



Major Service Areas and Grant Programs of ORR's Resettlement Program

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) is a key government actor in welcoming newly arrived immigrants forcibly displaced from their home countries, offering vital support to those seeking refuge and stability in the U.S. ORR strives to achieve the goal of promoting the health, well-being, and stability of refugees, unaccompanied children, and other eligible individuals and families. One of the key ways they work toward this goal is through awarding grant funding to resettlement agencies, ethnic community-based organizations, and other organizations in the U.S.

Through these organizations, ORR provides a variety of services, such as time-limited cash and medical assistance to new arrivals, as well as support for case management services, English classes, and job readiness and employment services—all designed to facilitate successful transition to life in the U.S. and help newcomers attain self-sufficiency within the first five years of their arrival.

ORR funds programs across four major service areas: social adjustment and integration, physical and behavioral health, employment and economic/social stability, and children and youth. In this video, we'll walk through the grant programs that ORR offers in each of these services areas. It's important to note that many ORR programs take a wholistic approach to newcomer services given that integration is a complex process and experience, so some services you learn about in this video may be relevant to multiple service areas. Let's begin with social adjustment and integration.

Through participation in social adjustment and integration grant programs, ORR-eligible newcomers are supported in building successful new lives in the U.S. by becoming actively engaged in their communities and gaining equitable access to social and economic systems.

The major grant program in this service area that we will discuss here is Preferred Communities (PC).

While ORR-eligible populations are all generally vulnerable, the PC program supports ORR-eligible populations with more complex vulnerabilities that require special attention, such as newcomers with serious medical conditions or disabilities. PC services include long-term case management, health and medical interventions, mental health interventions, and social adjustment services, typically in the form of intensive case management or group services settings.

ORR also has two other grant programs in this service area. Services to Older Refugees, or SOR, assists refugees aged 60 and older in gaining access to applicable services for the aging and provides appropriate services for older refugees that are not currently available in the community. The other program is called the Ethnic Community Self-Help grant, or ECSH. This program supports ethnic community-based organizations founded by newcomers who are leaders in their communities with lived experience and who are able to provide culturally and linguistically responsive services. The ECSH program is versatile and can offer a variety of services like case management, employment, community building and integration, English classes, and other services as needed or requested.

The second major service area is physical and behavioral health, where ORR-eligible populations are supported in achieving well-being and self-sufficiency through appropriate physical and behavioral health services and supports.

Two of the major ORR grant programs in this service area, which we will dive into next, are the Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) and Refugee Health Promotion (RHP) grants.

RMA provides short-term medical coverage to newly arrived refugees who may not be eligible for Medicaid. The benefits are generally similar to Medicaid. In addition to providing access to health care, RMA funds aim to promote the public health of resettled populations and enable refugees to receive a medical screening upon arrival in the U.S., usually within the first 90 days.

The RHP grant has three primary goals: providing opportunities to increase health literacy, coordinating physical and mental health care, and organizing wellness groups. RHP services and activities in practice may include health education classes, targeted health outreach to ORR-eligible individuals, medical and mental health navigation and support, cultural adjustment groups, skill-building networks, and peer support meetings.

ORR has three other grant programs in the physical and behavioral health service area that we will mention here. The Survivors of Torture program provides rehabilitative, social, and legal services to individuals who have experienced torture outside of the U.S., regardless of their immigration status, through both direct service and technical assistance to providers. Additionally, Support for Trauma-Affected Refugees (STAR) is a recently launched grant that provides holistic and integrated trauma assistance services to underserved ORR-eligible populations through case management and more deeply trauma-informed health, psychological, and social adjustment services. Finally, the Services to Afghan Survivors Impacted by Combat grant offers services similar to STAR that are holistic, strengths-based, and trauma-informed, but more specifically related to the unique needs of Afghans who experienced combat-related trauma.

Now let's look at ORR's work related to employment and economic/social stability. Through this service area's programming, refugees work toward economic self-sufficiency, connecting to sustainable forms of income and economic mobility, and progressing toward their personal and professional goals.

For this service area, we will dive deeper into four ORR programs: Refugee Support Services (RSS), Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), Matching Grant (MG), and Refugee Career Pathways (RCP).

RSS is a basic integration program with considerable economic empowerment elements. RSS helps ORR-eligible populations gain economic independence by helping them find and maintain employment, preferably within a year of being enrolled in the program. These services focus on employability assessment, training and job development, vocational training, skills recertification, and job placement and maintenance. RSS funding is administered by individual states that may have specific rules about which services qualify for funding and specific ways of administering funding.

Like RMA [which we] mentioned in the last service area, RCA benefits are meant to support newcomers without access to other public cash benefits. This assistance is generally equivalent to that established by state governments through programs like SNAP and TANF. The RCA program helps individuals meet their most basic needs, such as food, shelter, and transportation.

The MG program helps refugees and other ORR-eligible populations quickly find jobs and achieve economic self-sufficiency within 240 days of enrollment without accessing mainstream cash assistance. It offers case management, job training, support for housing, utilities, food, transportation, health, and English language training. Through a unique public-private partnership, the program matches community contributions two-to-one and encourages donations, volunteer support, and mentorship.

The RCP program helps ORR-eligible populations achieve self-sufficiency through education and job training to continue their professional careers in the U.S. The program offers personalized career plans, career counseling, foreign degree evaluations, educational opportunities, apprenticeships, and vocational English training. RCP funds can also provide financial assistance for child care, licensing fees, transportation, and work attire.

In this service area of employment and economic/social stability, ORR also offers a few other smaller grant programs. The Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP) supports refugees to lead rural farming and urban community gardening projects. Next, the Employer Engagement Program is an ORR program that funds organizations to partner with employers to create work-based English and job training programs for ORR-eligible populations. Finally, the Wilson-Fish Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Coordination Program provides foundational case management and other tailored services to help refugee families with children navigate mainstream benefits and other workforce development program barriers, become economically self-sufficient, and improve well-being.

ORR also has Employment and Economic/Social Stability programs specifically geared toward asset building for newcomers. First, the Refugee Microenterprise Development grant provides loans and training to help refugees start, sustain, or expand a small business. ORR also has another version of this grant that is geared specifically toward starting child care programs. Additionally, the Individualized Development Accounts (IDA) program is a savings

match program in which ORR-eligible newcomers work with service providers to create a saving plan for qualified assets, including house down payments, vehicles, education and training expenses, and businesses. These savings are then matched by IDA funding to make it easier for clients to build assets.

Now let's explore the final major service area, children and youth, an especially important area given the high proportion of newcomers arriving to the U.S. under the age of 18. Through ORR programs in this service area, newcomer children and youth achieve English language proficiency, access education to reach their academic and professional goals, and receive support to promote their social adjustment and integration into U.S. communities.

The three children and youth services programs from ORR we will explore are Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM), Refugee School Impact (RSI), and Refugee Youth Mentoring (RYM).

The URM program supports some of the most vulnerable minors in the world who fled persecution, violence, or abuse and entered the U.S. without a parent or guardian. Serving youth from about 50 nationalities, the URM program provides care and services similar to state foster care programs and is supported by foster parents, transitional and group homes, and mentors. URM services include housing, educational support, health care, vocational training, cultural orientation, independent living skills, and family reunification when possible.

The RSI program provides grants to support school districts with refugee and ORR-eligible students from birth to age 18, including Early RSI for early childhood development support. RSI aims to prepare children for school success, promote child care access, and support social adjustment and academic performance. Services include specialized support for students, family assistance with the education system, capacity building for school staff and child care providers, and facilitating early childhood education.

The RYM program funds newcomer services organizations to match ORR-eligible youth, ages 15 to 24, with mentors for integration and development, and to offer case management for educational and career goals. RYM focuses on refugee youth and young adults, promoting civic engagement and addressing trauma, language proficiency, and educational needs. RYM services include social activities, cultural orientation, academic and career support, and health and financial literacy training.

As you can see, ORR has a great number of programs available for promoting integration of newcomers to the U.S. Keep in mind that not all newcomer services agencies offer all these programs, and many of them have eligibility criteria that may restrict grant program enrollments.

If you would like to connect with local resettlement or newcomer services organizations in your area, you can search for them online, follow various newcomer-serving organizations on social media, and attend community events where they may have a presence for more information. You can also check out ORR's Network Resources page on their website, which can be accessed on the Switchboard resource page of this video.

For more information about the services that ORR offers to eligible populations, we hope you will watch Switchboard's other videos, including the first one in this series, "Understanding ORR Programs and Services," as well as "Who Are Refugees" and "Understanding Newcomer Immigration Statuses." You can also check out the many helpful factsheets and resources on ORR's website.