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Study of Domestic Capacity to Provide Medical Care for Vulnerable Refugees Promoting Refugee Health and Well-Being

Program Overview

Refugees who are resettled in the United States face many challenges that are part of building their new lives in a new country. Some of these refugees arrive with significant medical conditions which require additional support from Resettlement Agencies to coordinate and assist with access to health care as well as auxiliary services such as accessible housing, transportation, and benefits.

The resettlement of refugees with significant medical conditions is challenging for Resettlement Agencies as a result of the need for more intense case and medical management. The agencies have responded to this challenge by developing innovative models that maximize available resources and incorporate private donations, federal grants and volunteerism.

The Study of Domestic Capacity to Provide Medical Care for Vulnerable Refugees seeks to assess the domestic capacity to care for refugees with significant medical conditions and apply research findings to policy recommendations. As part of the study, USCRI will explore the various models being used by resettlement sites and assess their success in the resettlement of refugees with significant medical conditions.

Funding for this study is provided by the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration of the U.S. Department of State. Data collected for this study are both qualitative and quantitative and have been gathered through a survey of research sites and through interviews with stakeholders in the refugee resettlement process. Results from this study will be available on the USCRI website in the Fall of 2014.

Partner Agencies' Participation

USCRI developed a survey tool to gather data on resources used in the management of newly arrived refugees with significant medical conditions. The survey has been implemented in five sites:

- International Institute of New England, Boston, MA
- International Institute of Minnesota, Saint Paul, MN
- YMCA International Services, Houston, TX
- College of Southern Idaho Refugee Service Center, Twin Falls, ID
- Nationalities Service Center, Philadelphia, PA

These sites were selected for their diversity of health programming. Factors considered when identifying the sites included: overall refugee arrival numbers into the state, rate of participation in the Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) program, the State's participation in the Wilson-Fish Program, Medicaid expansion, and the current capability of the agency to provide medical case management to newly resettled refugees.

Communities' Participation

Local Resettlement Agencies work closely with local stakeholders and service providers to help clients transition successfully to their new lives in the United States. To gain a deeper understanding of the agencies' capacity to resettle medical cases, the project included interviewing key resettlement personnel with knowledge of the process involved in locating appropriate services and resources for cases with severe medical conditions. The interviews were conducted with key resettlement personnel including medical case personnel at five selected sites, state officials involved in refugee issues (specifically the State Refugee Health Coordinators and State Refugee Coordinators), and other local Resettlement Agency affiliates.