services agencies at the federal, state, and local levels have demonstrated increased interest in two-generation strategies. These efforts, also known as dual-generation, multi-generation, or whole-family approaches,<sup>29</sup> focus on meeting the needs of entire families by combining or improving coordination between historically separate programs for adults and children. These strategies have emerged from the growing awareness that children will struggle if their parents are struggling, and that parents cannot succeed if their children are not adequately supported.<sup>30</sup> Thus, addressing the needs of the whole family helps create healthy, stable, and self-sufficient families.<sup>31</sup>

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*These efforts ... focus on meeting the needs of entire families  
by combining or improving coordination between historically  
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Strategies that carry the “two-generation” label typically share core concepts, including a focus on the learning and development of young children and on providing education and workforce skills development to parents. For children, services are often centered around early childhood education and care (ECEC), trauma-informed care, and health services such as prenatal care and early detection of conditions.<sup>32</sup> Many two-generation initiatives leverage the neuroscience of child development to guide services and take into consideration the impacts of adverse childhood experiences.<sup>33</sup> For parents, many

26 HHS, ORR, “Report Forms,” updated September 10, 2018, [www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/report-forms](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/report-forms); HHS, ORR, “Wilson-Fish Alternative Program Guidelines—VII. Reporting,” updated October 5, 2017, [www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/wilson-fish-alternative-program-guidelines#VII.%20REPORTING](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/wilson-fish-alternative-program-guidelines#VII.%20REPORTING).

27 See HHS, ORR, “FY 2017 Refugee Social Services Formula Allocations,” updated August 15, 2017, [www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/fy-2017-refugee-social-services-formula-allocations](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/fy-2017-refugee-social-services-formula-allocations); HHS, ORR, “FY 2017 Targeted Assistance Formula Allocations,” updated September 20, 2017, [www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/fiscal-year-2017-targeted-assistance-formula-allocations](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/fiscal-year-2017-targeted-assistance-formula-allocations); HHS, ORR, “Report Forms—ORR-6, Schedule C.”

28 HHS, ORR, “Voluntary Agencies Matching Grant Program: FY 2014 Program Guidelines,” accessed May 4, 2018, [www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/fy\\_2014\\_matching\\_grant\\_mg\\_program\\_guidelines\\_for\\_grantees.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/fy_2014_matching_grant_mg_program_guidelines_for_grantees.pdf); HHS, ORR, “2010 Matching Grant Reporting Requirements,” accessed May 4, 2018, [www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/2010\\_matching\\_grant\\_reporting\\_requirements.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/2010_matching_grant_reporting_requirements.pdf). For the annual reports, see ORR, “Annual ORR Reports to Congress.”

29 Janice M. Gruendel, *Two (or More) Generation Frameworks: A Look Across and Within* (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2014), 2, [www.cssp.org/publications/Two-or-More-Generation-Frameworks-A-Look-Across-and-Within.pdf](http://www.cssp.org/publications/Two-or-More-Generation-Frameworks-A-Look-Across-and-Within.pdf).

30 Molly M. Scott, Susan J. Popkin, and Jasmine K. Simington, *A Theoretical Framework for Two-Generation Models* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2016), [www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/76846/2000578-A-Theoretical-Framework-for-Two-Generation-Models.pdf](http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/76846/2000578-A-Theoretical-Framework-for-Two-Generation-Models.pdf).

31 Ibid.

32 P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, “Two-Generation Programs in the Twenty-First Century,” *The Future of Children* 24, no. 1 (2014): 13–39.

33 Gruendel, *Two (or More) Generation Frameworks*.



programs involve improving parenting, GED attainment and assistance accessing higher education, and development of new skills to find higher paying jobs,<sup>34</sup> in recognition that higher incomes are correlated with family stability and improved long-term outcomes for children.<sup>35</sup> Two-generation programs may also approach family services through a racial-equity lens, acknowledging the relationship between race and socioeconomic status.<sup>36</sup>

Some two-generation efforts emphasize the importance of simultaneously serving parents and children in a single program; others stress the need for coordinated services mindful of the needs of both parents and children.<sup>37</sup>

The two-generation approach has gained considerable traction among state human services agencies, and several states have extended it to refugee resettlement. While many state resettlement offices and the nonprofits with which they partner have developed individual initiatives for refugees that use elements of two-generation approaches, only a few have committed to fully integrating a two-generation approach throughout the resettlement program. For example, Colorado expressly works with resettlement agencies to ensure services are delivered through a two-generation framework. When the state had an opportunity to partner with a new resettlement agency in early 2016, it specifically solicited a partner dedicated to the two-generation approach and then began to roll out the concept to all agencies. A natural fit within the refugee resettlement context, in which agencies are accustomed to serving full families, the two-generation framework afforded refugee resettlement agencies the opportunity to approach their work with renewed focus on all members of arriving families and to create synergies between programs for parents and services for children. This allowed the agencies to emphasize both early employment and accessible and quality daycare for children, for example. State contracts outline expectations in service delivery for all members of the family.

## IV. State Two-Generation Strategies for Refugee Resettlement

In seeking to explore the potentials for two-generation strategies in refugee resettlement, this section examines initiatives in three areas: services and supports for children; efforts to help arriving refugees secure better jobs, either initially or after entering employment; and initiatives that take a broader, whole-family approach to refugee integration. Two-generation approaches may include programs that explicitly serve both adults and children as well as those that focus on either adults or children in ways that support the advancement of the whole family.<sup>38</sup> These examples are drawn from MPI site visits and a meeting of a dozen refugee coordinators organized by MPI in May 2018. Site visits were conducted in Arizona, California, Colorado, Michigan, Utah, and Washington State between November 2017 and April

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34 Meegan Dugan Bassett, “Considering Two Generation Strategies in the States” (policy brief, Working Poor Families Project, Summer 2014), [www.workingpoorfamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/WPFP-Summer-2014-Brief.pdf](http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/WPFP-Summer-2014-Brief.pdf); Chase-Lansdale and Brooks-Gunn, “Two-Generation Programs.”

35 Ibid.

36 Gruendel, *Two (or More) Generation Frameworks*.

37 For more information about two-generation initiatives at the state and local level, see Kristin Lehoullier and Shelley Waters Boots, “Advancing Two-Generation Approaches: Funding to Help Families Succeed” (brief, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, MD, 2017), [www.aecf.org/resources/advancing-two-generation-approaches/](http://www.aecf.org/resources/advancing-two-generation-approaches/); Kristin Lehoullier and Karen Murrell, “Advancing Two-Generation Approaches: Developing an Infrastructure to Address Parent and Child Needs Together” (brief, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, MD, 2017), [www.aecf.org/resources/advancing-two-generation-approaches-1/](http://www.aecf.org/resources/advancing-two-generation-approaches-1/); Ascend, *The Colorado Guide to 2Gen* (Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute, 2017), <https://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/resources/colorado-guide-to-2gen/>.

38 A literacy program for parents and children is an example of the first type of two-generation program as it contributes to both the parents’ and children’s education while also strengthens the bond between them. A class that leads to a professional certificate for a parent may be an example of the latter type as it enables parents to get better jobs and, in doing so, better support their families.



2018. The meeting of state refugee coordinators included representatives of those states along with state refugee coordinators from Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Virginia. While the majority of refugees are settled in these states, the examples in this section are illustrative rather than exhaustive.

This broad range of examples illustrates both the overall potential and range of initiatives that have adopted two-generation strategies to support refugee integration. Some are funded or supported by the state, and others are implemented by resettlement agencies and other nongovernmental organizations, whether or not state funded. Almost none of the services and programs highlighted here have undergone formal evaluation. Thus, while they show promise, further study is needed to demonstrate that these strategies are effectively meeting their goals.

### A. Children of Refugees: Characteristics, Needs, and Program Initiatives

In the context of two-generation models, it is important to consider the needs of both refugee children and children of refugees. In FY 2016, nearly half of all refugee arrivals—48 percent or about 41,000—were age 19 or under.<sup>39</sup> And between 2009 and 2013, of the approximately 941,000 children under age 10 with refugee parents, 89 percent were U.S. born.<sup>40</sup>

While refugee families are diverse, certain distinctive factors are likely, on balance, to contribute to child wellbeing, while others may present challenges for children. Children of refugees are likely to live in two-parent families—81 percent did so in the 2009–13 period.<sup>41</sup> Employment rates are generally high among refugee fathers from all countries of origin, ranging in 2009–13 from 71 percent to 92 percent, and the average employment rate among refugee mothers was 58 percent—higher than that of other immigrant mothers.<sup>42</sup> Still, one-quarter of children of refugees under age 10 lived below the federal poverty threshold during this period.<sup>43</sup>

Linguistic barriers can be significant for children of refugees. In 2009–11, 30 percent of refugees under age 18 in the United States were considered limited English proficient (LEP).<sup>44</sup> And in 2009–13, almost one-third of children of refugees lived in linguistically isolated homes in which no one over age 14 could speak English very well.<sup>45</sup> A lack of English proficiency is correlated with a higher risk of poverty and reduced access to health services.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, linguistic barriers can negatively affect children's social adjustment, and some refugee children experience bullying at school as a result.<sup>47</sup> Low English proficiency among refugee parents can also prevent them from engaging with schools and other service providers on behalf of their children.<sup>48</sup>

39 DHS, "Table 15. Refugee Arrivals by Relationship to Principal Applicant and Sex, Age, and Marital Status: Fiscal Year 2016," updated January 8, 2018, [www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2016/table15](http://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2016/table15).

40 Kate Hooper, Jie Zong, Randy Capps, and Michael Fix, *Young Children of Refugees in the United States: Integration Successes and Challenges* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2016), 1, [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/young-children-refugees-united-states-integration-successes-and-challenges](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/young-children-refugees-united-states-integration-successes-and-challenges).

41 Ibid., 1.

42 Refugee fathers from Iraq had the lowest employment rate (71 percent) while refugee fathers from Iran had the highest (92 percent). See *ibid.*, 19–20.

43 Ibid., 22.

44 Randy Capps et al., *The Integration Outcomes of U.S. Refugees: Successes and Challenges* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2015), 17, [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/integration-outcomes-us-refugees-successes-and-challenges](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/integration-outcomes-us-refugees-successes-and-challenges).

45 Hooper, Zong, Capps, and Fix, *Young Children of Refugees in the United States*, 17.

46 Ibid.

47 Maki Park and Margie McHugh, *Immigrant Parents and Early Childhood Programs: Addressing Barriers of Literacy, Culture, and Systems Knowledge* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-parents-early-childhood-programs-barriers](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-parents-early-childhood-programs-barriers).

48 Hooper, Zong, Capps, and Fix, *Young Children of Refugees in the United States*.



Some refugee children experience complex trauma—multiple traumas over an extended period—before or during migration or after resettlement.<sup>49</sup> Stressors may include family loss or separation; exposure to war, torture, violence, or discrimination; disruption to schooling; unsafe living conditions; culture shock; and social alienation. U.S.-born children of refugees may be living with family members who have suffered severe trauma, experiencing its effects secondhand. Poor parental mental health is associated with social, cognitive, and behavioral problems in children.<sup>50</sup> And while not everyone who experiences trauma develops a mental health condition, the interfamilial nature of trauma can be an important aspect of refugee children’s experiences.<sup>51</sup>

## I. Challenges Facing Young Children of Refugees

ECEC, such as child care, Head Start, or other public or private preschool or prekindergarten programs, can be important for young children of refugees. High-quality ECEC provides both short- and long-term advantages for young children: it is associated with social, emotional, and cognitive gains; higher educational achievement and occupational success later in life; and positive health outcomes.<sup>52</sup>

Dual Language Learners<sup>53</sup> reap significant benefits from ECEC once they enter school, doing better in reading, writing, and math than peers who did not attend early education.<sup>54</sup> Further, some ECEC providers include wrap-around support for children and their families—for example, providers may offer ESL classes and family engagement programming for parents, and afterschool tutorials and activities for children.<sup>55</sup>

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### *Some ECEC providers include wrap-around support for children and their families.*

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In the 2009–13 period, however, just 42 percent of children of refugees ages 3 and 4 were enrolled in preschool, including prekindergarten programs in public schools, Head Start programs, center-based care, and other forms of care outside the home.<sup>56</sup> Differing cultural expectations between parents and ECEC providers can be an obstacle in solidifying trusting collaborations between families and providers.<sup>57</sup> Among refugee families participating in Head Start and Early Head Start, low socioeconomic status and language barriers can also make enrollment and communication between parents and center staff difficult.<sup>58</sup> In addition, the urgent need for refugee parents to find employment forces many to secure

49 Kerrie A. Pieloch, Mary Beth McCullough, and Amy K. Marks, “Resilience of Children with Refugee Statuses: A Research Review,” *Canadian Psychology* 57, No. 4 (2016): 330–39.

50 Richard A. Bryant et al., “The Effect of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder on Refugees’ Parenting and Their Children’s Mental Health: A Cohort Study,” *Lancet Public Health* 3, no. 5 (2018): e249–58, [www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2468-2667%2818%2930051-3](http://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2468-2667%2818%2930051-3).

51 Cindy C. Sangalang and Cindy Vang, “Intergenerational Trauma in Refugee Families: A Systematic Review,” *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* 19, no. 3 (2017): 745–54, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5362358/pdf/nihms-818645.pdf](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5362358/pdf/nihms-818645.pdf).

52 Lyn Morland, Nicole Ives, Clea McNeely, and Chenoa Allen, *Providing a Head Start: Improving Access to Early Childhood Education for Refugees* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2016), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/providing-head-start-improving-access-early-childhood-education-refugees](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/providing-head-start-improving-access-early-childhood-education-refugees).

53 Dual Language Learners (DLLs) are young children who have at least one parent who speaks a language other than English in the home and are thus exposed to multiple languages during their formative years.

54 Morland, Ives, McNeely, and Allen, *Providing a Head Start*.

55 Ibid.

56 Hooper, Zong, Capps, and Fix, *Young Children of Refugees in the United States*.

57 Jeff Gross and Christina Ntagengwa, *Challenges in Accessing Early Childhood Education and Care for Children in Refugee Families in Massachusetts* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2016), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/challenges-accessing-early-childhood-education-and-care-children-refugee-families](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/challenges-accessing-early-childhood-education-and-care-children-refugee-families).

58 Morland, Ives, McNeely, and Allen, *Providing a Head Start*; Shana J. Haines, Jean A. Summers, Ann P. Turnbull, and H. Rutherford Turnbull III, “Family Partnerships with a Head Start Agency: A Case Study of a Refugee Family,” *Dialog* 17, no. 4 (2015): 22–49, <https://journals.uncc.edu/dialog/article/view/168/354>.



child care as quickly as possible; this time constraint makes it difficult for refugee parents to seek out and enroll their children in licensed family child care or center-based programs, a process that takes time.<sup>59</sup> Together, these characteristics form a constellation of challenges to accessing ECEC programs for children of refugees.<sup>60</sup>

## 2. State Initiatives for Refugee Families with Young Children

A range of state initiatives has emerged to support the young children of refugees, including those who are themselves refugees and those who are U.S. born. Current federal policies do not require resettlement agencies to assess or address the needs of young children in refugee families. ACF has issued guidance to encourage partnerships and linkages between refugee resettlement and early childhood providers, though such efforts are not mandatory.<sup>61</sup> Yet a number of promising initiatives exist at the state and local level, despite the lack of federal requirements.

Families with young children often receive help from either the state agency or a private provider in understanding the subsidy assistance available to them for child care to enable them to work. Typically, the same subsidy assistance policies that apply to families in the state's TANF program apply to refugee families. However, in some states, refugee families, like nonrefugee families, may not qualify for child care subsidy assistance if only one parent in a two-parent family is seeking employment. In addition, arriving families frequently convey apprehension about placing children in out-of-home care, particularly when the placement is with an individual who does not speak the family's native language. And, frequently, available child care providers are not located in or near the communities in which refugee families live, introducing transportation challenges. Unfortunately, data reporting does not provide information about the share of refugee families receiving child care subsidy assistance or the type of assistance received.

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*A specialized program at the Refugee Employment and Training Center helps refugees receive child care licensing so that they can operate as child care providers.*

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In an effort to overcome these challenges, stakeholders from Utah described a strong partnership between the state Refugee Services Office and the office responsible for child care assistance. Both are part of the state's Department of Workforce Services, which leaders indicated facilitated their partnership. Through the partnership, a licensed drop-in child care center was established at the state's Refugee Employment and Training Center in Salt Lake City; the center allows parents to attend programming and also provides hands-on training to help refugee child care staff better understand child care practices in the United States. Separately, a specialized program at the Refugee Employment and Training Center helps refugees receive child care licensing so that they can operate as child care providers; when dedicated funding for the program ended, the state child care agency hired a staff person to offer trainings so refugees could continue to get and stay licensed. As a result of these initiatives, half or more of arriving refugee children in child care in the state are in settings operated by refugees. The

<sup>59</sup> Gross and Ntagengwa, *Challenges in Accessing Early Childhood Education and Care*.

<sup>60</sup> Michael Fix, Kate Hooper, and Jie Zong, *How Are Refugees Faring? Integration at U.S. and State Levels* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2017), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/how-are-refugees-faring-integration-us-and-state-levels](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/how-are-refugees-faring-integration-us-and-state-levels); Joanna E. Bettmann et al., "Resettlement Experiences of Children Who Entered the United States as Refugees," *Social Development Issues* 39, no. 3 (November 2017): 1–18.

<sup>61</sup> Memorandum from Shannon L. Rudisill, Director of the Office of Child Care and Eskinder Negash, Director of ORR, to lead agencies administering child care programs under the *Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 1990*, as amended; national, regional, state, and local refugee resettlement networks; and other interested parties, *Refugee Resettlement and Child Care Partnerships: Partnering to Increase Refugee Families' Access to High-Quality Child Care*, March 25, 2014, [www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/im-refugee-resettlement](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/im-refugee-resettlement).





state is now engaged in efforts to improve the quality of ECEC offerings, with American Express funding a study of the quality of care among refugee child care providers.

In Colorado, in addition to overall collaborative efforts to help refugee families access child care subsidies through state and county human services, the refugee program works to connect case managers at resettlement agencies with nearby child care centers so the agencies are aware of available resources and can help families attain child care slots for their children. The state's Head Start Coordinator also attends quarterly community consultations to foster partnerships and understanding between the two parties.

A number of states have initiatives that stemmed from ORR competitive grants to support microenterprise training for refugee parents to become child care providers. These include:

- In Washington State, ORR funds the Diocese of Olympia, a resettlement agency, to provide the Refugee Family Child Care Microenterprise Development Program and the Microenterprise Development Grants Program. The Diocese utilized its experience in managing these programs to raise private funds to start a larger microenterprise program to help refugees open their own businesses, including child care businesses.
- Another agency in Washington, Refugee Women's Alliance, operates an onsite child care center that also offers internships to parent trainees receiving TANF.
- In Michigan, the ORR microenterprise grant was operated by Bethany Christian Services (BCS) and continued with private funding when federal funding ended. Twenty-five individuals were licensed as child care providers, of whom 13 have launched home-based child care businesses. BCS also made sure that participants in its refugee employment program were aware that child care was available through these refugee providers.
- In Sacramento, California, Opening Doors, Inc., a service provider for arriving refugees, has a microenterprise child care grant from ORR. In addition to helping with child care licensing, the program includes a financial literacy and business management component. A partner organization trains participants on child development, and licensed providers mentor participants.

While some service providers and state officials expressed strong support for the microenterprise grants, others conveyed substantial challenges, often relating to difficulties providers face in meeting requirements for state licensing or fire and safety codes, and in opening and sustaining child care businesses. However, when these grants have been successful, they respond to an important need, not just demand for trained providers but for the opportunity to place children in the care of trusted community members.

Generally, state stakeholders did not describe strong or formal partnerships with Head Start programs, although some noted partnerships and coordination do exist:

- In Arizona, a Head Start Pilot Project that began in December 2011 involved a partnership between the state Refugee Resettlement Program and Head Start/Early Head Start. ECBOs and resettlement agencies also participated in this collaboration to increase refugee family participation in Head Start/Early Head Start programs.<sup>62</sup> Partners worked together to identify barriers to participation, and to address them through efforts including coordinated outreach activities to assist families with enrollment, hiring of bilingual/bicultural staff members at Head Start sites, and translation of important documents into languages spoken by refugees. More recently, an AmeriCorps VISTA participant has continued some of these efforts by working to streamline referral processes for refugee children to Head Start.

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62 Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services, "Arizona Head Start Pilot Project," accessed November 9, 2018, <https://brycs.org/early-childhood/arizona-head-start-pilot-project/>; Morland, Ives, McNeely, and Allen, *Providing a Head Start*.





- In Utah, a Head Start and Early Head Start Program is on site at the state's Refugee Employment and Training Center in Salt Lake City, operated by Utah Community Action.
- In Minnesota, some Head Start providers have created a community navigator role using private resources to support immigrant and refugee children, but there have been challenges sustaining the funding for this model over time.

In Grand Rapids, Michigan, a particularly innovative effort is underway. Two nongovernmental organizations, the Refugee Education Center and the Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative (ELNC) have launched an early childhood center focused on serving refugee families. With ELNC providing technical assistance, the center has developed a multicultural early childhood curriculum. The center is currently operating two Early Head Start classrooms and plans to add Head Start classrooms as well. Sixty percent of slots in a classroom are reserved for children who are refugees or were born in the United States to refugee parents. By the third year of operation, the goal is that 50 percent of employees, including the center director, will have a refugee background. The Early Head Start teachers were recruited from among graduates of BCS' child care microenterprise training who had not already opened businesses. The center itself will provide general professional development, such as trainings on trauma-informed care, along with specialized professional development on topics such as how to assist children in developing their home language and how to monitor that development. The costs of the classroom are covered by Early Head Start funding, with foundation funding supporting additional costs.

In site visits, state officials and providers often indicated that challenges in promoting Head Start participation include that such programs are often operating at capacity and do not prioritize the enrollment or have other special considerations for children of refugees.<sup>63</sup> In addition, parents may be hesitant to place their children in programs whose staff lack the ability to converse with them in their native language.

A number of states and service providers have sought to coordinate parent and child programming, recognizing that this can motivate adults who might otherwise be socially isolated to participate and make it more practical for them to do so. Examples include:

- The Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants has partnered with the Department of Early Education and Care and community-based organizations to develop and support intergenerational family literacy activities. With child care provided, mainstream early education staff, with support from bilingual colleagues, led reading circles to model and mentor parents and grandparents in reading to children. This effort has led to new literacy initiatives, funded through the Refugee School Impact program, that offer playgroups for children while parents are in ESL classes; coordinate volunteer readers and book drives in partnership with local colleges; and provide space and support for parents reading to children.
- Maryland's Department of Human Services is piloting a Refugee Family Education Program in partnership with a Judy Center and a local human services organization. Judy Centers provide a central location for early childhood education and family support services for children from birth to kindergarten.<sup>64</sup> In the Refugee Family Education Program, children participate in playgroups designed to foster social interactions with people outside their homes, strengthen English language learning, and build self-confidence. While the children participate in the playgroups, their parents receive onsite ESL instruction provided by Strong City with financial support from the Maryland Department of Labor.
- In Phoenix, Arizona, Lutheran Social Services uses private funds to operate an eight-week family literacy program with the goal of empowering mothers to be their children's first teachers. In the

<sup>63</sup> Some Head Start programs do prioritize DLLs through policy set at the local level. National policy for Head Start does not prioritize DLLs, immigrants, or refugees.

<sup>64</sup> For additional information about Judy Centers, see Maryland Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood, "Judy Centers," accessed September 5, 2018, <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/families/judy-centers>.



first hour each week, the instructor works with mothers; they read a book, review vocabulary, and talk about early childhood education and what to expect when children go to school. In the second hour, they bring the children in to do a craft with their parents related to the book. This approach is intended to show mothers how they can teach their children even when they are not very familiar with the language or content of the materials.

- The Colorado state resettlement office has a contract with the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning to provide contextualized ESL classes targeted toward family, friends, and neighbors who provide child care, as well as to provide entry into career paths for refugees interested in the teaching professions. The services are housed at an apartment complex with a significant refugee population. The goal is to embed teaching, parenting, and child care in ESL, and to train people who were teachers in their countries of origin to be paraprofessionals in the United States.
- Almost all of the Colorado Refugee English as a Second Language (CRESL) classes offer child care in conjunction with their class offerings. The state has worked with contractors to ensure classes are offered in most of the refugee-rich neighborhoods in metro Denver to streamline access. Child care programs utilize the opportunity to provide early childhood education to refugee children whose parents are in the classes.

Examples of coordination or partnership with state home visiting programs were not often mentioned by stakeholders during this study. Home visiting builds parenting skills as well as early parent engagement in their children's education, which has been shown to support children's future academic success but may be a challenge for refugee parents in a new environment.<sup>65</sup> In Arizona, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) is using private funds to operate a pilot home visiting program for refugee families, drawing from the organization's overseas work and prior experience. Key components are:

- providing a 15-week, privately funded program for families with 0- to 5-year-olds that works with about 40 families in a year, all of whom were resettled by IRC;
- working with children during visits on topics with which their parents may struggle, such as healthy discipline, healthy engagement activities, and supporting children with literacy; and
- teaching parents about the milestones in child development, so they see those milestones and get involved in their child's development.

### 3. School-Age and Adolescent Refugees' Challenges in Transitioning into U.S. Schools

Refugee children and youth may struggle to transition into the U.S. schooling system due to disruptions in their education, the quality of education they received prior to resettlement, language barriers, low expectations, and bullying. Refugee children and youth may have missed schooling as they moved from their homes to refugee camps, urban areas, or between countries.<sup>66</sup> Overall, students with limited or interrupted formal education tend to be significantly behind students of the same age in subjects including native-language literacy and math, and they may not have effectively developed key academic skills.<sup>67</sup> Language barriers also make the transition to U.S. schools difficult for some arriving refugee

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<sup>65</sup> Park and McHugh, *Immigrant Parents and Early Childhood Programs*.

<sup>66</sup> Athanase Gahungu, Olive Gahungu, and Florah Luseno, "Educating Culturally Displaced Students with Truncated Formal Education (CDS-TFE): The Case of Refugee Students and Challenges for Administrators, Teachers, and Counselors," *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation* 6, no. 2 (2011): 1–18, [www.ncpeapublications.org/index.php/volume-6-number-2/379-educating-culturally-displaced-students-with-truncated-formal-education-cds-tfe-the-case-of-refugee-students-and-challenges-for-administrators-teachers-and-counselors](http://www.ncpeapublications.org/index.php/volume-6-number-2/379-educating-culturally-displaced-students-with-truncated-formal-education-cds-tfe-the-case-of-refugee-students-and-challenges-for-administrators-teachers-and-counselors).

<sup>67</sup> Julie Sugarman, *Beyond Teaching English: Supporting High School Completion by Immigrant and Refugee Students* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2017), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/beyond-teaching-english-supporting-high-school-completion-immigrant-and-refugee-students](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/beyond-teaching-english-supporting-high-school-completion-immigrant-and-refugee-students).



children. Especially among refugee teens, the language barrier is a significant contributor to short-term poor high school and college outcomes.<sup>68</sup>

In conversations with service providers, MPI researchers often heard that many refugee youth who arrived in their later teenage years struggled to complete high school before aging out of eligibility for public high schools.<sup>69</sup> In many places, GED programs are also reportedly not well suited to serving LEP youth.

The social climate of the school also has a significant impact on a youth's transition into the new learning environment. Bullying is a common negative experience for adolescent refugees.<sup>70</sup> One study involving interviews and focus groups with refugee parents and children revealed that 60 percent of both boys and girls reported being bullied at least once a month during the study year (2011), mostly on the basis of their refugee background.<sup>71</sup>

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### *Parental involvement and family engagement are correlated with better outcomes for students.*

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There is limited evidence on how to best support the school performance of refugee children. Maintaining cultural connections to their homes while building networks of support can be helpful for older refugee youth. Young adults (ages 18 to 26) who participated in one qualitative study, having been resettled on average at age 15, reported that keeping in touch with their culture of origin helped them stay focused on their education and work through hardship.<sup>72</sup> In another study, parents also expressed the view that maintaining a connection with their origin culture was important or useful for their children.<sup>73</sup>

While parental involvement and family engagement are correlated with better outcomes for students, refugee parents may find it difficult to engage with their children's schools.<sup>74</sup> While some parents do not

68 William N. Evans and Daniel Fitzgerald, "The Economic and Social Outcomes of Refugees in the United States: Evidence from the ACS" (working paper no. 23498, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA, June 2017), 5, [www.nber.org/papers/w23498.pdf](http://www.nber.org/papers/w23498.pdf).

69 The age at which a student is no longer eligible to enroll in public high school differs across states.

70 Ibid.; Shirley Mthethwa-Sommers and Otieno Kisiara, "Listening to Students from Refugee Backgrounds: Lessons for Education Professionals," *PennGSE Perspectives on Urban Education* 12, no. 1 (2015): 1, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1056671.pdf>.

71 Mthethwa-Sommers and Kisiara, "Listening to Students from Refugee Backgrounds."

72 Desiree Baolian Qin et al., "My Culture Helps Me Make Good Decisions": Cultural Adaptation of Sudanese Refugee Emerging Adults," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 30, no. 2 (2015): 213–43.

73 Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund, *Invisible Newcomers: Refugees from Burma/Myanmar and Bhutan in the United States* (Washington, DC: Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund, 2014), [www.apiasf.org/research/APIASF\\_Burma\\_Bhutan\\_Report.pdf](http://www.apiasf.org/research/APIASF_Burma_Bhutan_Report.pdf); J. Lynn McBrien, "The Importance of Context: Vietnamese, Somali, and Iranian Refugee Mothers Discuss Their Resettled Lives and Involvement in Their Children's Schools," *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 41, no. 1 (2011); Zeynep Isik-Ercan, "In Pursuit of a New Perspective in the Education of Children of Refugees: Advocacy for the 'Family,'" *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice* 12, no. 4 (Autumn 2012): 3025–38, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1002997.pdf>.

74 Haines, Summers, Turnbull, and Turnbull, "Family Partnerships with a Head Start Agency"; Morland, Ives, McNeely, and Allen, *Providing a Head Start*; Hamish R. Graham, Ripudaman S. Minhas, and Georgia Paxton, "Learning Problems in Children of Refugee Background: A Systematic Review," *Pediatrics* 137, no. 6 (2016): 1–15, <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2016/05/17/peds.2015-3994.full.pdf>; Isik-Ercan, "In Pursuit of a New Perspective in the Education of Children of Refugees"; Gross and Ntagengwa, *Challenges in Accessing Early Childhood Education and Care*; McBrien, "The Importance of Context"; Clea McNeely, Katharine Sprecher, and Denise Bates, *Comparative Case Study of Caring across Communities: Identifying Essential Components of Comprehensive School-Linked Mental Health Services for Refugee and Immigrant Children* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Center for the Study of Youth and Political Violence and Department of Public Health, 2010), [www.healthinschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/CACFinalEvalreport.pdf](http://www.healthinschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/CACFinalEvalreport.pdf); Gahungu, Gahungu, and Luseno, "Educating Culturally Displaced Students with Truncated Formal Education"; Bettmann et al., "Resettlement Experiences of Children who Entered the United States as Refugees"; Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund, *Invisible Newcomers*.



see it as their place to be involved,<sup>75</sup> others do want to be more closely connected.<sup>76</sup> However, family or financial responsibilities, language barriers, and a lack of familiarity with the U.S. education system can inhibit refugee parents from engaging with teachers and school staff.<sup>77</sup> Finally, some refugee parents have limited levels of education, which may hinder their efforts to provide academic help to their children and may cause parents to perceive themselves as unable to advocate for their children at school.<sup>78</sup>

#### 4. Initiatives for K-12 Education and the Transition to Adulthood

States have implemented a number of strategies to serve school-age refugee youth, primarily through school-based interventions. Services for school-age children start during the R&P period, during which refugee resettlement staff are required to provide an orientation for parents about schools in the United States. Within 30 days of arrival, staff must explain the legal and normative expectations regarding primary and secondary education; options for postsecondary education and vocational training; and the value of weighing those options against the need to begin earning an income. Resettlement staff also assist parents in enrolling their children at the local school.<sup>79</sup>

Once enrolled in school, refugee children ages 5 to 18 may participate in programs funded by ORR's Refugee School Impact (RSI) program. The RSI program offers significant flexibility, which can be used to offer services for the whole family and to support parent engagement in schools.<sup>80</sup> However, RSI funding is very limited. Funds are usually targeted to schools with the largest numbers of recently arrived refugee children, and school services often give priority to children in their first year after arrival.<sup>81</sup> And because the program's age range limits it to serving children ages 5 to 18, RSI services are generally not available to younger or older youth, although past funding announcements point to some flexibility in serving students who are older than 18.<sup>82</sup>

In the past, ORR awarded the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops technical assistance funding to track promising practices and provide technical assistance to nearly 200 state and local RSI programs through the Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services project. That funding ended in FY 2013. After a two-year gap, funding resumed for technical assistance to schools, child welfare agencies and other service providers that intersect with refugee children and youth, although it did not include designated funds to monitor and analyze data from the RSI program.<sup>83</sup> The lack of publicly available outcome data and comprehensive review of RSI programs represents a significant gap in knowledge about this program. Nevertheless, certain program elements, discussed below, show promise.

75 McNeely, Sprecher, and Bates, *Comparative Case Study of Caring across Communities*.

76 Isik-Ercan, "In Pursuit of a New Perspective in the Education of Children of Refugees."

77 Haines, Summers, Turnbull, and Turnbull, "Family Partnerships with a Head Start Agency."

78 Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund, *Invisible Newcomers*; Gahungu, Gahungu, and Luseno, "Educating Culturally Displaced Students with Truncated Formal Education"; McBrien, "The Importance of Context."

79 Author correspondence with Barbara Day.

80 In October 2017, ORR announced that funding for the Refugee School Impact (RSI) program would be issued to states through the Refugee Social Services formula allocation rather than a competitive grant program. ORR also encouraged states to use certain approaches when delivering services, including developing broad partnerships, meeting with refugee parents, tracking high school graduation rates, and helping refugee youth integrate to their new school environment. Despite changes to the funding mechanism, allowable activities under the RSI program continue to include English as a Second Language instruction, afterschool tutorials, high school completion services, afterschool and summer activities, parental involvement programs, bilingual/bicultural counselors, and interpreter services. See HHS, ORR, "Fiscal Year 2018 Refugee School Impact Social Services Set-Aside," updated October 5, 2017, [www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/fiscal-year-2018-refugee-school-impact-social-services-set-aside](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/fiscal-year-2018-refugee-school-impact-social-services-set-aside); HHS, ORR, "About School Impact," updated May 14, 2018, [www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/school-impact/about](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/school-impact/about).

81 HHS, ORR, "Fiscal Year 2018 Refugee School Impact Social Services Set-Aside."

82 HHS, ORR, "Refugee School Impact HHS-2014-ACF-ORR-ZE-0789," accessed August 13, 2018, [https://ami.grantsolutions.gov/files/HHS-2014-ACF-ORR-ZE-0789\\_0.htm](https://ami.grantsolutions.gov/files/HHS-2014-ACF-ORR-ZE-0789_0.htm).

83 Prior to 2009, ORR awarded U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) funds to provide broad-based technical assistance to support refugee children, youth, and families. From 2009 to 2012, ORR awarded the USCCB additional technical assistance funding to coordinate the RSI program. Prior to 2009, and in 2015 when funding resumed, technical assistance was broad and covered child welfare, family strengthening, and youth development. Laura Gardner, "School Age Refugee Children and Refugee School Impact Funds" (presentation, Two-Generation/Whole Family Strategies for Refugee Resettlement meeting, MPI, Washington, DC, May 23, 2018).



### *a. Teacher Training*

Teachers play a pivotal role in the social and educational development of refugee children. State officials and service providers consulted as part of this study noted the importance of teacher-training initiatives to better meet the distinctive needs of arriving refugee children, including for appropriate educational assessments and grade-level placements. In several discussions, stakeholders commented that while teacher training has always been important, it has taken on greater significance in a context of increased reports of bullying and Islamophobia.

A number of study sites—including IRC in Phoenix, Arizona, and King County, Washington; refugee service providers in Chicago, Illinois; the Russian Community Association of Massachusetts in Lowell; and several school districts in Virginia—invested RSI funds in professional development for teachers who work with refugee students, while the Cajon Valley School District in San Diego, California, has leveraged other funding for teacher training. Instruction is generally designed to increase teachers' understanding of refugee children's strengths, cultures, and traumas. Other training topics include how to support the social-emotional wellbeing of refugee children and best practices for effectively engage refugee parents. In Arizona, IRC has also worked with the state Department of Education to allow teachers to receive continuing education credits for some of the professional development courses, adding another incentive for them to participate.

### *b. Parent Education, Engagement, and Support*

State leaders and service providers also discussed the importance of working with recently arrived refugee parents as the parents are often unfamiliar with many aspects of U.S. schools, such as rules and expectations around homework, attendance, participation in school and afterschool activities, and accessing online school portals. Several states use RSI funds to promote family engagement with teachers and other school officials.

- A number of sites—including IRC in Phoenix, Arizona; the Ethiopian Community Development Center, Inc. (ECDC) African Community Center in Denver, Colorado; the Refugee Education Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Samaritas in Detroit, Michigan; and Catholic Charities in Northern Virginia—use RSI funds to employ school liaisons or navigators to coordinate between refugee parents and school officials.
- The Coalition for Refugees from Burma, an ECBO in Seattle, Washington, offers an innovative program that teaches refugee parents computer skills and orients them to the online school portal. After completing the four to six weeks of classes, parents are equipped to track their children's school work, test schedules, and other important school notices from the school portal. This intervention is reported to have led to improved attendance and fewer disciplinary actions for their children.

The Cajon Valley school district in San Diego, California, has received funding from the Kellogg Foundation, state government, and the U.S. Department of Education to implement its Family and Community Engagement (FACE) program, which emphasizes building trust between school staff and refugee and immigrant families. Components of FACE include:

- community liaisons, whose job it is to build relationships between parents and teachers;
- an eight-week Parent University focusing on how parents can read with their children, co-taught by a teacher and a community liaison, all in either Arabic, English, or Spanish;
- home visits by teachers; and
- professional development for teachers, which includes experiential training activities such as poverty/immigrant simulations, tours of the community, and design-thinking activities in which teachers listen while a parent shares their experiences in their native languages. Parents and





teachers then work together in teams to propose initiatives in the school that respond to their suggestions.

FACE has found that children whose parents participated in the Parent University outperformed their peers on reading tests. Teachers who participated in professional development also indicated a higher level of trust among these parents than those who did not participate, and 97 percent of teachers who participated in home visits said they felt more comfortable talking to parents after the visit.

*c. Academic and Language Supports*

RSI funds are commonly used to provide academic and language support to refugee children. States use a variety of program designs, ranging from tutoring in afterschool programs to specialized case management for youth approaching high school graduation. Examples include:

- IRC in Phoenix, Arizona, provides programs for refugee high school students who are 17 or 18 years old that include afterschool tutoring and one-on-one case management to help them complete graduation requirements.
- Some schools, including some in Phoenix, San Diego, Chicago, and Grand Rapids, feature integrated or designated newcomer classrooms through the RSI program, other funding, or a mix of RSI program dollars and other resources. Integrated newcomer programs typically offer classroom instruction to students of varying language proficiency levels using bilingual or dual-language models, including language immersion. Designated newcomer programs give specialized attention to refugees and other immigrants who have recently arrived. Services generally last for about a year and serve as an intermediary step until the student is ready to transition to the general school program.<sup>84</sup>
- School liaisons in Phoenix, Arizona, and Northern Virginia coordinate a variety of services for students, including school orientation, tutoring, and interpreter services.
- School districts and community-based organizations in Massachusetts offer English instruction to parents of refugee students coupled with social skills groups for their children. ESOL classes are held at schools in the evening, or at community-based sites. RSI programs assist with translation of school documents and interpret for school meetings.

*d. College and Career Pathways*

States may direct some RSI funds toward preparing refugee youth for college and career pathways. In some instances, states have also secured other funding to support refugee youth's transition into adulthood. Still, many stakeholders identified a funding gap in this service area and expressed a need for greater support to effectively prepare youth for life after high school and to support late-arriving youth who age out of RSI eligibility when they graduate.

In Salt Lake City, Utah, refugee youth usually enroll in the Salt Lake Community College system after graduating from high school. It typically takes two years to earn an associate degree at a community college, but many refugee students do not meet the English language proficiency requirements to complete the program within that timeframe. Instead, they are put on a remedial track that takes twice as long to complete. Given the pressure refugee youth often feel to earn money and contribute to the household, many leave community college without completing the program. After studying this pattern, the Utah state resettlement office arranged for Granite School District to offer remedial community college courses at the local high school through dual enrollment so that LEP students can take these classes prior to fully enrolling in college.

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<sup>84</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, *Newcomer Toolkit* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2017), [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/newcomers-toolkit/ncomertoolkit.pdf](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/newcomers-toolkit/ncomertoolkit.pdf).





Refugees in their junior or senior years of high school in Colorado can participate in On-Trac, a ten-week college preparation course that arranges college tours and assists with college applications. With funding from a private donor, ten program participants receive \$1,000 toward tuition, and one participant receives a full four-year scholarship to a Colorado university. With a mix of RSI dollars and other non-ORR funding from the Colorado Department of Human Services, the ECDC African Community Center runs On-Trac and another afterschool program called International City. These programs prepare high-school-age youth in the metro Denver area for college.

Organizations in Arizona, Maryland, Michigan, and Virginia also use RSI funding to support college and career pathways.

- The Tucson, Arizona, suboffice of Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest Refugee and Immigration Services runs a K-12 Refugee Education program that includes an afterschool tutoring center that focuses on helping junior- and high-school-age refugees finish high school, get a GED, and/or consider how to move on to college.
- Baltimore City Community College in Maryland, in partnership with IRC, supports refugee youth who are not pursuing college by first helping them find summer employment while they are still in high school, and then guiding them through developing a career plan as they approach graduation.
- Samaritas in Detroit, Michigan, takes children on both college visits and field trips to see other vocational opportunities. The organization also has a partnership with Refugees to College, a student group at the University of Michigan that helps refugee families with college and financial aid applications.
- School liaisons in Virginia work closely with universities and colleges across the state to provide tutoring and mentoring programs for refugee youth. School liaisons have also collaborated with Georgetown University's Muslim Student Association to provide workshops for refugee youth and parents on the college application process and how to plan for a successful college experience.
- Although there are no college and career pathway programs specific to refugee youth in Illinois, refugees in Chicago, like other students in that city, may enroll in city colleges while attending high school or attend after high school at no charge.

In San Diego, the county government has dedicated funding under the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) to provide workforce services to refugees and other youth. Run by IRC, the Connect to Work program serves 40 to 60 people a year in cohorts of ten to 15, the great majority of whom are refugees or asylees. Since 2015, the program's focus has been on youth who are neither in school nor working. The program involves six to eight weeks of instruction, with each day including a half day of literacy and numeracy classes and a half day of work readiness training. Throughout, youth receive intensive case management and behavioral support, as well as financial coaching, assistance finding professional clothing, and other services. They also receive mental health group counseling, during which program staff identify whether any youth could benefit from individual counseling. Participating youth can then sign-up for paid internships funded through WIOA. If youth are interested, IRC will help connect them back to a high school, if they qualify, or to a high school equivalency program.

#### *e. Social Adjustment Programs*

Another type of programming for refugee youth focuses on their social, emotional, and cultural development and on easing the acculturation process. Examples of this type of programming include:

- The Refugee Development Center, a nonprofit in Lansing, Michigan, runs an Art Voice program, in which students have the opportunity to express feelings about their home countries and their new lives in the United States through art projects. The Refugee Development Center also has graduate-level social workers on staff to assist families who are managing traumatic experiences.



- The ECDC African Community Center in Colorado uses a combination of art and music therapy and soccer to promote refugee children's social, emotional, and cultural development. It also manages a youth-to-youth peer mentoring program in which previously resettled refugee youth are matched with newly arriving refugee mentees.
- IRC's Girls for Peace program in Washington State fuses artistic expression with socio-emotional education, including in a mentoring program that connects middle and high school girls with young adult women who act as mentors.
- Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains in Denver has a hiking club in the summer that takes refugee youth to explore the Colorado mountains with community mentors. This program teaches refugee youth to utilize Colorado's natural resources as an avenue to address social-emotional challenges.

Despite these efforts, stakeholders from several states indicated a greater need for services to address refugee students' emotional wellbeing and broader social adjustment, but noted there is insufficient funding to meet this service gap.

## **B.     Helping Refugees Get Better Jobs**

While refugees tend to work at high rates, refugee resettlement services have traditionally emphasized rapid employment rather than efforts to help refugees get into higher-paying jobs, or to advance to better jobs over time. Employment is, of course, necessary for family economic survival, and higher incomes and more stable work help refugee parents better support their children's development. Therefore, efforts to support refugee parents' upward mobility in the workplace also support the integration of children and families overall.

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*Higher incomes and more stable work help refugee parents  
better support their children's development.*

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The characteristics of newly arriving refugees, as shown in Figure 4, suggest that many arrive in their prime working years but face barriers to finding good, stable jobs with family-sustaining wages.<sup>85</sup> In a survey of refugees who arrived in FY 2015, 77 percent reported that they spoke English less than well at arrival, and 51 percent reported having less than a secondary school education.<sup>86</sup> As Figure 3 above shows, educational attainment varies by nationality, with 31 percent of refugees from Iran arriving with a postsecondary degree, for example, compared to 3 percent from Somalia. Limited education, English proficiency, and native-language literacy can create challenges for refugees' labor-market integration.

Refugee men have higher labor-force participation rates than U.S.-born men (67 percent versus 60 percent in 2009–11), while refugee women are as likely to be working as U.S.-born women (54 percent for both groups in 2009–11).<sup>87</sup> But refugees' work experiences shift as they spend more years in the

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<sup>85</sup> Capps et al., *The Integration Outcomes of U.S. Refugees*.

<sup>86</sup> HHS, ACF, *Annual Report to Congress: Office of Refugee Resettlement Fiscal Year 2016*.

<sup>87</sup> Capps et al., *The Integration Outcomes of U.S. Refugees*, 16.



United States. Refugees—both men and women—surpass the labor-force participation rates of U.S.-born workers after five years in the country.<sup>88</sup>

Data suggest that refugees' earnings increase rapidly over their first ten years in the United States, though they never converge with those of U.S.-born workers.<sup>89</sup> This wage growth starts from a low base. Of refugees receiving ORR-funded employment services in FY 2016—most of whom were recently arrived refugees—the average hourly wage for those with jobs was \$9.91.<sup>90</sup> And despite growing wages, large shares of refugees sustain low incomes: in 2009–11, 44 percent of refugees were low income, compared to 33 percent of the U.S. born.<sup>91</sup>

There is little research on the employment trajectories of refugee workers, though trends in earnings and income suggest they do experience upward mobility. One analysis of the occupations of four refugee groups found that increasing shares of Somali, Burmese, and Hmong refugees were working in white-collar jobs after ten years of U.S. residence, while the rate barely increased for Bosnian refugees, who were more likely to hold white-collar jobs to begin with.<sup>92</sup> Still, of all college-educated adult refugees, regardless of their period of arrival, 29 percent were underemployed (either unemployed or working in a low-skill job) in 2009–13.<sup>93</sup>

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*Historically, adult education and workforce systems have struggled to reach and serve immigrants and refugees.*

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Refugees, like many immigrants, face barriers in accessing supports to help them obtain better employment, beyond those experienced by most Americans. Limited English proficiency, unfamiliarity with employment and training options, low digital literacy, difficulties accessing transportation and child care, and barriers to getting foreign education and credentials recognized can all make it more difficult for immigrant and refugee workers to benefit from mainstream employment services.<sup>94</sup> Historically, adult education and workforce systems have struggled to reach and serve immigrants and refugees.<sup>95</sup> As one example, as of 2014, less than 2 percent of participants in WIOA Title I workforce development services are limited English proficient, while about 10 percent of working-age adults are LEP.<sup>96</sup>

88 Evans and Fitzgerald, “The Economic and Social Outcomes of Refugees in the United States.” These findings, and those below, result from comparing refugees who have been in the United States longer to refugees who have been here for shorter periods, rather than observing the same refugees over time, so there is some chance that these findings conflate changes in the characteristics of refugees admitted over time with changes in refugee experiences as their length of U.S. residence grows.

89 Evans and Fitzgerald, “The Economic and Social Outcomes of Refugees in the United States,” 43. See also Capps et al., *The Integration Outcomes of U.S. Refugees*; New American Economy, *From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America* (New York: New American Economy, 2017), [www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/NAE\\_Refugees\\_V5.pdf](http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/NAE_Refugees_V5.pdf); David Dyssegaard Kallick and Silva Mathema, *Refugee Integration in the United States* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2016), 16–17, <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/15112912/refugeeintegration.pdf>.

90 HHS, ACF, *Annual Report to Congress: Office of Refugee Resettlement Fiscal Year 2016*, 25–27.

91 Capps et al., *The Integration Outcomes of U.S. Refugees*, 22.

92 Kallick and Mathema, *Refugee Integration in the United States*, 17.

93 Fix, Hooper, and Zong, *How are Refugees Faring?*

94 Hamutal Bernstein and Carolyn Vilter, *Upskilling the Immigrant Workforce to Meet Employer Demand for Skilled Workers* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2018), [www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/98766/upskilling\\_immigrant\\_workforce\\_to\\_meet\\_employer\\_demand\\_for\\_skilled\\_workers\\_2.pdf](http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/98766/upskilling_immigrant_workforce_to_meet_employer_demand_for_skilled_workers_2.pdf).

95 Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, *Upskilling the New American Workforce: Demand-Driven Programs that Foster Immigrant Worker Success & Policies that Can Take Them to Scale* (Washington, DC: National Skills Coalition, 2016), 2–3, [www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/Upskilling-the-New-American-Workforce-1.pdf](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/Upskilling-the-New-American-Workforce-1.pdf).

96 Ibid, 3.



## Initiatives to Help Refugees Get Better Jobs

Federally funded refugee services do not strongly incentivize helping refugees find better jobs over time, and mainstream services are not always well-positioned to serve refugees. States are not precluded from addressing longer-term employment goals, but the federal outcome measures only look at the characteristics of participants' jobs at initial placement and at the 90-day retention mark, or the 120- and 180-day marks under the MG Program. While many refugees could benefit from mainstream workforce development services through community colleges or WIOA-funded one-stop centers, these services are not always well-suited to serving LEP adults and those with limited literacy, or to providing education or training to adults with full-time jobs and family commitments—service limitations that mean some refugees need advance preparation to be ready for mainstream programs. Some programs require extensive English instruction before participants can begin training, creating longer and potentially more expensive pathways for refugee learners. Further, refugees who are not familiar with U.S. education and training systems, and those who may not have developed clear career goals, may need additional assistance in navigating and making efficient use of available resources.

All states that resettle refugees provide basic employment services during refugees' first months in the United States. Refugees with children are generally served through TANF programs, with services coming either from general TANF case managers or staff dedicated to serving refugees. Refugees receiving RCA (those without children) generally receive employment services from dedicated state staff or staff at refugee-serving organizations. All of these services focus on helping refugees get into a first job before their cash assistance expires and on short-term job retention. Services may include ESL classes, employment workshops, case management, and/or ongoing education programs, as well as transportation assistance and driver's education.<sup>97</sup> And, as explained in Section II.B., some refugees are served by the Matching Grant program, which places an even heavier emphasis on rapid employment.

A focus on helping refugees secure better jobs could involve preparation efforts and greater attention to initial job placement, continuing access to services after initial placement, or both. The subsections that follow present examples of states that have developed innovative or particularly interesting models for helping with this endeavor.

### *a. Efforts to Help Refugees Build English Skills*

Limited English proficiency prevents many refugees from obtaining better jobs. Compounding this, refugees who are not literate in their home language(s) must first learn basic literacy skills before learning to read and write in English. In site visits, service providers also noted that because refugees are often placed in jobs that do not require English skills, opportunities for learning English at the workplace are often limited.

One model for successful English instruction is contextualized English, in which learners focus on vocabulary needed for a particular occupation. Michigan allocated \$250,000 in state funds, ending in 2017, for new, creative methods of teaching English, including this one. Models granted funding include an English program targeted to the construction trade, in which participants also obtained their forklift license and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certification, and a program providing English instruction tailored to the sewing industry. In Massachusetts, the Comprehensive Refugee Employment Program (CRES) focuses on providing English for Employment in the mornings, enhanced with additional hours of basic English in the afternoons for those in need of more intensive instruction.

In many places, refugees may struggle to find suitable ESL classes. Utah has created an ESL referral flowchart to help connect people to the right ESL opportunities and appropriate class levels. Utah is also working with ESL-contracted providers to develop clear measures to identify what skills are being

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<sup>97</sup> Bethany Boland and Angela Gaffney, *Understanding the Intersection between TANF and Refugee Cash Assistance Services: Findings from a Survey of State Refugee Coordinators* (Washington, DC: HHS, ACF, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, 2017), [www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/understanding-intersection-tanf-refugee-cash-assistance-services-findings-survey-state-refugee-coordinators](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/understanding-intersection-tanf-refugee-cash-assistance-services-findings-survey-state-refugee-coordinators).



learned at each level that help prepare refugees for success in the workforce. Colorado uses an online tool to ensure that all partners have up to date schedules for all ESL opportunities. Some states report using tablets and computers to provide individualized instruction to refugees who are at different levels of literacy or English ability.

Refugees sometimes struggle to find time to invest in English skills if they also work and have family responsibilities. In Arizona, Lutheran Social Services has provided bus passes and onsite child care services during English classes to encourage clients who work full time to attend English classes as a way to enable them to advance in their careers. Other providers help refugees study English during the work day. Pima Community College in Tucson offers a limited number of Vocational English as a Second Language classes at employer locations. And in Utah, the Humanitarian Center, run by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, pays for four hours of work/job training per day and four hours of English instruction per day for 150 clients at a time. Half of the clients are paid for their English instruction through TANF funding.

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*In Arizona, Lutheran Social Services has provided bus passes and onsite child care services during English classes to encourage clients who work full time to attend.*

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*b. Helping Lower-Skilled Refugees Find Better Jobs*

Many refugees arrive to the United States with limited education, and some come with limited work experience, sometimes due to years spent in refugee camps. Strategies for connecting lower-skilled refugees to better jobs over time necessarily focus on building basic job skills and providing skill development and training.

Utah built its Refugee Education and Training Center specifically to provide training and other programming for refugees. The state has developed short-term, intensive trainings that lead to certificates. For example, they host a 20-week computer experience course that leads to a certificate; a 6- to 8-month web development course; and trainings in medical manufacturing, framing, and warehousing and distribution. Courses also build in training on soft skills for U.S. workplaces, and job fairs help refugees find jobs in their industry. The center has developed these in-house trainings because similar offerings at community colleges are inaccessible to many refugees due to their English requirements or high costs.

IRC's employment services for lower-skilled refugees in San Diego focus on preparing clients for several career pathways—building trades, transportation and logistics, hospitality, health care, and telecommunications—chosen based on the local economy, client interest, available resources, and the ability for LEP refugees to progress within these careers. In this programming, IRC helps employed refugees who want to move up career ladders as well as those who are not working and secondary wage earners. IRC provides basic English and skills training to prepare clients to participate in trainings offered by partners such as community colleges and vocational schools, which ideally lead to an industry-recognized credential. This work is funded through a blend of public, foundation, and corporate funding.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has initiated a set of activities across its service locations to help refugee clients attain better jobs; for an overview, see Erica Bouris, *Skill, Career and Wage Mobility among Refugees: Understanding Refugees' Transitions into Higher-Skill, Higher-Wage Work as a Lens to Inform Effective Workforce Development Policies and Practices in the U.S.* (New York: IRC, 2018), [www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/3375/skillcareerandwagemobilityamongrefugeesircfinaldocx2.pdf](http://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/3375/skillcareerandwagemobilityamongrefugeesircfinaldocx2.pdf).





Colorado has several culinary training programs aimed at refugees and immigrants who arrive with lower skills. One of them, Ready for Hospitality, is a partnership between a local resettlement agency and the University of Denver's hospitality management graduate school program. This program offers refugees training toward a University of Denver certificate that prepares them for work within the food service sector, while also teaching graduate students, who work alongside the refugee trainees, valuable lessons on how to work in diverse workplace environments.

Massachusetts has allocated approximately \$800,000 to refugee employment service providers that offered an ample portfolio of vocational skills trainings in local industries where demand for jobs is high. These employment providers offer recognized trainings in the areas of health (medical interpretation and Certified Nurse Assistant) in partnerships with community health organizations and training institutions; hospitality, including food service, in partnerships with hotels; and public and private security in partnership with the airport Transportation Security Administration (TSA) office and private security trainers.

Given that refugee families often cannot afford to forgo work hours to participate in trainings, apprenticeships are a promising model for helping refugees gain the skills to move up job ladders. However, barriers can hinder refugees from accessing apprenticeships, including English or other skills requirements. IRC in San Diego tries to find apprenticeship opportunities for refugees, and in case of skills barriers, provides "bridge programs" to help refugees acquire the required skills.

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### *Apprenticeships are a promising model for helping refugees gain the skills to move up job ladders.*

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To assist refugees without literacy skills, Minnesota is developing a pilot to implement an "oral learner pathway," which would develop and assess refugees' competencies for living-wage employment and advancement without requiring English literacy. State officials hope that this will allow more people to progress on career pathways more quickly.

#### *c. Connecting Refugees with Workforce and Other Mainstream Employment Services*

Some states are working with mainstream employment service providers to expand services to refugee families. In 2016, the Maryland Departments of Human Services and Labor jointly formed the Maryland Skilled Immigrant Taskforce. The state sought to help foreign-trained refugees and immigrants obtain jobs that match their skills, and to help businesses, especially in industries that have endemic workforce shortages, benefit from the untapped workforce. The taskforce has organized capacity-building workshops to train mainstream workforce development partners on ways to work with skilled immigrants. The taskforce has also contributed significantly to the development of the new state WIOA plan, including language prohibiting discrimination in workforce services on the basis of national origin and other characteristics.

California has funded an 18-month pilot, providing \$500,000 to each of five grantees to place navigators in job centers run by the state workforce system. The navigators are designated to help ELs (including refugees, immigrants, and U.S.-born workers) utilize workforce and adult education services. In addition, grantees are expected to coordinate wrap-around services such as transportation and child care, engage with community-based organizations (including refugee-serving organizations), and work to educate workforce boards about refugee resettlement. In a similar vein, the Michigan Office of New Americans, which serves immigrants and refugees in the state, is funding a refugee and immigrant navigator pilot in four one-stop centers in the four counties in the state with the largest numbers of refugees.





In addition, California's planning guidance for WIOA requires more substantial local engagement with community-based organizations, including refugee-serving organizations. The new California navigator effort comes on top of a state policy that requires workforce investment boards to develop plans to serve LEP populations if at least 15 percent of the service population in the jurisdiction is LEP. The state issued further guidance to workforce boards about how to work with resettlement agencies and other immigrant serving organizations,<sup>99</sup> including creating a directory of partners to facilitate the collaboration.<sup>100</sup> Resettlement agencies are also receiving webinar trainings on how to participate in the WIOA planning process.

Massachusetts has identified the health sector as the industry with greatest opportunities for refugee employment. Through the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants' leadership, refugee employment service providers have partnered with institutions of higher education, the Departments of Elders' Affairs and Education, community colleges, and wellness centers to create an Integrated ESOL/Certified Nursing Aide training program. The comprehensive model offers basic English while introducing vocabulary and content knowledge specific to this job. The first pilot program, held in January 2018, trained 23 individuals, of whom 17 found jobs in a related field at an average salary of approximately \$22.50 per hour.

Other states have sought to leverage U.S. Department of Agriculture Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) funds to serve immigrant workers who are accessing food stamps (now known as SNAP). Maryland uses SNAP E&T funds to support workforce development for secondary wage earners as well as skilled refugees—efforts that include both initial job placements and support in advancing to higher-level jobs. Washington State also uses SNAP E&T dollars to help refugees find jobs, through job search, job training, and vocational education services. While the intention is to use this resource for job upgrades, currently the state also uses the funding to help refugees who need more assistance finding a first job than is covered by ORR funding.

#### *d. Helping High-Skilled Refugees Find Better Jobs*

For the minority of refugees who arrive with high educational attainment or formal job credentials, it can be challenging to resume their careers due to a lack of recognition of foreign degrees and credentials by U.S. employers and licensing bodies, and a lack of familiarity with how to navigate career paths in the United States. This is particularly true for many Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders who worked for the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan, who must often reinvent their careers after admission (see Box 1). Several states have developed services to help skilled refugees reenter their careers or at least find a job in the same field.

In Washington, the CLEVER (Career Ladders for Educated and Vocationally Experienced Refugees) program provides skilled and educated refugees with services to get back into their chosen careers. CLEVER brings together three partner organizations: the Puget Sound Welcome Back Center program, which helps refugees get their foreign transcripts evaluated and design a pathway to obtain licenses necessary for their chosen careers; Jewish Family Services, which provides initial orientation to newly arrived refugees, trains other refugee resettlement agencies to do similar orientations, and coordinates a mentorship program to connect refugees to U.S. peers in their professions; and TRAC Associates, which develops job opportunities for refugees in their career fields.

Washington State is working to lower or remove licensing barriers for refugees, particularly requirements for English skills that are unrelated to performance in a given job, by either creating waiver processes or getting the state to recognize foreign licenses. For example, after reviewing Iraqi and other foreign licensing procedures, Washington now offers reciprocity for barbers' licenses from Iraq and many other countries.

<sup>99</sup> California Workforce Development Board, "Additional Language on the Provision of Services to English Language Learners, the Foreign Born, and Refugees," accessed September 5, 2018, [https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2018/02/WIOA\\_Immigrants\\_and\\_Refugees.pdf](https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2018/02/WIOA_Immigrants_and_Refugees.pdf).

<sup>100</sup> California Workforce Development Board, "Directory of Planning Partners," updated August 1, 2018, <https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2018/08/Workforce-Development-System-Directory-8-1-2018.pdf>.



Virginia has included in the Refugee Social Services Employment Program's request for applications for FY 2018 and FY 2019 language that emphasizes the need to provide specific services for highly skilled, educated, and motivated refugee clients who have either a substantial or specialized work history, or advanced degrees. This program is called Skills Training for Earnings Potential (STEP) and includes assistance with recertification, credential validation, funding for specialized training programs, and obtaining of licenses and new certifications. By making this a required service provision component for contracting agencies, Virginia has established STEP as a fundamental part of the state's employment program.

Colorado's CAREERS (Career Aligned Refugee Education and Employment Readiness Services) program offers shorter-term occupational training, on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and Career and Technical Education courses to about 100 people, targeted to more highly skilled refugees. Participants have relatively high wages, at an average of about \$20 per hour. This program is embedded in a local technical college, offering entry into a number of industry-supported programs that provide career pathways and post-training employment. Some of the opportunities offer a wage while a participant is enrolled in the program. CAREERS navigators help prospective participants determine what program is a good fit; each program has selection criteria based on what will make a participant successful in the program. The technical college where the program is housed (Emily Griffith Technical College) has intentionally revisited all program requirements to mitigate arbitrary barriers to enrollment for immigrants and refugees, such as set, collegewide Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) minimum scores. At the same time, CAREERS navigators identify and facilitate opportunities for skill enhancement (English classes, for example) for individuals who may not be ready for their chosen program. This programming leverages funding from TANF and from the state refugee office.

In Michigan, service providers help skilled refugees enroll in inexpensive, short-term classes that can bring them closer to the careers they had in their origin countries. For example, foreign-trained doctors may enroll in a phlebotomy course, and physicists may study to be x-ray technicians—preparing them for jobs that may not fully allow them to use their skills, but that nevertheless are a better fit for skilled refugees than manual labor. Another service provider in the state started a degree evaluation program, which involves partnering with one of two organizations—World Education Services or Education Credential Evaluators—to translate a foreign degree to a comparable U.S. degree.

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*In Michigan, service providers help skilled refugees enroll in inexpensive, short-term classes that can bring them closer to the careers they had in their origin countries.*

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Illinois and Michigan have also funded services provided by Upwardly Global, which helps college-educated, work-authorized immigrants, including refugees, who have been in the United States for fewer than five years and speak English get into jobs that better fit their skills. Upwardly Global helps refugees by providing online English training and connecting job seekers with job coaches. They also help with resume preparation and job interview skills and provide networking events.



### Box 1. Special Immigrant Visa Program

Among the additional populations that the refugee resettlement program serves are Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders from Iraq and Afghanistan. Since 2006, the United States has granted immigrant visas to thousands of Iraqis and Afghans who worked for or on behalf of the U.S. government in their home countries through several different SIV programs. As refugee admissions dropped in FY 2017 and more SIV holders were admitted, SIV holders started to make up a larger share of resettlement agencies' service populations (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Refugee and SIV Holder Arrivals, FY 2007–17**

Fiscal Year	Refugees	Iraqi and Afghan SIV Holders
2007	48,281	101
2008	60,192	1,015
2009	74,654	2,657
2010	73,311	2,705
2011	56,424	1,259
2012	58,236	4,273
2013	69,926	2,871
2014	69,987	12,581
2015	69,933	8,442
2016	84,995	14,338
2017	53,713	20,836

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), "Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees" (congressional budget justification, HHS, ACF, accessed April 6, 2018), [www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/olab/acf\\_master\\_cj\\_acf\\_final\\_3\\_19\\_0.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/olab/acf_master_cj_acf_final_3_19_0.pdf).

Some resettlement agencies have been able to weather the fluctuations in refugee admissions largely because of the growing SIV population—but this is not true everywhere. More than half of SIV holders in the United States are resettled in California, Texas, and Virginia. SIV holders tend to be a highly educated and English-proficient group, which presents unique opportunities and challenges in effectively supporting their resettlement. It may be difficult to find them jobs in their fields or that match their skill levels because jobs working for the U.S. government, such as those they had in Iraq and Afghanistan, often require U.S. citizenship. They may also seem underqualified for jobs in other fields, as their most recent experiences have been in translation and interpretation. Additionally, their expectations for their U.S. jobs and the level of job-search assistance they will receive are often higher than those of other refugees.

Refugee service providers in several states described SIV holders as getting more frustrated than other refugees with the low- and middle-skilled jobs available. Some organizations in Washington State have come up with professional reentry programs to combat these challenges. Several resettlement agencies work with highly skilled refugees and SIV holders who are employed in first jobs to help them build a career pathway, including help with targeted job searches, networking, and certification and licensing.

SIV families are also unique because the skills gaps that exist between husbands and wives are generally larger than among other refugees. Data on refugees and SIVs admitted between FY 2011 and early FY 2017 showed that while 86 percent of principal SIV holders (usually men) spoke English well, 19 percent of SIV spouses reported good spoken English—a 67-point difference, compared to the 4-point difference between the 8 percent of all principal refugees who spoke English well and the 4 percent of their spouses who did. This means that SIV husbands may take charge of the resettlement process, and it may be more difficult to get SIV wives into jobs. Some service providers have introduced ways to increase SIV spouses' engagement, including a women's health group in Colorado and a sewing program tied to vocational ESL in Washington.

Source: U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrants: More Information on Their Resettlement Outcomes Would Be Beneficial* (Washington, DC: GAO, 2018), [www.gao.gov/assets/700/690190.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/assets/700/690190.pdf).



*e. Supporting Entrepreneurship*

For refugees with a business background and those struggling to find good work opportunities, entrepreneurship can be a path to upward mobility. In Sacramento, California, Opening Doors, Inc. runs a microloan program that helps refugees start businesses, such as car dealerships or carpentry businesses, or purchase vehicles to work as commercial truckers or Uber/Lyft drivers. To help new entrepreneurs, they provide business technical assistance on how to effectively operate a small business, covering topics such as preparing business plans, business taxes, record keeping, and accounting. Entrepreneurs can access smaller loans at first, and as they pay those off, access larger loans.

In Utah, the Microbusiness Connection Center, located at the Refugee Education and Training Center, provides entry-level information to refugees interested in starting a business through classes offered by Utah State University. In addition to these connections, it provides mentorship, one-on-one support, and education on basic business skills. The Spice Kitchen Incubator in Salt Lake City, run by IRC, helps refugee, immigrant, and disadvantaged families start food businesses by providing access to a commercial kitchen at a subsidized rate. They have workshops on how to conduct a financial assessment and set a financial plan, provide help with the permitting process, and connect participants to market opportunities such as farmer's markets, hot meal pickup services, and catering. They can use incubation services for up to 4.5 years.

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*In Sacramento, California, Opening Doors, Inc. runs a microloan program that helps refugees start businesses, such as car dealerships or carpentry businesses.*

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*f. Incentivizing a Focus on Job Upgrades*

Some states have built in incentives for refugee service providers to help refugees get into better jobs over time. Michigan has written its contracts for providers of refugee employment services to provide incentive payments for organizations that help refugees get job upgrades, defined as increasing work hours from part time to full time (35+ hours a week) or increasing wages by at least \$1.75 an hour.

Utah funds two years of case management for refugees. While this case management focuses on a broad range of needs, it also brings a longer-term focus on employment services. Case managers can help refugees connect to employment and training services that include realistic career-ladder guidance to help them find better jobs over time. The case management program has set the goal of helping 70 percent of clients attain jobs that pay at least \$12 an hour, in a state where the minimum wage is \$7.25 an hour.

Utah is also working to provide initial employment services in a way that helps refugees prepare for career pathways. This work includes training employment service providers to help refugees into strategic initial jobs placements. For example, skilled refugees may be placed into entry-level jobs in the industry in which they have experience, enabling them to learn about how that industry functions in the United States, even as they work on their English skills or on transferring their credentials to the United States. Utah has also hired an upward mobility navigator—a career counselor focused on upward mobility, who can help refugees make a detailed, realistic step-by-step plan to work toward their desired career. Case managers and employment service providers can then help refugees take the steps identified toward their chosen career.

In response to lower refugee arrivals in 2017 and 2018, Arizona has started requiring state-funded refugee service providers to conduct six-month check-ins for refugees throughout their first five years in



the country. These check-ins are an opportunity to maintain contact and revisit refugees' self-sufficiency and employability plans; in the future, these may present an opportunity to identify refugees who are interested in receiving assistance finding another job.

### C. Broader Refugee Integration

Integration has multiple dimensions, and those who study or support the integration of refugees and other immigrants conceptualize the integration process using different frameworks. What research there is on refugee integration tends to focus on three areas: economic, linguistic, and civic.<sup>101</sup> One of the few refugee-specific conceptualizations of integration highlights ten areas of refugee integration: 1) rights and citizenship, 2) language and cultural knowledge, 3) safety and stability, 4) social bridges, 5) social bonds, 6) social links, 7) employment, 8) housing, 9) education, and 10) health.<sup>102</sup> A survey of refugees in Colorado largely adopted this framework, adding in a focus on children's education and omitting the focus on social links. That study found strong progress along most of these dimensions as refugees spent more time in the United States, while noting that integration was lowest for stay-at-home mothers and for older men and women, particularly those who did not work.<sup>103</sup> Other research on refugees' integration challenges and service needs, including a survey of State Refugee Coordinators, suggests that the biggest service needs are culturally appropriate mental health services and affordable housing.<sup>104</sup>

#### Initiatives to Support Refugee Families' Broader Needs

States are using a variety of promising strategies to support refugee families' integration, beyond efforts to support children's education and adults' ability to find better jobs over time. These efforts, which seek to address the needs of all family members, encompass many domains of integration, from meeting basic needs, such as health care, transportation, and housing, to intergenerational learning programs, to services for socially isolated refugees. The subsections that follow highlight just some of the strategies used to broadly address refugee family integration through case management, home visits, support for community-based organizations, and engagement of volunteers and broader communities.

##### a. Supports for Refugee Mental Health

Due to past experiences of loss, violence, or other trauma, and the strains of leaving family and friends and of resettling in a new country, many refugees benefit from mental health supports. In Washington State, all refugees age 14 and over are now screened for mental health conditions during their required health check using the Refugee Health Screener-15 (RHS-15), a tool developed in the state. Based on the results of the RHS-15, some refugees are referred to local providers for mental health evaluation, including diagnosis and recommended treatment, as needed. Kentucky also uses the RHS-15 for refugees age 14 and older.

It can be a challenge to find mental health providers who are culturally and linguistically well suited to serving refugees. As a result, the Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance in Washington State is working to train mainstream providers on how to treat refugees.

Some refugee-serving organizations leverage licensed therapists on staff with other departments to meet the needs of refugees. For instance, Catholic Charities in San Diego has licensed therapists from their clinical services department provide direct counselling and teach acculturation classes, with the aim of

101 Hamutal Bernstein and Nicole DuBois, *Bringing Evidence to the Refugee Integration Debate* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2018), 10, [www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/97771/bringing\\_evidence\\_to\\_the\\_refugee\\_integration\\_debate\\_0.pdf](http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/97771/bringing_evidence_to_the_refugee_integration_debate_0.pdf).

102 Alastair Ager and Alison Strang, "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21, no. 2 (2008): 170, <https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/21/2/166/1621262>.

103 Colorado Department of Human Services, *The Refugee Integration Survey and Evaluation (RISE) Year Five: Final Report: A Study of Refugee Integration in Colorado* (Denver: Colorado Office of Economic Security, Division of Employment and Benefits, 2016), <https://cbsdenver.files.wordpress.com/2016/03/rise-year-5-report-feb-2016.pdf>.

104 Boland and Gaffney, *Understanding the Intersection between TANF and Refugee Cash Assistance Services*, 8.





removing the stigma around mental health that exists among some refugees. In Utah, the refugee services office also funds a licensed clinical therapist, who takes walk-in appointments to help deal with complex issues, and contracts with refugee service providers to offer mental health treatment to refugees.

*b. Supports for Basic Needs: Affordable Housing and Transportation*

Access to affordable, safe housing is one of the most basic necessities for refugees finding their footing in the United States. After receiving initial support, refugees must find a way to cover their own rent. Those with lower incomes are eligible for the same housing supports as other U.S. residents, but these resources are extremely limited and often have years-long waitlists. In all of the sites visited as part of this study, housing is a challenge, though some described initiatives to address housing needs. In Salt Lake County, Utah, officials set aside 40 units in a new low-income housing complex specifically for refugee families. Refugee families also fill some of the nondesignated slots in that complex. The state, through TANF funding, contracts two case managers who work with residents of the complex. The Housing Authority of Salt Lake, a private nonprofit, provides programming onsite, including three different ESL classes, a preschool, and an afterschool program. While highly concentrated housing can bring challenges, it also creates opportunities for one-stop service provision for a large group of people.

Utah also runs a one-year rent subsidy program for families, funded by TANF, called the Refugee Employment Subsidized Housing program. This provides subsidized rent, with families' share of the rent increasing after the first six months to provide transitional assistance. These refugee families have employment counselors and must participate in 100 hours of qualifying activities a month, such as learning English, working, or doing on-the-job training. This initiative is run through a partnership between the Refugee Services Office and the local housing authority.

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*In Salt Lake County, Utah, officials set aside 40 units in a new low-income housing complex specifically for refugee families.*

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In many parts of the country, access to transportation is a major barrier for new refugees' ability to access employment, resettlement services, health care, and other supports. Placing refugees in affordable neighborhoods may also mean placing them further from public transportation hubs. Some service providers are trying to tackle this issue. In San Diego, a community-based organization known as the Syrian Community Network helps families buy cars and women obtain driver's licenses. Samaritas, in Michigan, likewise helps clients enroll quickly in driver's education courses and facilitates carpools to help people find rides to work.

*c. Services for Older Refugees and Stay-at-Home Mothers*

As noted above, studies show that elderly refugees and stay-at-home mothers may be less likely to integrate and may struggle with social isolation. Some communities have developed services to connect refugee seniors to their peers and to mental health supports. In Michigan, two local Area Agencies on Aging subcontract with service providers to offer citizenship assistance to seniors, as well as ESL classes and other services in their communities, to ensure that they are not isolated. In Colorado, the Area Agency on Aging in metro Denver partners with refugee service providers and trains providers on serving refugees. They also work with community navigators from within the largest refugee populations to identify older refugees who need additional supports. In addition, they host a program at a center for "active adults" which provides field trips, celebrations, Zumba classes, and courses on English, nutrition, and chronic disease management. They have found that refugees and U.S.-born participants are starting to form friendships, despite some initial tensions.



Likewise, providers have developed services to help women who are not working build connections outside the home. Several resettlement agencies have started sewing circles, in which women can learn sewing skills, connect with other women, and potentially access other needed services. In Colorado, the ECDC African Community Center started a Women's Empowerment Program that combines sewing, job training, and lessons on topics such as child care and women's health, allowing women to practice their English together. They also started a monthly women's health group targeted to Arab women who were not involved in other services, which focuses on topics such as domestic violence, purchasing healthy food, and how to use checks from public food assistance programs. Similarly, the Tucson suboffice of Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest, Refugee and Immigration Services manages a Women's Empowerment Program, including a sewing class, which helps women improve their skills and confidence, contribute to their family income, and connect with other women.

*d. Assessing Broad Family Needs through Case Management and Other Methods*

One way service providers can learn about the broader needs of refugee families and work to meet them is through case management. ORR funding can be used for case management, but after refugees' first eight months in the country, this type of service is generally targeted to higher-need families or narrowly focused on overcoming barriers to employment. In Utah, all refugee families receive two years of case management, provided by one of three refugee-serving nonprofits and funded primarily through TANF with additional ORR funding. These case management services allow providers to identify family needs and add on services as needed, such as assistance with transportation, access to medical care, food assistance, or access to microloans or other help starting a business. Families receive regular assessments to gauge their progress along a range of outcome measures, including employment, housing, education, health, community and family supports, language and cultural knowledge, and life skills. Within each area, case managers record the extent to which refugees mastered several specific competencies or outcomes.

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*In Virginia, all refugees receive a Comprehensive Resettlement Plan (CRP) that assesses the range of family needs—for children, parents, and elderly family members.*

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In Washington, refugee families with greater barriers to self-sufficiency in education, health care, housing, employment, or system navigation receive extended case management through a program called Promoting Refugee Integration Mobility and Empowerment (PRIME), which is administered by the state Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance using ORR funding. PRIME case management focuses on needs other than employment, such as housing or health issues in the family.

In Virginia, all refugees receive a Comprehensive Resettlement Plan (CRP) that assesses the range of family needs—for children, parents, and elderly family members. Providers can then base their services and referrals on that plan. In addition to being a useful tool for the employment specialist to use in the development of an employment plan for adult clients, other sections of the CRP allow for the planning of services for children and elderly family members. It seeks to ensure that plans are developed to address the needs of the entire family.

*e. Financial Literacy*

Some service providers have identified financial literacy as an important need among refugee families. In Massachusetts, the Office for Refugees and Immigrants provides culturally and linguistically appropriate financial literacy education to refugees, among others. The agency has partnered with local banks, community-based organizations and others to provide workshop series throughout the commonwealth.



IRC in San Diego is a Financial Opportunity Center, which means economic development services are integrated into all other services they provide so that anyone accessing services at IRC is also given financial education and coaching, screened for public benefits eligibility, and offered assistance with employment and training. IRC believes this model helps improve families' economic circumstances more than employment services alone.

*f. Refugee-Led Programming*

Several states provide funding or support for refugee-led programming, which allows communities to identify and work to serve their own needs. In Utah, the Refugee Education and Training Center hosts a wide variety of classes and trainings organized and/or led by refugees, from 4-H to classes on parenting, sewing, driver's education, leadership, public speaking, and more. Utah's state government also provides funding to the Refugee Services Office that it distributes to support ECBOs to build their service capacity. They have found that more than one-third of clients accessing services from ECBOs have not accessed any services directly from the Refugee Services Office, meaning that this funding allows them to boost the service population. Washington also invests in ECBOs, to help them address family needs not reached by other services. Services from ECBOs can be particularly important for reaching families in which refugee parents are not accessing employment services from the local resettlement agency.

*g. Making Use of Volunteers and the Broader Community*

Involving community groups and volunteers in refugee resettlement helps states facilitate refugee integration by providing additional resources to refugees that they may not have access to otherwise. Additionally, volunteer engagement may be particularly helpful as part of a two-generation strategy because of volunteers' natural tendency to look at the needs of the whole family.

One way to increase community engagement is by formally involving community stakeholders in the state resettlement program. Utah's state Refugee Services Office has a 20-member advisory board, made up of representatives from resettlement agencies, the housing authority, a local business, a local school district, law enforcement, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, among others. The board is responsible for raising awareness among the public and policymakers on refugee issues; recommending ways to more successfully integrate refugees and involve them in mainstream services; and identifying service gaps and funding that could fill them.<sup>105</sup>

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*Volunteer engagement may be particularly helpful as part of a two-generation strategy because of volunteers' natural tendency to look at the needs of the whole family.*

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Many states use volunteers to support the provision of specific services, for both adults and children, and to increase opportunities for refugees to socialize with members of the broader community. In order to encourage this, Michigan's Office of Refugee Services includes a requirement in its postresettlement contracts, which focus on funding support services in light of lower resettlement numbers, that contractors use funds to recruit and utilize volunteers who will assist with service provision and meet socially with refugees.

Finally, some resettlement programs have succeeded in engaging community groups in a more intensive form of volunteering in which volunteers from the mainstream population band together to help with the resettlement and integration needs of a refugee family, often called "co-sponsorship." Co-

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<sup>105</sup> Governor of the State of Utah, "Creating a Board of Advisors for the Refugee Services Office, Utah Exec. Order No. 2016-3," *Utah State Bulletin* 2016, no. 10 (May 15, 2016), <https://rules.utah.gov/execdocs/2016/ExecDoc157425.htm>.



sponsorship is more often spearheaded by refugee service providers, often faith based, than by state-level coordinators. This approach is multigenerational, as co-sponsorship groups—which may themselves include children, adults, and elders—typically focus on the wellbeing and integration of the entire refugee family. Organizations in Arizona; San Diego, California; and Michigan have all developed co-sponsorship programs. In Michigan, Bethany Christian Services pairs arriving refugees with groups of anywhere from five to 35 volunteers who make a six-month commitment to help resettle the refugee family. Each volunteer in a group is designated to focus on a different aspect of integration. For example, one volunteer becomes the housing coordinator and spearheads setting up the refugees' apartment, another is the education coordinator and enrolls children in school and adults in ESL classes and monitors their progress, and the social coordinator puts together activities for co-sponsors and refugees. These volunteers thus support the integration of the whole family, not just the employable adult.

## V. Challenges and Opportunities in Advancing the Two-Generation Approach in the Current Environment

While exploring the potential to advance a two-generation approach in refugee resettlement, it is important to consider the current landscape, including the financial stressors for programs, the impacts of declining arrivals, and the political context surrounding the resettlement program.

### A. Financial Stressors for Programs

The refugee resettlement network is experiencing unprecedented financial stress. The budget for ORR-funded refugee integration services dropped by 24 percent from FY 2017 to FY 2018.<sup>106</sup> Additional cuts affecting the R&P Program have caused local affiliates of the nine national resettlement agencies to scale back or end their resettlement programs.<sup>107</sup> Since funding for the R&P Program is per capita, fewer refugee arrivals have translated to significant cuts in infrastructure funding. The decision to let funding fall this way was a policy choice. In FY 2002 and FY 2003, when refugee arrivals were roughly 40 percent of the cap after 9/11, the federal government opted to maintain the service infrastructure by continuing to support it.<sup>108</sup>

Many resettlement programs are exploring alternate funding sources from private and civil-society groups to act as a buffer. For example, the Tent Partnership—a coalition of more than 80 private sector companies, including Starbucks, Google, and UPS—is mobilizing to employ refugees, invest in refugee businesses, train refugees, and provide access to financial services.<sup>109</sup> Funders such as the Open Society

<sup>106</sup> Authors' calculations based on U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, "Explanatory Statement Submitted by Mr. Frelinghuysen, Chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, Regarding the House Amendment to Senate Amendment on H.R. 1625: Division H—Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2018," 115th Cong, 2d sess., *Congressional Record* 164, no. 50, daily ed. (March 22, 2018): H2743, [www.congress.gov/crc/2018/03/22/CREC-2018-03-22-bk3.pdf](http://www.congress.gov/crc/2018/03/22/CREC-2018-03-22-bk3.pdf).

<sup>107</sup> This figure does not include funds appropriated to support ORR's anti-trafficking and unaccompanied children's program. See HHS, ACF, "Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees" (congressional budget justification, HHS, ACF, Washington, DC, accessed April 6, 2018), [www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/olab/acf\\_master\\_cj\\_acf\\_final\\_3\\_19\\_0.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/olab/acf_master_cj_acf_final_3_19_0.pdf); U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, "Explanatory Statement Submitted by Mr. Frelinghuysen," H2697–783; Mica Rosenberg, "Exclusive: Dozens of Refugee Resettlement Offices to Close as Trump Downsizes Program," Reuters, February 14, 2018, [www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-refugees-exclusive/exclusive-dozens-of-refugee-resettlement-offices-to-close-as-trump-downsizes-program-idUSKCN1FY1EJ](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-refugees-exclusive/exclusive-dozens-of-refugee-resettlement-offices-to-close-as-trump-downsizes-program-idUSKCN1FY1EJ).

<sup>108</sup> Erin Patrick, "The U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program," *Migration Information Source*, June 1, 2004, [www.migrationpolicy.org/article/us-refugee-resettlement-program](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/us-refugee-resettlement-program); Tarryn Mento, "How a Reduced Ceiling on Refugee Arrivals Could Impact San Diego," KBPS, September 29, 2017, [www.kpbs.org/news/2017/sep/29/how-fluctuating-refugee-arrivals-could-impact-san-diego](http://www.kpbs.org/news/2017/sep/29/how-fluctuating-refugee-arrivals-could-impact-san-diego); HIAS, "A Brief History of the Presidential Determination," updated August 7, 2017, [www.hias.org/blog/video-brief-history-presidential-determination](http://www.hias.org/blog/video-brief-history-presidential-determination).

<sup>109</sup> Tent Partnership for Refugees, "Mobilizing the Private Sector," accessed July 14, 2018, [www.tent.org/members/](http://www.tent.org/members/).



Foundations and the Rockefeller Foundation are making similar investments.<sup>110</sup> While these pledges were initially made in response to the Syrian refugee crisis in 2016, the current financial stressors underscore their continued significance.

The USRAP is designed to be a public-private partnership, but since the federal refugee resettlement program began, states and providers have relied primarily on federal government funding. In the current context, there are heightened incentives to seek out and expanded private investments in the program, including those from foundations.

## **B. Impacts of Declining Arrivals**

In December 2017, the State Department instructed resettlement agencies that only local programs that expected to resettle 100 or more refugees in FY 2018 were permitted to accept new arrivals. This is meant to reduce costs by consolidating local programs, but in some places, such as Louisiana, the policy has eliminated resettlement programs altogether.<sup>111</sup> In Florida, about half of the state-supervised resettlement offices closed, in addition to several local nonprofit programs.<sup>112</sup> For national resettlement agencies, a loss of R&P funding could mean ineligibility for certain ORR-funded programs because some ORR grant programs, including the MG Program, restrict funding eligibility to resettlement agencies that provide R&P services through a cooperative agreement with the State Department.<sup>113</sup>

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*Previously resettled refugees ... cannot access those services if the resettlement program in their community has been closed.*

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As refugee arrivals and resettlement funding decline, local communities are feeling the impact. Previously resettled refugees, asylees, and other immigrants admitted on humanitarian grounds—groups who remain eligible for employment and social services for up to five years—cannot access those services if the resettlement program in their community has been closed. Lack of access to services makes it more difficult to achieve economic, linguistic, and civic integration.<sup>114</sup> Businesses, including meat packing plants, lumber mills, hotels, and manufacturing companies, that in some parts of the country rely on refugee workers are also finding it more difficult to fill positions.<sup>115</sup>

Declining arrivals could have important implications for efforts to take a two-generation approach to refugee integration. As the refugee resettlement network contracts, refugee services may have fewer resources to focus on integration beyond their mandated core mission of facilitating rapid employment. However, declining arrivals may also allow providers the time and space to redesign services to better meet the needs of whole families for a longer period of time and on broader integration goals. With support from nonfederal partners, there may be opportunities to examine innovative, evidence-based methods of serving entire refugee families.

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110 Philanthropy News Digest, “Soros Pledges to Invest Up to \$500 Million in Migrants, Refugees,” updated September 21, 2016, <https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/news/soros-pledges-to-invest-up-to-500-million-in-migrants-refugees>.

111 Rosenberg, “Exclusive: Dozens of Refugee Resettlement Offices to Close.”

112 Michael Van Sickler, “Trump Administration Helps Close Nearly Half of Florida’s Resettlement Offices, Diverting Refugees to DCF,” *Tampa Bay Times*, April 20, 2018, [www.tampabay.com/florida-politics/buzz/2018/04/20/trump-administration-helps-close-nearly-half-of-floridas-resettlement-offices-diverting-refugees-to-dcf/](http://www.tampabay.com/florida-politics/buzz/2018/04/20/trump-administration-helps-close-nearly-half-of-floridas-resettlement-offices-diverting-refugees-to-dcf/); Ana Ceballos, “Florida Loses Resettlement Offices as Fewer Refugees Arrive,” *Naples Daily News*, April 18, 2018, [www.naplesnews.com/story/news/government/2018/04/18/florida-loses-resettlement-offices-refugee-arrivals-decline/525717002/](http://www.naplesnews.com/story/news/government/2018/04/18/florida-loses-resettlement-offices-refugee-arrivals-decline/525717002/).

113 Resettlement agencies that receive funding from DHS to deliver reception and placement services to paroled Cuban and Haitian entrants are eligible for ORR-funded programs in the same way as those that receive Reception and Placement (R&P) funding from the State Department. See HHS, ORR, “About the Voluntary Agencies Matching Grant Program.”

114 Ibid.

115 Patricia Cohen, “Where Companies Welcome Refugees, the More, the Better,” *The New York Times*, April 1, 2018, [www.nytimes.com/2018/04/01/business/economy/labor-recruit.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/01/business/economy/labor-recruit.html).





### C. Political Context

These recent spending cuts and decreased refugee arrivals are occurring in a contentious political context. For most of its existence, the U.S. refugee resettlement program has enjoyed bipartisan support.<sup>116</sup> But in recent years, that support has split along party lines. Conservative and nativist voices point to national security and economic concerns as arguments against refugee resettlement. More progressive voices emphasize refugees' contributions to the United States, citing their accomplishments in business, military service, and public service as examples. Refugee advocates also point to the increasing global need for resettlement amid large-scale crises of displacement, and the country's legacy of international leadership in this area.

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*Other states that have expressed support for the refugee resettlement program may offer fertile ground for testing promising practices.*

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Some new information has become available about program costs and benefits. A March 2017 White House memo directed a study to assess the long-term costs of the resettlement program at the federal, state, and local levels.<sup>117</sup> An earlier version of the study, never released but leaked to the media, concluded that refugees have a positive net fiscal impact of \$63 billion at the federal, state, and local levels, but the final released version of the study states only that HHS spends more per capita on refugees than on members of the broader U.S. population.<sup>118</sup>

The political tensions surrounding refugee resettlement may pose a challenge in advancing the two-generation approach among state and local human service agencies, especially considering that some state governments have withdrawn from the refugee resettlement program leaving resettlement agencies in charge of statewide coordination.<sup>119</sup> Yet other states that have expressed support for the refugee resettlement program may offer fertile ground for testing promising practices.

## VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

Research and experience point to the potential benefits of adopting a two-generation strategy in refugee resettlement and integration. The examples discussed in this report highlight that aspects of this strategy already exist in a number of states. Even in challenging times, there are steps that the federal government, states, and voluntary organizations can take to advance such efforts.

<sup>116</sup> Stephen Moore and Aaron Harris, "Still the Pro-Immigration Party?" (commentary, Cato Institute, Washington, DC, August 26, 1996), [www.cato.org/publications/commentary/still-proimmigration-party](http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/still-proimmigration-party).

<sup>117</sup> White House, "Implementing Immediate Heightened Screening and Vetting of Applications for Visas and Other Immigration Benefits, Ensuring Enforcement of All Laws for Entry into the United States, and Increasing Transparency Among Departments and Agencies of the Federal Government and for the American People," *Federal Register* 82, no. 62 (April 3, 2017): 16279–81, [www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2017-04-03/pdf/2017-06702.pdf](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2017-04-03/pdf/2017-06702.pdf).

<sup>118</sup> Julie Hirschfeld Davis and Somini Sengupta, "Trump Administration Rejects Study Showing Positive Impact of Refugees," *The New York Times*, September 18, 2017, [www.nytimes.com/2017/09/18/us/politics/refugees-revenue-cost-report-trump.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/18/us/politics/refugees-revenue-cost-report-trump.html).

<sup>119</sup> See, for example, Alexa Ura, "Texas Officially Withdraws from Refugee Resettlement Program," *Texas Tribune*, September 30, 2016, [www.texastribune.org/2016/09/30/texas-officially-withdraws-refugee-resettlement-pr/](http://www.texastribune.org/2016/09/30/texas-officially-withdraws-refugee-resettlement-pr/); Kevin Miller, "LePage Tells Obama that Maine Won't Participate in Refugee Resettlement," *Portland Press Herald*, November 4, 2016, [www.pressherald.com/2016/11/04/lepage-to-obama-maine-wont-participate-in-refugee-resettlement/](http://www.pressherald.com/2016/11/04/lepage-to-obama-maine-wont-participate-in-refugee-resettlement/).

Among the recommendations for the federal government, several have modest budget implications, but none call for large increases in federal funding. That is not because such funding is not needed; rather, these are recommendations that remain viable even in a context where substantial increases in federal funding may be difficult or even impossible.

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*Even in challenging times, there are steps that the federal government, states, and voluntary organizations can take to advance such efforts.*

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For the federal government:

- The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration within the U.S. Department of State should, in consultation with voluntary agencies, review and update the requirements and performance outcome measures for the Reception and Placement Program to establish a two-generation/whole-family approach to services delivered during the initial R&P period. This could involve ensuring that service plans reflect the needs of all family members, that young children are referred to and connected with appropriate early childhood programs, and that appropriate assessments are undertaken to develop plans for school, higher education, and work for older children in families. To the extent that these revisions result in expanded responsibilities for voluntary agencies, the per capita funding for those agencies should be adjusted to reflect those expanded responsibilities.
- The Office of Refugee Resettlement within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services should, in in-depth and ongoing consultation with State Coordinators of Refugee Resettlement, resettlement agencies, and where appropriate, the Association of Refugee Health Coordinators:
  - revise the outcome measures for all ORR-funded refugee benefit and service programs to include both child and adult outcomes, with adult outcomes broadened beyond short-term employment measures;
  - revise the distribution formula for supportive services funding to better reflect the need for continued services to refugee families after initial entry into employment;
  - revise eligibility requirements for school impact grant funding to be used for both younger children and youth above age 18 who are still in school, while also exploring the possibility of supplemental funding to target youth ages 18 to 24;
  - identify current funding streams for which performance data are not publicly available, consider the need for revisions to advance a two-generation approach, and begin to regularly publish program outcome data as part of ORR's *Annual Report to Congress*;
  - develop policy guidance and identify and disseminate relevant research and best practices for refugee resettlement and integration efforts concerning the needs of young and school-age children, including youth arriving near high school graduation age and youth transitioning to adulthood, highlighting opportunities to use existing funding streams and to build partnerships with other state agencies; and
  - coordinate and collaborate with the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education to identify and disseminate key research findings and funding opportunities concerning strategies for promoting employment advancement for low-wage workers.



For statewide refugee resettlement programs, even in the absence of new federal funding or modifications to federal policies, it is possible to take a set of important steps:

- identify existing two-generation initiatives currently ongoing within each state's department responsible for human services and ensure that the refugee resettlement network becomes an active partner in such initiatives;
- reach out to potential early childhood partners—including state Early Learning Council leads, state child care administrators, Head Start collaboration office directors, and agencies responsible for home visiting—to establish relationships and identify areas for potential partnerships in linking families to services and improving the responsiveness of mainstream programs to refugees' needs;
- regularly bring together partners in services to share information and perspectives about the effectiveness of current services, gaps in services, available data, research needs, and strategies for strengthening efforts, including strategies to ensure that different service providers offer complementary rather than duplicative services;
- work with school districts to help them leverage different federal funding to support the broader needs of refugee students (e.g., Title III funds);
- establish a working group of state and nonstate partners to examine existing services for refugee youth transitioning to adulthood, and to identify strategies for strengthening career counseling and guidance, connections to workforce services for youth seeking to enter the labor force, and connections to the community college and state university system for those seeking a postsecondary education;
- examine existing employment services contracts to consider whether they currently have incentives to address better jobs through initial placement, postemployment services, or both, and to the extent that there are not current incentives, develop them;
- develop and implement assessment tools for program services and performance measures that include attention to the needs of all family members;
- if funding is available, lengthen the period for which case management is provided for refugee families and articulate a set of service connections and outcomes appropriate to address the needs of all family members in case management contracts;
- ensure that TANF services are provided through dedicated staff with knowledge appropriate to serving refugee families and that TANF funds remain available to refugees for upgrade assistance after they have entered employment; and
- develop partnerships with state universities or other appropriate research bodies to put in place an ongoing research agenda relating to the needs of all members of resettled refugee families.

For state human service agency leadership:

- identify opportunities to promote partnerships between refugee coordinators and other components of the human services agency, including in child care/early childhood offices, and provide support to strengthen coordination and collaboration with state workforce agencies;
- if the agency is responsible for a broader immigrant integration initiative, ensure that the refugee program is an active partner in that effort; and
- if the agency is initiating or has initiated a two-generation strategy, ensure that the refugee program participates in and benefits from the initiative.



For resettlement agencies:

- identify existing best practices among offices and programs that reflect principles of two generation strategies, and ensure that they are shared across the organization and elevated to the attention of state refugee resettlement programs, both in the state in which they operate and in other states;
- identify instances in which the agency has available data relating to the characteristics of families in need of services, effectiveness of service strategies, or both, and bring attention to these findings;
- identify strategies for coordinating and harmonizing outcome measures for the R&P Program and state refugee resettlement programs, and encourage improved federal coordination between agencies; and
- develop proposals for continued work with families after employment placement and/or for more comprehensive services for all family members, and advocate for state initiatives to adopt such strategies.

In concluding, this study is mindful that across the country, refugee resettlement programs are struggling with the pressures flowing from reduced arrivals and reduced budgets; in many respects, that makes this a difficult time to undertake new initiatives. However, it also underscores the importance of adopting a more extensive and intensive approach capable of supporting entire refugee families as they arrive and begin their lives in the United States.



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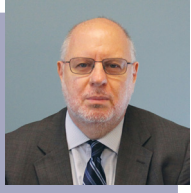
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## About the Authors



**Mark Greenberg** joined the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) as a Senior Fellow in July 2017. His work focuses on the intersections of migration policy with human services and social welfare policies.

From 2009 to 2017, Mr. Greenberg worked at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. He served as ACF Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy from 2009–13; Acting Commissioner for the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families from 2013–15; and Acting Assistant Secretary from 2013–17. ACF includes the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which has responsibility for the refugee resettlement and unaccompanied children program, and has a strong research agenda relating to the programs under its jurisdiction. Among these are a wide range of human services programs, including Head Start, child care, child support, child welfare, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

Previously, Mr. Greenberg was Executive Director of the Georgetown Center on Poverty, Inequality, and Public Policy, a joint initiative of the Georgetown Law Center and Georgetown Public Policy Institute. In addition, he previously was Executive Director of the Center for American Progress' Task Force on Poverty, and the Director of Policy for the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP).

He is a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School, and was a legal services lawyer in Florida and California for ten years after graduating law school.



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Dr. Gelatt previously worked as a Research Associate at the Urban Institute, where her mixed-methods research focused on state policies toward immigrants; barriers to and facilitators of immigrant families' access to public benefits and public prekindergarten programs; and identifying youth victims of human trafficking. She was a Research Assistant at MPI before graduate school.

Dr. Gelatt earned her PhD in sociology, with a specialization in demography, from Princeton University, where her work focused on the relationship between immigration status and children's health and wellbeing. She earned a bachelor of the arts in sociology and anthropology from Carleton College.



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Earlier, Ms. Workie served as the Regional Administrator for ACF, examining the relationships between early childhood development, economic security, and immigrant integration programs. Prior to that, Ms. Workie contributed to ORR as a senior advisor and policymaker. She established the division of refugee health, overseeing several programs and initiatives including the survivors of torture programs, refugee medical assistance and health-care reform, medical screening, health education, and professional recertification. She also partnered with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to conduct a rapid health assessment of Congolese refugees in Rwanda.

Ms. Workie began her career in nonprofit organizations and local government as a social worker, specializing in child and adolescent mental health. She has a bachelor's degree in psychology from James Madison University and a master's degree in social work from Temple University. She serves as the Chair of the WISER Board of Directors and is an executive leadership coach.



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The Migration Policy Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide. MPI provides analysis, development, and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national, and international levels. It aims to meet the rising demand for pragmatic and thoughtful responses to the challenges and opportunities that large-scale migration, whether voluntary or forced, presents to communities and institutions in an increasingly integrated world.

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