

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE - INFORMATION RECEIVED REGARDING REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

This memorandum summarizes information received by the Human Services Committee regarding the refugee resettlement process, including the costs and benefits of refugee resettlement. The memorandum also summarizes information received by the committee regarding economic benefits generated by all new Americans. The following are the definitions of "refugee" and "new American."

- Refugee - Any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. (Definition used by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)
- New American - Any immigrant, including a refugee, who was born in another country and is seeking permanent residence in the United States.

Other considerations when reviewing the data include:

- After residing in the country for 1 year a refugee may apply for lawful permanent residence (green card). Some information received by the committee includes costs/benefits of refugees after the initial year of residence.
- Some costs/benefits cannot be quantified but may still be considered in committee discussions.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT STRUCTURE AND ARRIVALS

In 1984 Congress amended the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services to implement alternative programs for refugee services. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), under the authority of the Secretary of Health and Human Services, allowed for proposed projects by state and other entities to provide services including refugee cash assistance and refugee medical assistance through nonstate programs. North Dakota proposed such an alternative in 1998, to be implemented in 1999, which after a period of time became the Wilson-Fish program in North Dakota. The proposal, made in collaboration with Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota (LSSND), moved the refugee cash assistance portion of the refugee program from state and county services to LSSND, the refugee resettlement agency.

Eventually, LSSND was designated as the state refugee coordinator by ORR after the state's withdrawal from refugee coordination in 2010. Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota is also the sole resettlement agency in the state providing services to refugees, with legal status, admitted by the United States Department of State.

Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota has resettled and provided services to the following populations admitted as refugees since federal fiscal year 1997:

Primary Refugee Arrivals to North Dakota					
Federal Fiscal Years	Total Number of Refugees Resettled	Percentage of Refugees Resettled by Location			Main Ethnicities
		Fargo/ West Fargo	Grand Forks	Bismarck	
1997-2001	2,646	80%	4%	16%	Bosnian, Somali
2002-2006	792	89%	11%	0%	Somali, Liberian
2007-2011	1,867	78%	20%	2%	Bhutanese, Iraqi
2012-2017	3,084	74%	20%	6%	Bhutanese, Iraqi, and Somali
Total 1997-2017	8,389	78%	14%	8%	

NOTE: Includes primary refugee arrivals only.

In federal fiscal year 2017, 95 percent of refugee individuals resettled in the state had family ties in their resettlement locations.

In the first 6 months of federal fiscal year 2018, 97 percent of the refugee individuals admitted had ties in North Dakota and 70 percent were either women or children and had spent an average of 19.2 years in refugee camps before arrival. The refugees who were resettled identified themselves as Hindu/Buddhist/Kirat (49 percent), followed by Christians (39 percent), and Muslims (13 percent).

Federal Funding to Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota

The Wilson-Fish refugee resettlement program provides "cost reimbursement grants" to refugee resettlement providers for actual expenditures incurred in the resettlement process. A program provider must submit a request for reimbursement to ORR in accordance with program guidelines. This funding is used only for the cash assistance to refugees and intensive case management (for refugees determined to be "special needs") services and for administrative costs. Funding for programs, including refugee employment, adult English education, and case management services for individuals (who are not determined to be "special needs") is provided from federal Refugee Social Services grants. The project provider (LSSND) enters into a cooperative agreement with ORR which outlines all of the duties and responsibilities of the project provider. Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota is also the recipient of Targeted Assistance, Services to Older Refugees, Refugee Health Promotion, and Refugee School Impact funding which are utilized for subawards for service providers across the communities via an annual grantmaking process. Community subawards for service providers totaled \$452,173 in federal fiscal year 2017.

PROGRAMS ASSISTING REFUGEES

Economic Assistance Programs

The committee received the following information regarding the number of refugees utilizing Department of Human Services economic assistance programs and related expenditures:

Refugees Utilizing Economic Assistance Programs			
	State Fiscal Year 2015	State Fiscal Year 2016	State Fiscal Year 2017
Traditional Medicaid			
Individuals served	2,684	2,630	2,983
Amount paid	\$11,991,012	\$11,849,449	\$14,419,630
Supplemental nutrition assistance program			
Individuals served	4,275	4,354	4,295
Amount paid	\$5,552,366	\$5,690,768	\$5,630,104
Temporary assistance for needy families			
Individuals served	355	299	260
Amount paid	\$284,789	\$254,596	\$200,327
NOTE: The number of individuals served is a cumulative total which includes new refugees, individuals who have been in the country for more than 1 year, and individuals who no longer have refugee status. The funding amounts listed are a combination of state and federal funds.			

Refugees may also be receiving benefits through the child care assistance program and low-income home energy assistance program. However, the Department of Human Services' information management programs do not capture data regarding citizenship or refugee status.

Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program

The unaccompanied refugee minor program provides assistance to eligible unaccompanied refugee minors that are settled in the state. The program provides the same level of assistance as is available to foster children in the state. When an unaccompanied refugee minor arrives in the state, LSSND obtains guardianship of the child and places the child in a licensed foster home.

The committee received the following data regarding the unaccompanied refugee minor program:

Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program			
	Minors Served	Payments to Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota for Administrative Expenses	Direct Payments for Support of Minor ¹
Federal fiscal year 2015	72	\$627,285	\$1,130,996
Federal fiscal year 2016	75	\$741,019	\$1,117,146
Federal fiscal year 2017 (through June 2017)	76	\$527,003	\$1,311,396
¹ Includes maintenance payments to foster homes, funds for extraordinary clothing needs, independent living preparation programming, education and training vouchers, and emergency funding.			
NOTE: The number of minors served is a cumulative total which includes new refugees and children and youth who have been in the country for more than 1 year and no longer have refugee status. Funding for the program is provided from federal funds.			

Refugee Medical Assistance Program

The refugee medical assistance program provides funding for medical expenses for unaccompanied minors and other legally admitted refugees. When a refugee arrives in the country it is determined whether the refugee is eligible to enroll in the traditional Medicaid program, Medicaid Expansion program, or the children's health insurance program. If a refugee is not eligible to enroll in any of the Medicaid programs, the refugee may be enrolled in the refugee medical assistance program. The medical assistance program is available for the first 8 months a refugee is in the country, or until the age of 21 for an unaccompanied minor.

The committee received the following information regarding the number of individuals receiving assistance under the program and the amount of program payments made since state fiscal year 2013:

Refugee Medical Assistance Program Recipients and Payments (State Fiscal Year)					
	2013	2014	2015 ¹	2016 ¹	2017 ^{1,2}
Number of recipients	267	166	33	18	17
Amount of payments	\$617,738	\$495,069	\$18,970	\$9,799	\$12,928
¹ The reduction in recipients is due in part to individuals enrolling in the Medicaid Expansion program rather than the refugee medical assistance program.					
² Additional claims may be incurred for services provided in state fiscal year 2017.					
NOTE: The refugee medical assistance program is 100 percent federally funded.					

Elementary and Secondary Education

The state definition of an English learner (EL) is an individual who is aged 5 to 21, is enrolled in a North Dakota school district, has a primary language other than English or comes from an environment in which a language other than English significantly impacts the individual's level of English proficiency, and has difficulty speaking, reading, writing, and understanding English as determined by assessment results. Federal law requires states to provide EL programs that meet specific standards.

English learner programs provide instruction to refugees, immigrants, and other individuals. During academic year 2017-18, 3,885 students were enrolled in EL programs. A total of 1,111 of the 3,885 EL students had refugee status. Some refugee students have achieved English proficiency and are not enrolled in EL programs. The committee received the following schedule which details total EL program enrollment at school districts, the number of EL students in the programs that are refugees, and the number of refugee students that are not enrolled in EL programs.

2017-18 EL Program Enrollment			
School District	Total EL Program Enrollment	Number of Refugee Students Enrolled in EL Programs ¹	Number of Refugee Students Not Enrolled in EL Programs ¹
Fargo	969	432	148
Bismarck	277	38	32
Dickinson	127	0	0
Dunseith	47	0	0
Grafton	49	0	0
Grand Forks	396	255	84
Mandan	112	0	0
McKenzie County (Watford City)	98	0	0
Minot	163	0	0
New Town	51	0	0
West Fargo	875	375	130
Williston	240	0	0
Other districts/Not listed	481	11 ²	6 ²
Total	3,885	1,111	400
¹ Includes new refugees and individuals who have been in the country for more than 1 year and no longer have refugee status.			
² Includes students that are not listed for specific school districts due to the small number of refugee students enrolled in the school district.			

Funding for EL programs is provided from state and other sources. State funding through the education funding formula is based on average daily membership (ADM). In addition to receiving general ADM funding for students, additional funding is provided for students enrolled in EL programs. The committee received the following schedule which details the general and weighted funding received by school districts for EL students:

2017-18 Funding Formula Payments for EL Students		
General ADM Payments for EL Students	Weighted EL Payment	Total Funding for EL Students
\$26,738,616	\$3,963,252	\$30,701,868

State EL grants provide additional funding for instruction of EL students. The 2017-18 school year grants were awarded to the four school districts in the state with the highest populations of EL students in specified proficiency levels. The following schedule details grant awards:

School District	EL Grant Funding Awarded
Fargo	\$104,635
West Fargo	83,480
Grand Forks	34,984
Bismarck	26,901
Total	\$250,000

Other Costs and Considerations

As part of the study directive, the committee is to review other impacts of refugee resettlement, including costs, government services, law enforcement, and health care. The committee has not received any information regarding estimated impacts to the identified areas or if the impact can be quantified.

BENEFITS OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT **Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Area Economic Impact**

The New American Economy organization reported the following economic impact of new Americans in the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area during 2014:

- Paid \$13.8 million in state and local taxes.
- Paid \$23.5 million in Social Security taxes.
- Paid \$5.9 million in Medicare taxes.
- Contributed \$542.8 million to the metropolitan area's gross domestic product.

Grand Forks Region Economic Impact

The New American Economy organization reported the following economic impact of new Americans in the Grand Forks region during 2015:

- Paid \$14.4 million in state and local taxes.
- Paid \$20.4 million in social security taxes.
- Paid \$5 million in Medicare taxes.
- Contributed \$353.7 million to the region's gross domestic product.

Statewide Economic Impact

The New American Economy organization reported the following economic impact of new Americans in North Dakota during 2014:

- Paid \$36.4 million in state and local taxes.
- Paid \$66.9 million in Social Security taxes.
- Paid \$16.2 million in Medicare taxes.
- Earned \$559.6 million of income.

Workforce

The New American Economy organization reported in 2015, new Americans represented 3.8 percent of the employed labor force in the Grand Forks region. The industries with the largest percentages of new Americans in the labor force included health care (6.8 percent), education (6.0 percent), professional services (5.1 percent), manufacturing (4.7 percent), and recreation and accommodation (4.3 percent).

The committee received testimony from representatives of private businesses and others regarding contributions of refugees and other new Americans to meet workforce needs. Comments made include:

- At Cardinal Glass Industries in Fargo, 69 percent of the plant's 268 employees are new Americans, many of which are resettled refugees. 71 percent of team leaders at the plant are new Americans and 85 percent of new hires in 2017 were new Americans.
- Of the new Americans living in the state, 8.1 percent are employed in manufacturing compared to the overall state rate of 7.7 percent.
- New Americans help meet the workforce needs at Bethany Retirement Living in Fargo. Many certified nurse assistants and many housekeeping positions at the facility are filled by individuals originally from Liberia.