

Orientation for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors in the United States

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Goals

Program Goal: “Through its network of caretakers, the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program helps unaccompanied minor refugees develop appropriate skills to enter adulthood and to achieve social self-sufficiency.” (Source: ORR website)

Goals, cont.

Orientation goal:

- To provide newly-arrived children with:
 - An overview of program expectations
 - Orientation to the roles of social workers and foster families
 - An understanding of foster family expectations
- To assess the child's needs and goals

Introduction to Foster Care

- What are child's beliefs about foster care?
- What does foster care mean in the United States?

Roles and Responsibilities

- Social Worker
- Foster Parent
- Child
- Other professionals--doctors, teachers, counselors, interpreters, immigration attorneys

Orientation to Family Living

- Home walk through
- Chores*
- Family schedules

Other Services

- Medical, dental, immunizations
- Education and school enrollment
- Counseling
- Court process
- Independent living services
- Cultural gatherings and ethnic community

Strengths and Needs Assessment

- Child's emotional and familial strengths
- Child's beliefs about foster care
- Medical or other issues requiring attention
- Cultural and religious needs, and how foster family will meet

Strengths and Needs Assessment, cont.

- Overseas URM:s:
 - Understanding camp experience, search for family members
- For Trafficking Victims:
 - Safety planning with foster family
 - Risk of contact with traffickers
 - Contact with family of origin

Strengths and Needs Assessment, cont.

- For former DUCS youth:
 - How is URM placement different from DUCS?
 - Legal status
 - URM benefits
 - Voluntary post-18
 - More opportunities to pursue education

Follow Up and Ongoing Orientation

- Continue needs assessment and any areas of concern
- Discussion of areas of conflict
 - Independence vs. family structure
 - Chores
 - Food
 - Communications styles
 - Gender roles

Follow Up and Ongoing Orientation, cont.

- Laws in the United States and how they differ from home country
- Introduction to broader community settings
- Older youth: shift focus to tasks of independent living through group and individual work

Strategies for Successful Orientation

- Clear expectations at the beginning lead to better adjustment in foster care
- Ongoing orientation facilitates gradual acclimatizing

Resettlement Challenges

- Preconceived notions of U.S. lifestyle
- Frustration with grade placement in school
- Family roles, gender roles, push towards independence
- Former DUCS youth--expectations of greater freedom
- Overwhelmed by their tasks and challenges
- Finding their place, new bicultural identity

Future Strategies

- Group orientation
- Mentoring program
- Video on life in the U.S. for youth overseas and in shelters
- Consult with CO instructors for current URM's