

Indiana Education for Homeless Children & Youth (INEHCY)

McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program

Refugees – Impact on Homelessness

Federal Guidance

Notice of Rights and Provision of Services

You are in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) because you are an Unaccompanied Child. While in ORR custody, you have the right to be treated humanely and with consideration for your safety. You are also entitled to have a safe place to stay and people that take care of your basic needs, such as having meals regularly, medical care, and other services. If you have questions, you may ask to speak to an attorney or legal service provider listed in this packet.

The law requires you to receive:

- ✓ Food, clothing, a safe place to live, and items you need to take care of yourself
- ✓ Routine medical and dental care and emergency health care services
- ✓ Help from a case manager who can determine what your individual needs and situation requires in order to prepare you for the next steps
- ✓ An education that matches your age and needs and help understanding the rules and systems in the United States so that you can adjust to the new setting
- ✓ Recreation and leisure time
- ✓ Individual and group counseling
- ✓ Access to religious services
- ✓ A reasonable right to privacy
- ✓ Visitation and communication with family members
- ✓ Services to promote a safe and timely release to a parent or other trusted adult

If you believe that you are still being denied your rights or access to services, you and the legal service provider or your attorney may appeal to the ORR Director or his or her designee by contacting UCPolicy@acf.hhs.gov.

State Guidance

The Indiana Department of Education aims to integrate and assimilate refugee students into the public school system. Indiana's Refugee Education Program offers advocacy for a special population of students who otherwise may not have supports. The Department provides technical assistance and facilitates districts' capacity to:

- Connect to the appropriate refugee resettlement agency in the surrounding areas
- Identify refugee students at enrollment
- Record the achievement of refugee students so that they may contribute to increasing the overall achievement of the district
- Provide a free and appropriate education for refugee students in the least restrictive environment
- Link refugee students to supportive programs within the district to help them achieve academic and social-emotional integration
- Work with community-based organizations to support refugee youth
- Encourage refugee parents to engage in the education of their children
- Value and use the diversity that exists within the refugee community to prepare all students for global service and leadership

Impact of refugee experiences

Schools, and agencies working with refugees in the schools, typically face similar challenges in accommodating this population. All too often schools problem-solve in isolation, despite the existence of resources and models developed by other districts or states for similar problems. This may be due to a lack of time to research best practices or limited knowledge about how to access such information. School Corporation works to facilitate information-sharing and collaboration among service providers serving refugee children and their families by offering technical assistance and hosting a Clearinghouse of centralized resources.

Impact on physical health

Many refugees reach their destinations in need of treatment for unmet medical and dental needs. These treatments may have been denied to them at home or were impossible to obtain in the country of initial asylum or in refugee holding camps. The health and physical condition of refugees may be manifested in a number of direct and indirect ways.

Direct manifestations can include:

- injuries and disabilities resulting from war, physical or sexual violence, torture or other mistreatment
- headaches, stomach complaints, fatigue, skin conditions and other physical reactions to stress
- increased risk of developing certain diseases, such as tuberculosis
- malnutrition and delayed growth

- anxiety, depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Indirect manifestations can include:

- poor dental health
- undetected visual or hearing problems
- low levels of immunization

Refugee Trauma: All refugees have experienced trauma in some form. Their traumas can be physical, emotional or psychological. Medical, dental and general health issues can consistently or intermittently disrupt the learning of refugee students at school. For this reason, it is important that refugee families are aware of the provisions for medical and dental health screening and health care accessible through the public health system.

Disruptive influence of trauma: A reasonable sense of personal safety and security enables an individual to go about their daily tasks free from undue anxiety or fear of harm. All refugee students have experienced trauma in some form and may continue to experience disruption to their sense of personal safety and security. This can significantly affect their learning at school.

- The extreme stress of crisis threatens children’s conceptual organization and they tend to become disorganized under such stress. Some examples of disorganization include loss of attention span, confusion, immobility, and lack of perspective.
- Children become less sophisticated, regressing to earlier, more primitive forms of functioning. Some examples of include loss of toileting or other independent living skills, dependency, generalized regressing to an immature state, fears and a return to earlier forms of coping.
- Children rely less on verbal means of communication and tend to demonstrate their distress rather than speak of it. Some examples of de-verbalization include thematic play, anxious clinging, and acting avoidances.
- Much of children’s distress manifests itself in their bodies as physical symptoms. Some examples of physical symptoms that cannot be fully explained by the presence of a medical condition, often associated with stress, anxiety, or other psychological factors are appetite and respiratory and digestive dysfunction, headaches and other general aches and pains.
- Hyperactive; Children’s agitated reactions included a flushed, sweating and frenzied appearance; panicked, enraged or ‘hysterical’ emotional reactions; and frenzied, ineffectual and uncontrolled behaviors that were overreactions to the situation.
- Hypoactive; Children may experience a depressive reaction, or under-reaction that can include a pale, submissive, and shock-like appearance; blunted or numb emotional states; and slowed, automatic, paralyzed or immobilized behavior.

Disrupted Education

Schools are often among the early casualties of war or unrest. They may be closed officially by governments or simply cease to operate because of dangers to staff and students. Depending on the conditions in their country of origin or in the refugee camps they came from, many refugee students may have been unable to attend school for some time. Some students may never have been to school. Few refugee students will have had recent experience with classrooms, schools or formal learning environments similar to those in Indiana schools. As a result of serious disruption to their education, refugee students may have significant gaps in their literacy and numeracy development or limited skills in expressing academic concepts in their first language. Limited or non-existent educational opportunities and restricted intellectual stimulation over many years may leave some refugee students ill-equipped for the broader learning demands and expectations of schooling in Indiana. It is very likely that refugee students will not be able to provide formal reports or credentials of prior learning because such documentation has been destroyed, lost or confiscated prior to departure from their home countries.

Homelessness:

The continuation of the confrontation, conflict or persecution that forced them to leave usually means that refugees are unable to return to their country of origin, thus are rendered 'homeless'. There is no reassuring 'fallback' position that is that they may be able to 'go home' if things don't work out in Indiana.

In addition to their physical separation from home, refugees often feel cut off from their past. This is the result of not being able to bring personal possessions or other mementos that might have been consoling reminders of home – the people, places and events in their lives. This sense of isolation can be intensified by fragmented or non-existent communication with loved ones left behind or lost along the way.

Feelings of helplessness

One reaction to becoming a refugee can be a sense of disempowerment. Disempowerment is the feeling of being at the mercy of external forces over which one has no power or control. In their home countries, before the conflict, individuals may have had stable lives and comfortable homes. They usually had the means and the capabilities to look after themselves and those they loved. Many no longer have the certainty they used to enjoy, they may no longer be able to earn an income and look after their families as they did in their country of origin. Disempowerment can lead to a sense of hopelessness and depression. Individuals may swing from being overwhelmed by past experiences to becoming numb and withdrawn, unable to discuss the past. They will need affirmation of their resilience and determination - factors that have brought them through horrifying experiences to Indiana.

Limited social support networks

Many refugees do not have relatives, friends or well-established community groups to call upon for assistance when they first arrive in Indiana. As a result of this perceived lack of support, refugees can

feel alone and isolated, particularly if they are not confident speakers of English. It takes time to develop supportive social networks in a new country. Until they develop networks, refugees may need to rely on 'strangers' from government, non-government or community agencies for the practical assistance and emotional support that would previously have been provided by relatives, friends and neighbors.

RESOURCES

- [INEHCY - Indiana Education for Homeless Children & Youth](#)
- [Office of Refugee Resettlement \(federal\)](#)
 - [The Refugee Act of 1980](#)
 - [Chapter 420 Refugee Act \(PDF\)](#)
- [Refugee Admissions Report to Congress, Published annually.](#)
- [Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services \(BRYCS\)](#)
- [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society](#)
- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#)
- [Administration for Children and Families \(ACF\)](#)
- [Administration for Children and Families - Funding Opportunities](#)
- [Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance \(CFDA\)](#)
- [Center for Applied Linguistics](#)
- [Refugee "Welcome to the United States Guide"](#)

For Additional Information Contact:

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