



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

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12/17/2015

Ms. Lorraine Hunter, State Refugee Coordinator
Division of Family and Children Services
750 North State Street
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

Dear Ms. Hunter,

We are pleased to inform you that the 2016 State Plan for the Mississippi Refugee Resettlement Program is approved. Based on our review, your Plan is in compliance with the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) regulations per 45 CFR Part 400.

We appreciate the work of your office to successfully resettle refugees in Mississippi and we look forward to continuing our partnership with the Mississippi Refugee Resettlement Program.

If you have any questions pertaining to this approval letter, please contact Faith Hurt, your Regional Representative, at Faith.Hurt@acf.hhs.gov or Carl Rubenstein, Director, the Division of Refugee Assistance, at Carl.Rubenstein@acf.hhs.gov.

Sincerely,

Robert Carey
Director
Office of Refugee Resettlement



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
Phil Bryant, Governor
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
Richard A. Berry, Executive Director

MISSISSIPPI STATE PLAN
FOR
REFUGEE ASSISTANCE AND SERVICES

FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2016

For

Office of Refugee Resettlement
Administration for Children and Families
United States Department of Health and Human Services

To

Meet the Requirements of Title IV
of the
Immigration and Nationality Act
In accordance with 45 CFR Part 400

State of Mississippi
Division of Family and Children's Services
Refugee Unit
750 North State Street
Jackson, Mississippi 39202

August 2015

Refugee Resettlement Plan
In Accordance with 45 CFR Part 400

The Refugee Resettlement Plan for Mississippi is designed to promote productive resettlement and self-sufficiency for refugee participants. The categories to which services will be provided include, but not limited to; asylees, Cuban/Haitians entrants and Victims of Trafficking who have been certified by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the intent of the program to provide services in a timely manner after entrance into Mississippi. Services to be provided to refugee participants by the State include cash assistance, medical assistance and support services. Refugees will become self-reliant with the assistance of our two resettlement agencies located in Jackson, MS and Biloxi, MS. Resources are provided to meet their basic needs related to English language, skills training, employment, medical card and social and cultural adjustment. It is Mississippi's goal to promote economic self-sufficiency by providing gainful employment in jobs paying minimum wages or better.

I. ADMINISTRATION

A. Authority

On August 20, 1980, the governor of Mississippi designated the Mississippi Department of Public Welfare, now known as the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS), as the agency to administer funds under the Refugee Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-121). Within MDHS, the Executive Director has designated the Division of Family and Children's Services as the Division directly responsible for administering the program. The State Refugee Coordinator is charged with coordination of public and private resources in refugee resettlement. Mississippi's Refugee Program is statewide. There are two resettlement agencies located in Mississippi: Catholic Charities of Jackson located at 200 North Congress Street, Suite 100, Jackson MS; the other is Catholic Charities of Biloxi's Migration and Refugee Center located at 425B Division Street, Biloxi MS.

B. Organization

The State Refugee Coordinator is located within Mississippi's Department of Human Services (MDHS), Division of Family and Children's Services (DFCS).

The Refugee Coordinator is responsible to the Division Director II; the Division Director II is responsible to the Bureau Director; the Bureau Director is responsible to the Office Director; the Office Director is responsible to the Deputy Administrator; the Deputy Administrator is responsible to the Executive Director of Mississippi Department of Human Services who is appointed by the Governor as his designee.

MDHS is responsible for TANF, SNAP benefits, cash assistance, medical assistance, child welfare services and adoption assistance.

The Refugee Resettlement Program consists of one full time position; the State Refugee Coordinator.

Refugee Resettlement Program policy, standards, procedures and instructions are provided by State Letters, electronic transmittal, manual and memorandums.

The State Refugee Coordinator will conduct monitoring and evaluation of the social services annually with the social service contracted agencies. The results are shared with the Office of Refugee Resettlement when required. The Refugee Coordinator will also conduct annual monitoring of services provided by the county Department of Family and Children's Services.

The Department of Human Services' Refugee Program is federally funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement and administered through contracted resettlement agencies.

C. Assurances

- a. The State of Mississippi Plan assures it will comply with the provisions of Title IV, Chapter 2 of the Immigration & Nationality Act, the Refugee Act of 1980 and official issuance by the Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) §400.5 (i) (1).
- b. The state assures it will meet requirements § 400.5 (i) (2).
- c. The State will comply with all applicable Federal statutes and regulations in effect during the time that it is receiving grant funding § 400.5 (i) (3).
- d. The plan will be amended as needed to comply with ORR standards, goals and priorities established by the Director of the ORR § 400.5 (i) (4).

- e. The State assures provision of services to all refugees without regard to race, religion, nationality, sex or political opinion § 400.5 (g).
- f. The State assures it will convene planning meetings of public/private sector at least quarterly, unless exempt by ORR § 400.5 (h).
- g. The State will use the same mediation/conciliation procedure as those for TANF if a publicly administered RCA program § 400.83 (a) (2).
- h. The State will use the hearing standards and procedures as set forth in § 400.83 (b).
- i. The State provides assurance that refugee programs and populations are included in the State Pandemic Influenza Emergency Plan and other emergency operational plans (SL#09-30 and SL# 06-10).

II. ASSISTANCE AND SERVICES

A. The State will coordinate CMA with support services to promote employment and encourage refugee economic self-sufficiency as specified in § 400.5.

B. Mississippi links the provision of CMA to refugees with their willingness to accept employment or training designed to lead to employment, as specified in § 400.5 (c) and applies sanctions in cases where recipients refuses to register and/or accept appropriate employment, including entry level and minimum wage jobs. Eligibility workers at the county identify any barriers to employment, i.e. language.

C. Refugee Cash Assistance

1. The State elects the option to provide the publicly Administered Refugee Cash Assistance program. The State will operate its Refugee Cash Assistance Program consistent with the provisions of Mississippi's TANF program. Financial assistance for refugees through RCA, regardless of family composition will be based on Mississippi's TANF need standards with income taken into consideration on same basis as non-refugee recipients. Refugee household's eligibility is based on the following elements; residency, age/relationship, enumeration, citizenship/alien status and income. Individuals who are eligible for TANF are automatically eligible for Medicaid.

Refugee household's eligibility is based on the following elements; residency, age/relationship, enumeration, citizenship/alien status and income. Individuals who

are eligible for TANF are automatically eligible for Medicaid §400.65(b). Refugee Cash Assistance is available to refugees under the Refugee Resettlement Program. Refugees cannot receive both Refugee Cash Assistance and TANF benefits. Refugee Cash Assistance is determined based on Mississippi's TANF standards. A family unit is considered as one or more adults and children, blood related or by law, that reside in the same household. When adults other than spouses reside together, each one will be considered a separate household. A refugee's income and resources will be considered on the same bases as TANF and payments are the same as Mississippi TANF payment levels.

- a. Determination of initial and on-going eligibility, are based on income and qualifying deductions as used by Mississippi TANF guidelines. §400.66 (a) (1)
- b. Determination of benefit amounts Both TANF and RCA payments are the same in Mississippi, legal maximums for TANF and RCA; \$110.00 for first person, additional \$36 for second person, \$24.00 addition for third or ongoing persons. §400.66 (a) (2). This covers both 1 and 2.

- 1 Person \$110.00
- 2 Persons \$146.00
- 3 Persons \$170.00
- 4 Persons \$194.00
- 5 Persons \$218.00

- c. Proration of shelter, utilities and similar needs must be considered to get a perception of an individual's ability to meet present an ongoing expenses. §400.66(a) (3)
- d. TANF caseworker will determine if refugee is eligible for TANF benefits. If not eligible for TANF, RCA benefits are determined according to the State's requirements. The State will determine any other State TANF rules related to financial eligibility and payments §400.66(a) (4)
- e. Caseworker will not consider resources remaining in the applicant's country of origin §400.66(b)
- f. Caseworker will not consider sponsor's income and resources as assessable to the refugee solely because the person is serving as a sponsor §400.66(C)
- g. State will not consider any cash grant received by the applicant under the Department of State or Department of Justice Reception and Placement Program §400.66 (d)

- h. State will use date of application as the date RCA begins (not required). Eligibility for both RCA and RMA begins the month of arrival and lasts for eight (8) months §400.66 (e)
- i. State will notify promptly local resettlement agency whenever refugee apply for RCA §400.68 (a)
- j. State will contact applicant's sponsor or local resettlement agency at time of application for RCA concerning offers of employment, etc. §400.68 (b)
- k. State will stay within prescribed assistance and budget levels in Public - Private programs §400.60
- l. State does not provide any type of differentials or incentive payments.
- m. As a condition for receipt of Refugee Cash Assistance a non-exempt refugee must be registered for work with the local employment service. Such Refugees must apply for, accept, or continue with the appropriate offer of employment or employment related training, and participate in any available and appropriate social service program providing job or language training in the area in which the refugee resides § 400.76 (b)
- n. The State meets the requirements regarding Limited English Proficient (LEP) Guidance and Language Materials. Each resettlement agency provides translations of written policy, notices, and determinations in the refugee's language. When no written policy or notices are available, translators are available to translate the written information to refugee. This is available in both public/private RCA programs and publicly-administered programs § 400.55

2. RCA Program Administration 45 CFR § 400.13

- a. RCA eligibility is done by State TANF office staff. (SL #12-13, SL #13-03)
- b. RCA benefit distribution is done by State TANF staff (SL #12-13, SL #13-03)
- c. The State has worker allocated from the TANF staff to process all RCA requests (SL #12-13, SL #13-03)

- d. The State has one full-time staff member assigned to RCA Administration for RCA distribution (SL #12-13, SL #13-03)
- e. There is no indirect cost being charged. The State only charges the actual time spent working on CMA (SL #12-13, SL #13-03)

Factors-Financial Assistance

The same criterion for eligibility in TANF applies to applicants for refugee cash assistance, with the exceptions of deprivation and specified degree of relationship. Children in the refugee household do not have to be deprived of a parent or be living with a specific relative in order to receive refugee cash assistance. Single individuals applying for refugee cash assistance may be eligible for benefits by meeting all the other eligibility factors

Residence

State may not impose requirements as to duration of residence as a condition of participation in the State's program for the provision of assistance or service.

Children's residence is determined by the parent or the adult responsible for them.

Age/Relationship

Age and relationship may be verified by using the I-94 or other documents in the refugee's possession which reflect age and relationship and appear reasonable under the circumstances. When the refugee has no written record of any kind to use as a support document, the refugee's statement regarding family relationship should be accepted unless there is reason to doubt the validity of such a declaration.

Mississippi does not have any type of differentials or incentive payments at this time.

Refugees who have been approved for SNAP through the county office may have already registered for work. If so, no further action regarding work registration for refugee is required. §400.76 (b)

English Language Instruction – English as a Second Language classes, General Equivalency Diploma classes and Test of English for Foreign Language (TOEFL) preparation are all part of the adult education program. Beginning, intermediate

and advance classes are offered in both the day and evening. All are designed to relate to obtaining and retaining a job. §400.55

For refugees determined ineligible for cash assistance under the TANF Program, the State or its designee must determine eligibility for refugee cash assistance in accordance with § 400.53 and § 400.59.

Eligibility for refugee cash assistance is limited to those who:

Are new arrivals who have resided in the U.S. less than the RCA eligibility period determined by the ORR Director in accordance with § 400.211;

Are ineligible for TANF, SSI, OAA, AB, APTD and AABD programs;

Meet immigration status and identification requirements in subpart D of this or are the dependent children of and part of the same family until as, individuals who meet the requirements in subpart D, subject to the limitation in § 200.208 with respect to non refugee children; and

Not full-time students in institutions of higher education, as defined by ORR Director.

A refugee may be eligible for cash assistance under this subpart during a period to be determined by the ORR Director in accordance with § 400.211.

Each individual refugee age 18 or over will have his/her application processed as an individual unless he/she is the parent of minor children. One application will be processed for parents and minor children. A minor child who was born to a refugee family after entry into the United States can be included in the refugee assistance group of the parent although the child is actually a citizen of the United States. RCA payments are determined the same as TANF benefit levels regarding maximums based on household size.

Reporting Changes

The State will determine what specific exemptions, if any, are appropriate for the recipients of a time limited RCA program. They are as follows:

The refugee is responsible for reporting to the county any changes in income, resources, living arrangements, etc., which will change the amount or status of his/her, assistance.

Any changes reported by a refugee must be relayed by the county office to State Operations. Such changes could include obtaining employment, increased earnings, receipt of other financial assistance, persons moving in or out of the home, or obtaining resources. In accepting the initial application for assistance, the county office is responsible for explaining to the refugee the requirement to report such changes.

Upon determination that the amount of the RCA payment will be changed or that the refugee is no longer eligible for financial assistance, State Operations will notify the refugee in writing of this change. Refugee Social Services (RSS) 45 CFR Part §400.140

Cash assistance, medical assistance, SNAP and TANF are all offered through the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

Employability Services provided by the Resettlement Agency assists with developing a plan for family self-sufficiency and an individual employability plan, job workshops, job development, referrals to job opportunities, job placement and follow-up.

Resettlement agency coordinates with employers to complete employability assessment services which include aptitude and skills testing. Resettlement agency and employer coordinate an on the job training when the employment site is expected to result in full time or permanent employment.

English language instruction with emphasis on English as it relates to obtaining and retaining a job.

They offer vocational training including driver education and training when provided as part of individual's employability plan. They also offer welding training.

When necessary, day care for children and transportation for participant in an employability service for acceptance or employment retention is offered.

The Resettlement Agency provides translation and interpreter services when necessary in connection with employment or participation in an employability service.

Resettlement Agency assists participant in obtaining Employment Authorization Documents (EADs).

The State also provides participants information and referral services. Case management is available for participants for purposes other than employment or in employability.

The Resettlement Agency has an outreach services which include activities designed to familiarize refugees with available services and to explain the purpose of the services.

The Resettlement Agency offers social adjustment services to participants.

Emergency services are not limited to short-term counseling to persons or families in crisis; referrals to appropriate resources and making arrangements for necessary service are available to participants.

Health related services are available to participants who need assistance with scheduling appointments and obtaining services. They can assist in counseling to individuals or families to help them understand and identify their physical and mental health needs and maintain or improve their physical and mental needs.

Home management services are also available. The ability to provide formal or informal instructions to individuals or families in management of household budgets, home maintenance, nutrition, housing standards tenants' rights as well as other consumer education services.

The Resettlement Agency also provides citizenship and naturalization preparation services which includes English language training and Civics instruction to prepare refugees for citizenship. They also provide application assistance for adjustment to legal permanent resident status and citizenship status. They assist disabled refugees in obtaining disability waivers from English and Civics requirements for naturalization and provide interpreter services for citizenship interview.

D. Refugee Medical Assistance and Refugee

Unfortunately at this time, Mississippi does not have a State Refugee Health Coordinator. Mississippi automatically gives Medicaid to all refugees who are eligible for cash assistance. The same TANF requirements apply for Refugee Medicaid.

1. Mississippi's refugees are given the opportunity to apply for medical assistance. § 400.93 Refugees who are eligible for Cash Assistance are automatically eligible for eight months Medicaid.

- a. Refugees contact the Resettlement Agency and make the request for RMA. The agency will contact Refugee Coordinator of the request and provide the necessary documentation to submit to the Division of Medicaid §400.94
 - a. DFCS has coordinated with Mississippi Division of Medicaid to provide medical and prescription services to adult refugees and their families once eligible for assistance. Refugee Medical Assistance grants is used to reimburse the Division of Medicaid for services provided §SL # 13-10
 - b. State Refugee Coordinator is responsible for Medicaid reimbursement to the Division of Medicaid twice a year. The reimbursement invoices are submitted to Refugee Coordinator in January and July of each year by the Division of Medicaid.
2. Financial Eligibility Standards § 400.101, Consecration of Income and Resources

Once participants are verified on the invoice, an itemized statement is provided to document services and prescriptions during the report periods; January through June and July through December. At that time the reimbursement is disbursed to the Division of Medicaid.

Refugees are required to report changes in income and address in ten days of said change. The refugees receive screenings with their personal providers of choice. Their vision, hearing and physical examinations are covered by Medicaid. Refugee youths immunization shots are also covered by Mississippi Medicaid.

Refugee Medical Assistance is determined by utilizing the previous two semi-annual invoices received from the MS Division of Medicaid. Clients were extracted from the report based on the individual clients receiving services. An average monthly cost was determined by combining the total amount of reimbursements for each individual client, divided by the months for which services were received. A combined total of all client monthly averages are divided by the number of clients served.

- Because the State has an agreement with the Division of Medicaid to be reimbursed for all Medicaid Services incurred by refugees, not based on income or resources; all other categories for # 2 through 6 d are covered in the agreement. This will cover §400.102, § 400.104, § 400.105, § 400.406, § 400.107, § 400.5 (f) and SL # 12-09

7. RMA Direct Cost

- a. Mississippi has no direct cost.
- c. Mississippi has no Health Coordinator

E. Refugee Medical Screening Program (RMS) 45 CFR Part § 400.107

Medicaid screening is done as approved for Medicaid. Refugees select a physician of their choice who accepts Medicaid.

The states Mental Health Screen if needed, is done on a referral bases.

F. Refugee Social Services

In conjunction with Texas A&M and the Bureau of Marine Resources, Fishing Vessel Drill Conductor Training is provided to the commercial shrimper and fisherman. A large number of refugees on the coast work in the fishing industry.

English Language Instruction – English as a Second Language classes, General Equivalency Diploma classes and Test of English for Foreign Language (TOEFL) preparation are all part of the adult education program. Beginning, intermediate and advanced classes are offered in both the day and evening. All are designed to relate to obtaining and retaining a job.

Translation and interpreter services – The contracted agency assists clients with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Outreach services. The regular services include English Language Training and Citizenship Preparation classes to help clients prepare for the USCIS test and interview; guidance in compiling the necessary personal documents required by USCIS; taking photographs and photo copying of residency cards and other documents; writing letters; Notary Public services; interpretation and translation services; filling out USCIS forms and referral services to providers in the community such as the local immigration attorney and area doctors. Caseworkers also assist refugees in the USCIS office in New Orleans, Louisiana whenever there is a need for interpretation and translation assistance.

Other services include:

Information and referral services – information about services are provided both orally and written in English, Vietnamese and Spanish. The contracted agency also

regularly meets with other agencies within the contract area to coordinate services. Resettlement agencies will provide interpreters for all other languages.

Emergency services – will include assessment and short-term counseling to persons or families in a perceived crisis with referral to the appropriate resources.

Health related services - including information, referral to appropriate resources, assistance in scheduling appointments and obtaining services, counseling to individuals or families to help them understand and identify their health needs and maintain or improve their health.

Other services- Child and family strengthening services are provided by staff members to the youth of the Vietnamese community. Workers provide an array of services including reading classes at the local library for the younger children, interpretation if families or youth are involved in the juvenile or family court system and contact with the police department to teach about the dangers of drugs in the community.

G. Cuban/ Haitian Entrant Program

The State of Mississippi, Department of Human Services will continue to apply the same standards and criteria to Cuban/Haitian entrants as are used to determine eligibility for Refugee Cash Assistance, Refugee Medical Assistance and social services for other eligible refugees. We will follow the guidelines with respect to Title V of the Refugee Educational Assistance Act of 1980, (Pub. L. No. 96 – 422) and supporting regulations and directives of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) at 45 CFR 401.

H. Unaccompanied Refugee Children

Presence of Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program

Mississippi receives Federal Funds from the Office of Refugee Resettlement to operate the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) Program. This program is 100% federally funded.

Administrative Structure and State Oversight

The State has implemented a monitoring tool and will do an annual on-site review with both Catholic Charities and county office. The review will involve Refugee Coordinator providing both agencies with a random selection of files to be reviewed. State Coordinator will review for all pertinent documentation to insure

Office of Refugee Resettlement requirements are being met. If a deficiency is discovered, a corrective action recommendation will be made. Catholic Charities provides both the state and county with monthly progress reports, Cultural activities and case management. They are to provide the state and county with Serious Incident Reports (SIRs) when necessary.

Oversight of the program is assigned to Refugee Coordinator, state staff and fiscal staff. All youth cases in the Division of Family and Children's Services foster care program are presented to a Foster Care Review panel which will address youth's specific needs and address the case plan for the next six months. All cases are presented to Youth Court Judge annually for review and the agency's recommendation for youth's expectancy to be released from custody. Findings will be submitted to Refugee Coordinator.

Assurances

The Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children's Services, provide for the care and supervision and legal responsibility for unaccompanied refugee minors entering the State. This process is coordinated with the State's Refugee Coordinator and Catholic Charities of Jackson, MS or Biloxi, MS, our contracted partner for the Refugee Program.

The State of Mississippi's Division of Family and Children's Services has legal responsibility for the youths participating in the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) program. All judicial proceedings are handled through the Hinds County Youth Court. The County office of Division of Family and Children's Services will assume legal responsibility.

The State assumes program accountability for all aspects of the program, including fiscal and program reporting.

URM youths are eligible for all foster care services and other support services provided to other youths in Division of Family and Children's Services custody. The same welfare standards, practices and procedures apply to the refugee youths. These services include foster care board payments, Medicaid and social services.

Catholic Charities shall provide culturally appropriate substitute/foster care services for the URM youth placed in a group home, a foster family home and/or a supervised independent living apartment placement based upon eligibility requirements established by the MDHS Foster Care Policy Manual and federal regulations published in the Federal Register, June 28, 1995.

Catholic Charities shall maintain a case file on each URM youth. A case plan will be included in the case file within 30 days and updated every six months. The MDHS shall have access to all case files.

Legal custody is maintained by the State of Mississippi up to the age of 20 or 21 when ordered by the Chancery Court. Hinds County Department of Human Services maintains case files on each minor and reviews appropriateness of placement and services through the Foster Care Review County Conferences.

Hinds County Division of Family and Children Services will have the responsibility of developing an ongoing service plan for the URM youth. The staff will develop and implement a plan for care and supervision of all youth participants. Case plans will be updated every six months.

Case records on the progress and status of URM youth including last known address of parents and a tracking system will be maintained in the County Office.

Individual cases of unaccompanied minors placed in therapeutic foster homes, group homes and Independent Living apartments will be monitored by the County Office. County worker will address needs of the child as well as care given by foster parent. Case Workers are required to make two (2) visits each month with the child and the foster parent. Board payments are made according to the state policy on foster care.

URM service providers are licensed according to MDHS, Division of Family and Children's Services and the Department of Mental Health requirements, when there is a therapeutic component to be met.

State, County and Catholic Charities meet on a monthly basis to discuss policy, status and any request needed for the program. We have implemented an in-house partnership agreement to share all parties' responsibilities.

Legal Responsibility

Mississippi's process of establishing legal responsibility begins when the county worker is notified of youths' arrival date. The County worker coordinates with Catholic Charities a designated point of contact for the county worker to make physical contact with the youth. At this point the worker will contact Youth Court to request a verbal order to bring the youth into custody. A shelter hearing will be conducted in forty-eight (48) hours for the youth. Legal responsibility is then given to the MDHS, Division of Family and Children's Services.

Hinds County Youth Court will maintain oversight for URM youth until age eighteen (18). If the youth requests to remain in the Refugee Program after his/her eighteenth (18th) birthday, a Chancery Court Order will be requested to keep them up to age twenty-one (21).

Eligibility

Mississippi's Unaccompanied Refugee Program will provide services to all eligible populations; Refugees, Asylees, Cuban/Haitian entrants, Amerasians, Victims of Human Trafficking, Special Immigrant Juveniles and U Visa Holders.

Foster Care and other placement services end when youth reaches age eighteen. If youth desires to remain in custody after age eighteen, the County worker must obtain a Chancery Order to allow the extension.

Factors that can trigger eligibility termination: the youth can request termination from the program voluntarily at age eighteen, pending he/she exhibits signs that they can provide self-sufficiently or when a family member is located within the United States, youth can be reunified with them.

Mississippi has made provisions for former foster children to return to placement and/or services.

The Independent Living Program is not ORR funded in Mississippi. The program assists adolescents in acquired basic life skills in the process toward self-sufficiency. This program does not exclude the refugee youth. Independent Living services are based on the following criteria:

Youth who leave DFCS custody at age eighteen (18) through ages twenty-one (21) are eligible for aftercare services up to age twenty-one (21).

Youth who leave custody after age twenty-one (21), but are enrolled in post-secondary educational and vocational programs may be eligible for the Educational and Training Voucher (ETV) Program.

Youth in foster care ages fourteen (14) through twenty (20) regardless of the permanency plan, is given the opportunity to participate in the Independent Living Program.

Unaccompanied minors are not generally eligible for adoption since family reunification is the objective of the program. In certain cases, adoption may be permitted pursuant to adoption laws in the State, provided the court finds that:

adoption would be in the best interest of the youth; there is a termination of parental rights (example in situations where the parents are dead or missing and presumed dead) as determined by State court. When adoption occurs, the child's status as an unaccompanied minor terminates.

Mississippi will provide unaccompanied minors with the same range of child welfare benefits and services as available to other children in custody of the State. Allowable benefits and services include foster care board payments, personal and clothing allowances, medical assistance and support services.

Case planning for unaccompanied minors will address the following elements:

- Family reunification;
- Appropriate placement of the unaccompanied youth in a foster home, group home, residential facility, supervised independent living or other setting as deemed appropriate in meeting the best interest and special needs of the child;
- Health screening and treatment and provides medical and dental examinations for all necessary medical and dental treatment;
- Orientation testing and counseling to facilitate the adjustment of the child to American culture will be available;
- Preparation for participation in American society with emphasis upon English language instruction and occupational as well as cultural training as necessary to facilitate the child's social integration and prepare the child for independent living and economic self-sufficiency;
- Mississippi will preserve the youths' ethnic and religious heritage;
- The State assures that cases will be reviewed every six months for continuing appropriateness of living arrangements and services.

Permanency planning is ongoing and begins as soon as DFCS receives a report of child abuse or neglect, and continues through every stage of service even when the child is not removed from the home.

Reasonable efforts to finalize an alternate permanency plan may be made concurrently with reasonable efforts to reunify the youth and family and that

reasonable efforts to place the youth for adoption or with a legal guardian, including identifying appropriate in-state and out-of-state placements.

After initial placement of an unaccompanied youth, the same procedures that govern the movement of non-refugee foster care participants will apply to the movement of unaccompanied youths to other States.

The State assures the following Acts will be enforced when necessary in the URM Program:

TRAFFICKING VICTIMS PROTECTION ACT OF 2000

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) defines “Severe Forms of Trafficking in Persons” as:

Sex Trafficking: the recruitment, harboring, transporting, provision, or obtaining a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act , in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person forced to perform such an act is under the age of 18 years; or **Labor Trafficking:** the recruitment, harboring, transporting, provision, or obtaining a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery.

he TVPA makes adult victims of severe forms of trafficking who are not U.S. citizens or Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) and who have been certified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) eligible for benefits and services under any Federal or State program or activity to the same extent as refugees.

Certification provides foreign victims of trafficking with the necessary documentation to be eligible to receive benefits and services they may need to rebuild their lives in the United States. Victims of trafficking who are U.S. citizens do not need to be certified to receive benefits.

To receive certification, victims of trafficking must:

- Be a victim of a severe form of trafficking, as defined by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA)
- Be willing to assist in every reasonable way in the investigation and prosecution of severe forms of trafficking or be unable to cooperate due to physical or psychological trauma; and
- Have completed a bona fide application for a T visa that has not been denied; **or**

- Have received continued presence status from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in order to contribute to the prosecution of human traffickers.

Once they have met the certification requirements listed above, victims of trafficking will receive an official letter of certification from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). Foreign child victims of trafficking (under the age of 18) do not need to be certified in order to receive services and benefits. ORR will issue a letter stating that a child is a victim of a severe form of trafficking and is therefore eligible for benefits.

TRAFFICKING VICTIMS PROTECTION REAUTHORIZATION ACT of 2008

An individual may request, on behalf of a child, eligibility for federally funded benefits and services from ORR when the individual has credible information the child may have been subjected to a severe form of trafficking in persons.

The information provided through the submission of a “Request for Assistance for Child Victims of Human Trafficking” enables ORR to make determinations regarding the eligibility of these children for the same benefits and services available to refugees, and to assess and address potential child protection issues.

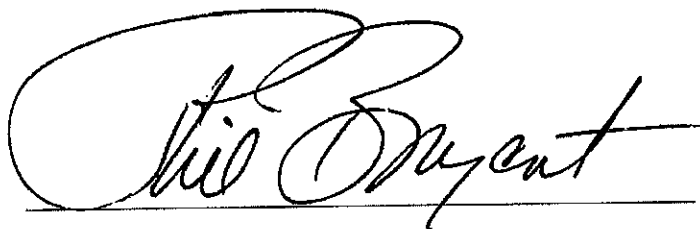
ORR may provide an Interim Assistance Letter if ORR receives credible information that a child may have been subjected to trafficking. For cases in which ORR has issued an Interim Assistance Letter, ORR will consult with DOJ, DHS, and nongovernmental organizations with expertise in victims of trafficking prior to

making a determination of the child's eligibility as a victim of trafficking. A child is not required to cooperate with law enforcement as a condition for receiving a letter of eligibility

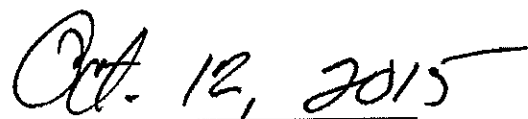
THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2013

A child who has been granted U status by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) eligible for the Office of Refugee Resettlement's (ORR) Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) program, provided that the child meets all other eligibility requirements.

The U nonimmigrant status (U visa) is set aside for victims of crimes who have suffered substantial mental or physical abuse and are willing to assist law enforcement and government officials in the investigation or prosecution of the criminal activity.



Phil Bryant, Governor
State of Mississippi



Date