ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES
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Refugee Support Services Funded by the Afghanistan Supplemental Appropriation

Policy Letter 22-03

Initially published October 21, 2021
Revised November 26, 2021[1]
Revised June 21, 2022[2]
Revised April 20, 2023[3]
Revised September 19, 2023[4]
Revised January 27, 2025[5]

This Policy Letter (PL) describes the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Refugee Support Services (RSS) base awards funded by the Afghanistan Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2022 (ASA). For information about funding allocations, please see the relevant Dear Colleague Letter(s) on the ORR website.

For both ASA RSS base awards and ASA RSS set-asides, ORR encourages states[6] to bypass standard procurement guidelines regarding competition through September 30, 2024[7], given the continuing need to facilitate the provision of services to eligible populations as quickly as possible (see also 45 C.F.R. § 75.329(f)(2)).[8] [9]

Eligible Populations[10]

ASA funding is designated to support eligible individuals as delineated within ORR PL 22-01, *Afghan Humanitarian Parolees and Unaccompanied Afghan Minors Eligible for ORR Benefits and Services; ASA-Eligible Afghan Populations*. Specific documentation requirements may be reviewed at ORR PL 22-02, *Additional ORR-Eligible Statuses and Categories and Acceptable Documentation Requirements for Afghan Nationals*.[11]

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[1] November 26, 2021 revisions are footnoted.
[2] June 21, 2022 revisions are footnoted.
[3] April 20, 2023 revisions are footnoted.
[4] September 19, 2023 revisions are footnoted.
[5] January 27, 2025: Removed former section on equity and inclusion
[6] "States" throughout this Policy Letter refers to states and replacement designees.
[7] September 19, 2023: September 30, 2023 replaced by September 30, 2024.
[8] November 26, 2021: This sentence added.
[9] June 21, 2022: While this PL is with regard to the ASA RSS base awards, ORR moved this paragraph from the ASA / RSS Priority section to the Introduction, to clarify that the ORR-authorized procurement exemption applies to ASA RSS set-asides as well. In addition, ORR has now specified an end date for this authorization.
[10] April 20, 2023: Original paragraph content, which included content from ORR PL 22-01, removed to direct readers to ORR PL 22-01
[11] April 20, 2023: June 21, 2022 reference to ORR PL 22-10 replaced by reference to ORR PL 22-02

ASA / RSS Priority
As part of Operation Allies Welcome (OAW), a significant number of Afghan arrivals are being resettled, including humanitarian parolees. As a result, states may need additional resources to adequately meet the needs of these arrivals, and in particular, may need resources to support resettlement housing needs.

This ASA funding is intended to provide support for traditional services provided under RSS base funding, but may also be used, when necessary, to support emergency/short-term and long-term housing for Afghan arrivals as a critical component in resettlement stability, self-sufficiency, and integration. ORR seeks to provide states with the flexibility and necessary resources to support capacity planning and coordination efforts for housing, given that a lack of available and affordable housing can create additional barriers to helping refugee populations find and retain employment, achieve self-sufficiency, and fully integrate into their new communities. Housing instability can also create additional barriers to the educational success and development of children.

Through this funding, states are encouraged to develop and implement a strategy to support housing needs for Afghan arrivals and should ensure that the methodology for supporting this need is equitable and transparent. States should consider hiring a statewide housing coordinator or retaining other expertise, such as fair housing consultancies, to work in partnership with national resettlement agencies, local resettlement agencies, state and local housing agencies and public housing authorities, and other stakeholders. States should determine the best way to sustain this position with the funding options available, including external funding resources if available, or Cash and Medical Assistance/Planning and Coordination.[12]

Emergency/Short-term Housing
OAW's goal is to resettle Afghans from Safe Havens as quickly and successfully as possible. If needed, emergency/short-term housing support may be used to support the state's involvement in the statewide coordination of housing access. States are strongly encouraged to identify solutions so that housing availability is not a barrier to swift resettlement. This could include:

- Participating in national and local-level workgroups to identify solutions to emergency housing needs.
- Coordinating with federal, state, and local emergency management officials and/or other entities, such as housing rental companies, to secure short-term housing to support initial resettlement.
- Collaborating with local resettlement agencies to ensure that their clients' immediate housing needs are being met.
- Identifying emergency housing assistance through other federal, state, or locally-funded programs to supplement gaps in cash assistance and housing costs. States should be cognizant of implications for their clients' eligibility for other public assistance programs should emergency housing assistance count as income.

Long-term Housing
If a state chooses to use these funds to develop a strategy to address long-term housing needs, the state may consider implementing some of the following:

- Engaging with a variety of stakeholders to build relationships and identify options that may lead to increased housing supply over time.

[12] November 26, 2021: Funding options updated.

- Creating a backstop or guarantee to cover missed rental payments or gaps in rental payments owed by tenants.
    - This would allow property management companies the assurance that rental costs would be paid for the duration of the lease. In the case where a tenant is unable to pay, the state or local program would step in and cover the gap in rental payments. Given the uncertainty of parolee employment and income over the course of a year, this may increase the supply available to local resettlement programs.
    - This program could include incentives for clients who consistently pay their rent.
- Identifying innovative models in securing affordable housing suitable to the needs of Afghan arrivals, such as working with housing developers with available units, Welcome.US, and other partners that focus on housing solutions.

Other Notable Activities Allowable Under the ASA[13]
If a state has met the ASA / RSS priorities under this policy letter, states are able to use ASA RSS funding for the following activities:

Legal assistance: States may provide legal assistance to Afghan arrivals as delineated by 45 C.F.R. § 400.154(k) and 45 C.F.R. § 400.155(i).[14] In addition, ORR PL 22-11 delineates specific allowable immigration-related legal assistance activities for ASA-eligible populations.[15]

Food Assistance: ORR will allow states to use ASA RSS funding to provide food to Afghan arrivals in the short-term. ORR defines short-term as the period before Afghan arrivals (a) are able to access Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and (b) have housing that will allow them to prepare food and cook. States should continue to focus on connecting Afghans to necessary food assistance programs as soon as possible.

Attached Afghan Minors: Attached Afghan Minors (AAMs) are children under the age of 18 who arrived to the U.S. through Operation Allies Welcome (OAW) with a non-parental adult caregiver. These minors were not referred to ORR as unaccompanied children (UC) and were never placed in ORR's custody through the UC Program. Rather, these minors resettled from the safe havens directly into communities with their non-parental family units. As Afghan humanitarian parolees, these minors are eligible to receive ORR-funded resettlement services. ORR strongly encourages states to conduct outreach activities to family units with AAMs to ensure connection to legal services, family reunification, and youth and family focused-resettlement services.[16]

Extended Case Management and Extended Community Orientation: ORR authorizes the use of ASA funding to provided extended case management and extended community orientation to eligible individuals and families. A policy letter providing ORR guidance on these services is forthcoming.[17]

Service Requirements
States must provide RSS base (and RSS set-aside) services in accordance with 45 CFR Part 400 Subpart I -- Refugee Social Services, ORR PL 21-06, and, if a state requested waivers modifying RSS requirements, ORR PL 21-08 (as well as any additional PLs governing the relevant RSS set-aside(s)).

[13] November 26, 2021: Section added.
[14] June 21, 2022: Added 45 C.F.R. § 400.154(k).
[15] June 21, 2022: Section amended.
[16] April 20, 2023: Paragraph added.
[17] April 20, 2023: Paragraph added.

The regulations at 45 C.F.R. §§ 400.154 and 400.155 define services allowable under RSS. If a state wishes to provide additional services not delineated in these sections, pursuant to 45 C.F.R. § 400.155(h), a state must submit a request to the ORR Director and receive approval, prior to providing the service.

ORR PL 16-07 authorizes base RSS funding to be used for transitional housing assistance, aimed at supporting economic self-sufficiency on occasions when there is an increased number of new arrivals.

In accordance with ORR PL 21-06, a state must ensure that each individual member of a household in which a member is receiving RSS employability services is assessed for a family self-sufficiency plan (FSSP), is subsequently referred to services, and receives appropriate follow-up minimally at six and twelve months post enrollment.

Reporting and Monitoring

States must describe ASA-funded activities for RSS base (and RSS set-asides) in their state plans and should ensure appropriate mechanisms to assess the need for, and track, all assistance provided to Afghan arrivals.

States should develop and track specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) annual program outcomes for all ASA-funded RSS base (and RSS set-aside) 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 ("ORR-6") semi-annual schedules A, C, 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 enrollments, including those enrollees served through ASA-funded RSS (and set-asides), 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 (SF) 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 ASA-funded awards through routine monitoring activities to ensure that states are in compliance and the services provided meet the needs of ASA-eligible populations. 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. ORR may create additional monitoring activities for ASA eligible individuals. States are responsible for monitoring sub-recipients for compliance and achievement of objectives as outlined in their approved state plan.

Resources
Please direct any questions about this PL to the Refugee Policy Unit at RefugeePolicy@acf.hhs.gov. ORR also encourages you to utilize ORR's Technical Assistance provider(s) for additional resources on serving refugees.

We appreciate all of your work to support the health and well-being of these new Afghan arrivals.

Sincerely,

Robin Dunn Marcos
Director
Office of Refugee Resettlement