Supporting Unaccompanied Children in the U.S. Communities Where They Live

July 21, 2021

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Today’s Event

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Today’s Event

- **Related Report:**
  Strengthening Services for Unaccompanied Children in U.S. Communities

- **Related Commentaries:**

Today’s Event

• **Related Data:**

  Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors by State and County, FY 2014-Present
Speakers

Essey Workie, Senior Policy Analyst, Migration Policy Institute (MPI)

Mark Greenberg, Senior Fellow and Director of Human Services Initiative, MPI

Stephanie Heredia, Research Assistant, MPI

Matt Haygood, Director of Children’s Services, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

Marcela M. Ruiz, Director of the Office of Equity, California Department of Social Services

Kate Reen, Director of Youth Initiatives, Northern Virginia Family Service
Unaccompanied Children Referrals to ORR, 2021

Unaccompanied Children Referred to Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) since 2010

Source: Strengthening Services for Unaccompanied Children in U.S. Communities, p. 8
Challenges Going Forward

• Improving Conditions in Emergency Intake Sites.

• Getting optimal balance in expediting releases to speed process while minimizing risks to children.

• Building licensed capacity to minimize future reliance on emergency facilities.

• Strengthening services to children and sponsors after release.
For **All Unaccompanied Children**

- 30-day Safety and Well-Being Follow-up/Check-in Call
- Access to a hotline for service referrals

For a **Minority and Certain Qualifying Unaccompanied Children**

- Legal Services
- Post-Release Services, typically for 90 days
1. Legal services are crucial for a child’s case and for links to other services, but federally funded legal services are limited.

2. Schools play an important role as service hubs to link children to community resources.

3. There is a need for improved coordination between shelters, ORR-funded post-release service providers, and other community providers.
1. HHS should ensure the availability of legal representation for all children released from federal custody to parents and other sponsors through a combination of support for pro bono assistance and directly funded services.

2. ORR should extend case management to all children for the first 90 days after they are released from federal custody and identify circumstances in which it should be provided beyond that period.
3. ORR should **strengthen coordination** between 30-day follow-up calls and post-release case management and **ensure additional follow-up** when children cannot be reached in 30-day calls.

4. ORR should require **case consultations** between shelter staff and post-release service providers to strengthen continuity of care.

5. States, localities, and philanthropic organizations should **identify service gaps and seek to provide funding** to fill those gaps.
Matt Haygood
Director of Children Services, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)
USCRI’S HOME STUDY AND POST RELEASE SERVICES

MATT HAYGOOD, LICSW
Director of Children’s Services
571-390-6600
mhaygood@uscridc.org
www.refugees.org
HOME STUDY AND POST RELEASE SERVICES

- USCRI is one of eight grantees under the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) who provide these services nationally

Home Studies
A home study is an in-depth investigation of a potential sponsor’s ability to ensure a child’s safety and well-being. The process includes background checks of the sponsor and adult household members, a home visit(s), a face-to-face sponsor interview, interviews with other household members, and an interview with the child.

Post Release Services
ORR provides post-release services for children who would benefit from ongoing assistance by a social service agency. These services include assistance in connecting children and their sponsors to community-based resources and monitoring the safety and stability of the placement.
## USCRI’S POST RELEASE SERVICES (PRS)

The goal is that children are safe, their developmental needs are met, and they have the resources to thrive in their new community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home visitation model</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support the child and family during the transition, monitor the placement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connect the family to affordable and culturally-appropriate mental health, medical, legal and other services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assist with school enrollment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocate for the child and caregiver and address barriers to services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate the child and sponsor and build upon their strengths</td>
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KEY LESSONS LEARNED

• Arrival (Honeymoon phase) > Long-term Needs

• Resources are non-existent or not accessible in many places

• We are not adequately addressing mental health and legal needs

• Need for increased research to develop evidence-based practices

• Outcomes are worse when PRS is not provided immediately upon release

• Sponsors overwhelmingly want and appreciate the services
SURGE OF 2021

- Not enough service providers to meet the need
  - COVID complications

- Timeliness is prioritized over safety

- Needs are not identified or addressed while in care

- Trauma experienced in Emergency Intake Sites
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All children should receive PRS

2. Federal government needs to fund more direct services post release (mental health, legal, medical, etc.)

3. Build capacity of local governments to meet the needs of unaccompanied children (school systems, child welfare)
Marcela M. Ruiz
Director of the Office of Equity, California Department of Social Services
California’s Unaccompanied Children Programs

Marcela Ruiz
Office of Equity
California Department of Social Services
UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN IN CALIFORNIA

- 2\textsuperscript{nd} or 3\textsuperscript{rd} greatest number of placements
- Across 17 counties
  - Los Angeles (1,731)
  - Alameda (301)
  - Fresno (162)
- Urban and rural
- Northern Triangle
Unaccompanied Children Integration

- Family Integration
- Immigration Status
- Resources Capacity Infrastructure
- Social Emotional Support
- Education
- Workforce
CALIFORNIA PROGRAMS

• Legal Services

• California Newcomer Education and Well-Being (CalNEW)

• Opportunities for Youth (OFY)

Marvin Cornejo came from El Salvador to the United States when he was 16 years old and Mendota alone and not speaking English. Now he is attending Fresno State and working to degree, pre-med. He is among many unaccompanied minors looking for a better life in the KOHLRUSS CKOHLRUSS@FRESNOBEE.COM
<table>
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<tr>
<th>RESOURCES FOR UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal Services (2014-15)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• $3 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 20 providers</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Full scope legal representation and technical assistance (Vera Institute)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>California Newcomer Education and Well-Being (CalNEW)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• $10 million (expanded to $15 million)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 12 school districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Services: academic enrichment; civic engagement; community partnerships; consumer education; employment pathways; youth and family engagement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Evaluation and technical assistance (forthcoming)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Opportunities for Youth (OFY)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• $5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 8 non-profit providers</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Services: case management, service navigation, mentorship, and family support workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Evaluation and technical assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>State Unaccompanied Minor Coordinator</strong></td>
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Kate Reen
Director of Youth Initiatives,
Northern Virginia Family Service (NVFS)
NVFS & Unaccompanied Children

Youth Initiatives Programs:

- The Family Reunification Program
- VPIP – Violence Prevention and Intervention Program
- The IPE Gang Prevention Program
- TVAP Provider
Other NVFS Programs serving Unaccompanied Minors:

- Healthy Families
- Multicultural information, referral, and case management
- Immigration Legal Services
- Health Access
- Hunger Resource Center
- COVID-19 Crisis Case Management
NVFS & Unaccompanied Children

Individual and Family Services
- Therapeutic case management
- Trauma informed home visiting mental health services

Group Based Services
- Psychoeducational groups and workshops for youth
- Workshops for Parents

Community Outreach and Education Services
- Educational presentations to service providers, school staff, parent groups and other community members on effective strategies and enhancing community response to youth exposed to violence and experiencing reunification.
NVFS & Unaccompanied Children

• Population Specific Program Design
  - Cultural Navigation
  - Tangible & Intangible Accessibility
  - Trauma Informed

• Continuum of Services

• Timing & Intensity of Services

• Collaboration
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For More Information

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