

Guidance on Refugee Social Services Funding

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This Policy Letter provides guidance on the use of Refugee Social Services (RSS) funding for additional services under 45 CFR 400.155(h).

Background

A significant number of refugee arrivals are projected for the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2016. As a result, some states may need additional services to adequately meet the needs of these new arrivals, particularly related to housing. A lack of available and affordable housing can create additional barriers to helping ORR-served populations find and retain employment.

Additional Services under 45 CFR 400.155(h)

RSS supports employability services and other services that address barriers to employment, such as social adjustment, interpretation and translation, day care for children, and citizenship and naturalization.

Allowable social services are delineated at 45 CFR 400.154 and 400.155. The regulations at 45 CFR 400.155(h) provide that RSS funding can be used for any additional services aimed at strengthening and supporting the ability of a refugee individual, family, or refugee community to achieve and maintain economic self-sufficiency, family stability, or community integration. Additional services must be demonstrated as effective and must not be available from any other funding source. Services provided under 45 CFR 400.155 must be consistent with the goals and priorities of the refugee program.

Meeting the needs of refugees and other ORR-eligible populations in a manner that promotes economic self-sufficiency is consistent with the goals and priorities of the refugee program. Therefore, ORR interprets the additional services described at 45 CFR 400.155(h) to include services, such as transitional housing assistance, aimed at supporting economic self-sufficiency on occasions when there is an increased number of new arrivals in the fourth quarter of a fiscal year, such as the one projected for this year.

This option applies only if the plan for providing transitional housing assistance: (1) does not substantially result in an absence of funding to provide other crucial employability and support services; (2) directly improves the likelihood of client employment and self-sufficiency; (3) does not supplant other available funding that could be used for the same purpose; and (4) is dispensed according to stringent criteria related to need and time frame for assistance. States should be cognizant of implications for their clients' eligibility for other public assistance programs should transitional or emergency housing assistance count as income.

ORR welcomes submissions to the ORR Director pursuant to 45 CFR 400.155(h) for additional services to meet the needs of refugees and other ORR-served populations. These submissions should include a description of the type of services to be provided and the amount of funding the state proposes to allocate to this service.

If you have questions about the information in this Policy Letter, please contact your Regional Representative.

Robert Carey, Director
Office of Refugee Resettlement