ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Office of Refugee Resettlement | 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20201
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Youth Mentoring Program

Policy Letter 22-09

Initially published November 10, 2021;
Revised December 8, 2021[1]
Revised January 27, 2025 [2]

This policy letter (PL) defines the Refugee Support Services set-aside program, Youth Mentoring (YM),[3] which provides states[4] funding to match eligible youth with mentors who will support successful integration and help the youth to thrive. This PL supersedes ORR PL 19-02, providing guidance regarding the YM program's eligible populations, goals, services, and reporting and monitoring requirements. For information about funding allocations, see the relevant fiscal year Dear Colleague Letter(s) on YM funding allocations on the ORR website.

Eligible Populations

YM program services may be provided to all ORR-eligible individuals[5] [6] between the ages of 15 and 24. States may provide services to ORR-eligible youth within the first 5 years of their arrival or date of eligibility, but should prioritize services for those who have been in the United States for 1 year or less and for those requiring additional academic, vocational, social, or emotional support.

Program Goals and Services

The YM program's goals are to promote positive civic and social engagement and support individual educational and vocational advancement for ORR-eligible youth. To accomplish these goals, states will fund the matching of eligible youth with positive adult mentors (one-on-one or in a group) who will provide the youth with positive personalized interaction. States will also fund the provision of case management to support educational and career development.

To accomplish these goals, a state must provide the following YM services in accordance with 45 C.F.R. Part 400 and are required to ensure that it or its subrecipient agencies:

1. Provide case management, to begin by performing an initial assessment of the needs and goals of the youth.
2. Develop a plan to meet those needs through educational and vocational services and social services and activities.
3. Refer the youth, and facilitate the youth's access, to the relevant services and activities.
4. Document services provided and activities.
5. Assess the progress of each youth toward meeting their needs and goals.
6. Recruit mentors, including members of relevant ethnic communities, as possible.
7. Screen out potential mentors who may present risks to the youth, as indicated by such factors as a

[1] The two December 8, 2021 revisions are annotated and are described within footnotes 5 and 6.

[2] January 27, 2025: Removed former section on equity and inclusion

[3] Pursuant to section 412(c) of the Refugee Act (8 U.S.C. 1522(c)), Congress authorized the Director of ORR (hereinafter "Director") to enter into contracts to provide services to address specific needs recognized by the Director.

[4] Throughout this PL, states refer to states and replacement designees that receive RSS funding from ORR to administer the YM program.

[5] For a description of ORR-eligible individuals see ORR Policy Letter 16-01, its attached Documentation Guide, the ORR PL 16-01 FAQ, and ORR PL 22-02, as well as 45 CFR § 400.43, 400.208.

[6] On December 8, 2021, ORR revised footnote 4 by striking the reference to rescinded ORR PL 21-07 and replacing it with ORR PL 22-02.

criminal history, history of substance abuse, or domestic violence and child welfare concerns, including being charged with or convicted of any crime or investigated for the physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, or abandonment of a minor.

8. Train mentors on how to support ORR-eligible youth.

Activities under the YM program should focus on the following areas, according to the needs of the youth:

- Supporting the development of social and life skills.
- Maintaining and celebrating the youth's cultural heritage, while educating the youth on aspects of American culture.
- Providing opportunities for social engagement with peers.
- Providing information about opportunities to participate in civic and community service activities.
- Supporting youth in learning English, math, and other skills.
- Supporting youth in developing health and financial literacy.
- Providing academic support, such as helping with homework, and assisting with school transitions, such as the transition between middle school and high school or from high school to post-secondary education.
- Helping youth with career development, including providing opportunities for skill building, resume drafting, training, and educating youth on workers' rights.

States may also develop an incentive program that encourages youth to participate in the YM program. Incentives may include, but are not limited to, paying registration fees or tuition costs for educational, vocational, apprenticeship, and career development activities or providing donated goods such as computers. If a state chooses to establish an incentive program, the state must document the policy and ensure that the incentive program is implemented in a fair and consistent way.

States must provide all services in accordance with 45 C.F.R. Part 400. States should direct funding to localities with the greatest need for YM services based on existing resources and the concentration of newly arrived YM-eligible populations.

Reporting and Monitoring

States must describe YM activities in their state plans and should ensure appropriate mechanisms to assess the need for, and track, YM services.

States must[7] develop and track specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound annual program outcomes for all YM activities. States must report the number of clients served, the type and frequency of services provided, outcomes, accomplishments, and challenges in the ORR-6 Program Performance Report semi-annual schedules A and D and submit the ORR-6 Annual Service Plan. States must also submit the annual RSS Sub-Grantee Report (OMB Clearance Number 0970-0556). These forms, instructions, and the reporting schedule are available on the ORR website.

States are required to submit data for all ORR-eligible population enrollments, including YM enrollees, within ORR's State Arrival and Service Data Collection Process, using the ORR-5 data collection form. Instructions for the ORR-5 are also on the ORR website.

States must also submit the Standard Form 425 Federal Financial Report through the Payment Management System (PMS) on a quarterly basis. For questions regarding PMS, please contact the PMS Help Desk at 877.614.5533 or pmssupport@psc.gov.

ORR will monitor the YM program through routine monitoring, to ensure that states are in compliance with this policy letter and the services provided are in alignment with specific activities described in their respective state plan. During monitoring, ORR will review a state's annual program outcomes and progress towards each goal. Additionally, ORR will assess how services are provided, identify promising practices, and observe trends for further analysis and information sharing. States are responsible for monitoring sub-recipients for compliance and achievement of objectives as outlined in their approved state plan.

Resources

If you have questions about this PL, contact RefugeePolicy@acf.hhs.gov. ORR also encourages you to utilize ORR's Technical Assistance provider(s) for additional resources on serving refugees.

Cindy Huang
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[7] On December 8, 2021, ORR revised this sentence by replacing "should" with "must."