
STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL
REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES

CHAPTER IV - REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES

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I. INTRODUCTION

North Carolina's Refugee Support Services (RSS) was established via federal funding from the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to provide refugee-specific social services defined and designated by federal regulation as being allowable for eligible refugees. Refugee services address the economic, educational, physical, and psycho-social challenges facing refugees.

The purpose of the RSS is to facilitate the effective resettlement of refugees and to assist them to achieve economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible. The State makes available a broad range of social services that are allowable under the federal refugee resettlement program. These refugee social services are specifically designed to address those problems that are unique to the refugee. Most refugees have limited proficiency in English; have fled their homeland to escape tyranny and harm; have traveled to a land of new people, laws and customs; and have to start rebuilding their lives without familiarity with American systems and sometimes without any family or friends. These social services are provided to expedite the resettlement process, quickly reduce dependence on public assistance, assist refugees to become employed, acquire English language skills, and ultimately achieve self-sufficiency.

Employment Services and English Language Training (ELT) have been established as the highest priority services.

RSS are combined with Reception and Placement Services (R&P) services delivered by local resettlement agencies for newly arrived refugees through the Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Department of State (DOS) and a national Voluntary Agency (VOLAG). RSS supplement and expand the local agency's responsibilities and ensures that duplication of services does not occur.

II. ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

A. General Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility for RSS is limited to refugees who meet immigration status and identification requirements. Throughout this Chapter, the term "*refugee*" will refer to all groups who are qualified aliens, and potentially eligible for RSS. See Chapter I – Background -for definition of eligible recipients.

B. Persons not eligible for Refugee Support Services

1. Naturalized U.S. citizens
2. Children born in the U.S. to Qualified Aliens; they are U.S. citizens at birth
3. Refugees less than 16 years of age
4. Full-time students, except for employment services when necessary to obtain part-time or temporary (e.g., summer) employment while a student.

NOTE: Income is not a criterion for receipt of RSS.

STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL
REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES

III. DELIVERY AND PRIORITY PROVISION OF SERVICES

A. Service Delivery

The delivery of services provided by the program is made available through one of three ways: (1) local departments of social services, (2) private, non-profit NC Refugee Service Providers under financial assistance service contracts, or (3) directly by designated staff of the NC State Refugee Office (SRO).

B. Priority Provision of Services

Among the population of eligible refugees, social services are provided based on the following client priorities, except in certain individual extreme circumstances:

- Newly arrived refugees within their first year in the United States, who apply for services;
- Refugees who are receiving cash assistance;
- Unemployed refugees who are not receiving cash assistance; and
- Employed refugees in need of services to retain employment or to attain economic independence.

Service provision is limited to those refugees who have been in the United States less than 60 months, except for translation/interpretation, information and referral, citizenship and naturalization preparation and emergency services. Employment services and ELT have been established as the highest priority services.

C. Cultural and Linguistic Competency

To ensure cultural competency, every reasonable effort shall be made to hire staff or secure individuals with the same cultural background and linguistic knowledge as the larger ethnic populations that are being served. When this is not possible or for very small refugee groups, volunteers shall be recruited to assist service provider staff with translation and orientation services as well as other needed social services. Provider staffs shall make an effort to become familiar with the cultural values and customs of newly arriving refugees so that they can more effectively work with them.

D. Equal Access for Women

Women must not be excluded from receiving services they need and for which they are eligible.

E. Protection of Rights and Ethical Obligations

Refugees must be informed of their rights and responsibilities and service provision must be fair and equitable. NC Refugee Service Providers must also provide clients with sufficient information to make informed choices about using the organization and its services. During the intake process, clients must receive written information of their rights and responsibilities.

STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL
REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES

IV. SCOPE OF SERVICES

Refugee Support Services funds are used primarily for employment services designed to enable refugees in achieving economic self-sufficiency as soon as possible. However, entered employment does not affect receipt of additional refugee social services.

A. Core Employability Services

1. Pre-Employment

Employment services provided to or with the client, including: orientation to the world of work including employment counseling, job fairs, job search, completing job application, practice with job interviewing; skills development and practice for work activities such as completing applications online; assistance with drug screening; referral to job opportunities and placement agencies, such as the Division of Employment Security for job search. Additionally, pre-employment services include assistance obtaining an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

2. Job Development

Employment activities with potential employers with the aim of developing employer resources resulting in job opportunities for clients; recruitment of employers including mailing of employment services brochures; meetings; and attending and developing job fairs.

a. Initial Job Placement

First job obtained for a refugee with the assistance of NC Refugee Service Providers.

b. Current Job Placement

Each job after initial employment with the assistance of the NC Refugee Service Providers.

3. Employment Follow-up

Assisting with problems on the job, explaining employee benefits, safety rules and procedures; discussing potential job upgrades; monitoring client performance; addressing language or cultural issues; immigrant status issues; and other contacts with client and employer after job placement.

4. Employment Transportation

Development of an employment transportation plan and actual transportation provided in conjunction with employment services--whether initial acceptance or retention of employment.

B. Additional Employment Services

1. Assessment Services

Assessment of refugee's aptitude and skills for employment, vocational training or skills recertification.

STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL
REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES

2. Vocational Skills Training

Training of short-term duration designed to teach refugees job-related skills that prepare them for a specific job or type of employment, such as nurse's aide, hair stylist, or tractor trailer truck driver that becomes their Employability Plan. RSS funds may not be used for long-term training programs such as vocational training that last for more than a year or educational programs that are not intended to lead to employment within a year.

3. On-The-Job Training

Training provided at the employment site that is expected to result in full-time, permanent, unsubsidized employment with the employer who is providing the training.

4. Skills Recertification

Services that assist previously trained refugees to obtain skills and licenses necessary to resume practice/operation in the U.S., such as a medical nurse. May also include short-term preparation for the General Education Diploma (GED) when the diploma is required by an employer for employment or advancement, or by a state licensing board for registration for a licensing examination.

5. Automobile Driver's Training

Includes driver's education when provided as part of an Individual Employability Plan.

6. English Language Training (ELT)

ELT is a course of instruction for non-native English speakers' equivalent to grade levels 0-6, that includes basic: literacy, grammar, syntax, vocabulary and oral English with an emphasis on acquisition of survival and vocational English. This includes completing the ELT assessment and ELT plan. Emphasis must be placed on English as it relates to obtaining and retaining a job.

7. English Language Training Transportation

Transportation when necessary for participation in ELT.

C. Additional Refugee Support Services

1. Outreach

These are activities designed to familiarize refugees with available services, to explain the purpose of these services, and facilitate access to these services.

STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL
REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES

2. Case Management

The process of handling, collaborating and directing the overall care of a refugee household or individual client in adjusting to a new environment and culture. This would include coordinating services with other NC Refugee Service Providers, developing appropriate service plans, providing individual and family counseling, and strengthening and supporting the ability of a refugee individual or family to achieve and maintain economic self-sufficiency and family stability.

3. Information and Referral Services

Referral to appropriate resources and making arrangements for necessary services. Individuals who cannot be served, or cannot be served promptly, are referred or connected to appropriate resources.

4. Social Adjustment

a. Emergency Services:

- assessment and short-term case management
- counseling to persons or families in a perceived crisis
- referral to appropriate resources

b. Health-related Services:

- information and referral to appropriate medical resources
- assistance in scheduling appointments and obtaining services
- counseling to individuals or families to help them understand and identify their physical and mental health needs and maintain or improve their physical and mental health
- assistance during required treatments and follow-up

5. Transportation

Actual trips provided to refugees when necessary for participation in a service other than employment and ELT. Whenever possible, the least expensive option shall be utilized, such as public transportation or mileage reimbursement.

6. Translation and Interpretation

Oral interpretation in conjunction with the Refugee's Service Plan when necessary for essential activities of life, such as medical appointments, mental health counseling, applying for and training associated with public benefits, employment services, child or adult protective services, or any time as needed in emergencies or crisis situations.

STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL
REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES

7. Citizenship and Naturalization Preparation Services

This includes ELT and US Civics Instruction to prepare refugees for citizenship, application assistance for naturalization, and assistance to disabled refugees in obtaining disability waivers from English and civics requirements for naturalization, and representation at the citizenship interview when needed and appropriate. Also included is application assistance for adjustment to legal permanent resident status or other relevant immigration documents such as Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

V. APPLICATION PROCESS

A. Intake Interview

All newly arriving refugees will be assessed for state funded refugee social services. Additionally, eligible refugees residing in the service area of a state funded program, who directly request services, will also be assessed for enrollment. Particular emphasis is given to client employability, as all employable adults will be enrolled in employment services within thirty (30) days of arrival or initial client request. Since the local Department of Social Services (DSS) promptly notifies the refugee service provider when a refugee applies for cash assistance, a concentrated effort must be made by the refugee employment provider staff to prepare the cash recipient for job placement in the shortest time possible. This DSS notification assures that cash assistance recipients are known to the Refugee Service Provider and can be enrolled in employment services within 30 days of receipt of benefits. All appropriate forms mentioned below must be completed on each employable adult at the time of intake.

The NC Refugee Service Providers through the SRO has the responsibility for intake, initial determination and re-determination of eligibility for service(s). This includes:

- taking applications for services
- determining the eligibility status of each individual for the service(s) requested
- determining the period of time for which service(s) are authorized
- notifying the client of the decision regarding eligibility

B. Service Plan Development

After a refugee requests any of the refugee social services, a Service Plan must be developed for each client on either the DSS-6232, **North Carolina State Refugee Office** Employability Plan **OR** the DSS-6231, North Carolina State Refugee Office Service Plan. The case plan provides the tool to assess and determine the client's current situation, needs and indicate which services will be provided. Once the plan is completed and all signatures obtained, the Employability or Service Plan is executed, and a copy shall be maintained in the client file.

1. Service Plan

When a client requests services exclusive of employment, the provider will complete the DSS-6231, **North Carolina State Refugee Office Service** Plan at the time the client is enrolled in a social service. Once the Plan is completed and all signatures obtained, the plan is executed, and a copy maintained in the client file.

STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL
REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES

2. Employment Plan

When a client requests employment services the following must occur:

- a. Complete the DSS-6232, **North Carolina State Refugee Office** Employability Plan at the time the client is enrolled in an employment-related service. The purpose of the plan is to provide a tool for the employment staff and client to assess and evaluate the skills, abilities and interests of the client to determine potential employment opportunities and appropriate placement. It is critical and required that this Plan is completed thoroughly with each employable adult in the case who is looking for employment.

Additionally, this Plan shall be completed anytime a client contacts the service provider to obtain any employment service outlined in Section III of this manual. Once the Plan is completed and all signatures obtained, the Employability Plan is executed, and a copy maintained in the client file.

- b. The DSS-6230, **North Carolina State Refugee Office** Family Self-Sufficiency Plan is developed with the refugee in conjunction with the Employability Plan. The purpose of this Plan is to provide a means to assist the client in determining the amount of income required to become economically self-sufficient and the amount of resources which will be available to the client.

Employment staff must complete the Plan at initial intake prior to the provision of services and for every family for whom employment services are provided. It shall also be completed anytime the client, or a member of their family has a change in employment status. Additionally, this plan shall be completed if the client has not been actively receiving services from the provider agency for an extended period of time but returns for any service that is provided through the NC SRO program.

3. English Language Training (ELT) Plan

English language training programs are designed to develop listening, speaking and writing skills essential for securing and maintaining employment in the United States. These programs help refugees move toward economic self-sufficiency and socio-cultural competency in their daily lives. NC Refugee Service Providers must adhere to the following ELT requirements and procedures:

- a. Develop the DSS-6233, **North Carolina State Refugee Office** Client (ELT) Service Plan at intake. The ELT staff and the client use the Plan to determine ELT goals and to list the steps that will be taken to attain those goals. Complete the Plan at the time the client enters into a state funded ELT service. This form shall be kept in the ELT section of the client's case file.

STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL
REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES

- b. The DSS-6234, **North Carolina State Refugee Office** ELT Learner Initial Assessment Form is used to assess the client's English language proficiency and English literacy, and to determine the appropriate level of ELT to be provided by the refugee service provider. The Form shall be completed by the ELT staff upon client arrival and prior to enrollment in ELT classes. When this is not possible, the assessment must be completed within the first ten (10) days of class. This form shall be completed a 2nd time upon exiting the program or at the end of 6 months (whichever comes first). The 2nd assessment shall be used as a tool to determine the progress of the client. If the client continues to remain in the ELT class after the 2nd assessment, the instructor may use other ELT Assessment forms based on the curriculum that is being used with the client. This form shall be kept in the ELT section of the client's case file.
- c. ELT Case File Documentation:
- Progress notes updating ELT information should be maintained in the client's case file for other staff to utilize when working with the client.
 - The ELT section of the DSS-6235, **North Carolina State Refugee Office** Quarterly Review Form must be kept updated with quarterly information regarding the client and their ELT status. This form shall be kept in the client's case file for other staff to utilize when working with the client.
 - Included in the client's ELT case file shall be Proof of Eligibility and a completed DSS-6237, North Carolina State Refugee Office Client Rights Form.
- d. If a case is closed and then reopened, a new ELT Service Plan must be completed along with a new ELT Assessment to determine the present status of the client. Both documents shall be used to meet the current needs and placement for the client. These forms shall be kept in the client's file for other staff to utilize when working with the client.
- e. NC Refugee Service Providers will arrange English Language instruction using varied approaches depending on the needs of the refugee. NC Refugee Service Providers shall arrange instruction at times and places convenient to refugees. ELT instruction must be held concurrent with employment and coordinated with employment services for employable adults.
- f. NC Refugee Service Providers must utilize established adult education programs, computer assisted English, on-site neighborhood training, one-on-one tutors, work site training, formal class language training and volunteer one-on-one tutors.

STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL
REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES

- g.** NC Refugee Service Providers must ensure that the ELT program addresses:
- Special needs for refugee women (e.g. childcare, transportation);
 - Strategies to ensure refugees continue to participate in ESL classes; after they go to work;
 - ELT classes in locations accessible to refugees and in timeframes outside normal working hours; and
 - Offering Basic, Intermediate and Advanced levels.

4. Confidentiality and Clients Rights

NC Refugee Service Provider Staff engage applicants in a non-judgmental explanation of roles and responsibilities resulting in a mutual, written understanding of expectations. At initial intake, clients receive and are helped to understand a written summary of their rights and responsibilities, including:

- a description of the client's rights, including the obligations the organization has to the client
 - basic expectations for the use of the organization's services
 - hours that services are available
 - rules, expectations, and other factors that can result in discharge or termination of services
 - a clear explanation of how to register complaints, grievances, or appeals.
- a.** The DSS-6236, **North Carolina State Refugee Office** Informed Consent for Release of Information Form is completed to ensure that the refugee client has complete understanding of his or her right to not allow information about them to be released or obtained by outside entities without their written consent. After all signatures are secured, the form is included in the client file onsite with the NC Refugee Service Providers and a copy given to the client.
- b.** The DSS-6237, **North Carolina State Refugee Office** Client Rights Form is completed at intake to help him or her understand rights afforded to them when enrolled in state funded social services. After all signatures are secured, the Form is included in the client file onsite with the NC Refugee Service Providers and a copy given to the client.

STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL
REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES

- c. The DSS-6239A, **North Carolina State Refugee Office** Mutual Responsibility Agreement and the DSS-6239B, Plan of Action Requirements are completed at intake when a client is enrolled in state funded employment services. Employment staff and the client review the Mutual Responsibility Agreement and develop the Plan of Action with the commitment of each party to abide by the responsibilities and conditions outlined.

VI. ONGOING ASSESSMENT AND DOCUMENTATION

Case Records are required for each client served in the NC State Refugee Office. At a minimum, all required forms outlined in this Chapter must be completed and confidentially maintained onsite at the service provider location. These files must be well organized and document all services received by the client through the NC SRO program. To demonstrate ongoing assessment and progress of each client, use the following forms:

A. Quarterly Reviews

The DSS-6235, **North Carolina State Refugee Office** Quarterly Review Form is a tool for the refugee service provider to evaluate the progress and current situation of the client receiving services in the Refugee Assistance Program. The form shall be completed 90 days after the client's arrival or the date the client enrolls in the program and every 90 days thereafter, as long as the client is being actively served under the Program. The refugee service provider's case manager, employment counselor, and/or ELT instructor assigned to the client shall complete the form. This form shall be kept in the client's case file.

B. Case Notes

Case and progress notes must be completed and kept current for each client that has entered into a state funded service. Case file notes shall include type, location, date, time spent and duration for each service provided. Additionally, information shall be included regarding the consequence of the service or activity and plan, if any, for subsequent follow-up. The DSS-1325, NC Narrative Documentation Record is available for use by NC Refugee Service Providers. This form shall be kept in the client's case file for other staff to utilize when working with the client.

VII. ADMINISTRATIVE AND PERFORMANCE REPORTING

Each refugee service provider funded by the SRO is required to submit specific documentation to fulfill its contractual obligations. These requirements include the management and report of specific service data as a condition of reimbursement and maintaining satisfactory status as a service provider with the State.

The SRO, with state support, utilize NC Refugee Information System (RIS) to assist NC Refugee Service Providers with reporting responsibilities. NC Refugee Service Providers enter and retrieve data from the statewide automated data system and produce mandatory performance reports.

STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL
REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES

Several periodic reports are submitted to the SRO to demonstrate effective goal planning and performance as required by the federal Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement:

A. Annual Outcome Goal Plan (AGP)

NC Refugee Service Providers submit a plan documenting program goals for the purposes of developing and improving services to refugees. NC Refugee Service Providers project annual service goals for the upcoming months and produce performance results for the prior twelve (12) months on the Annual Goal Plan (AGP) or another narrative format.

B. Periodic Performance Reports

NC Refugee Service Providers submit semi-annual, trimester, and monthly performance reports to demonstrate progress toward program goals at each interval. Specific instructions are outlined in the service provider state level contract.

STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL
REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES

INDEX

Annual Goal Plan (AGP)	11
Determination	6
DSS-1325, NC Narrative Documentation Record	10
DSS-6230, NC RAP Family Self-Sufficiency Plan	7
DSS-6231, NC RAP Service Plan	6
DSS-6232, NC RAP Employability Plan	7
DSS-6233, NC RAP Client (ELT) Service Plan	7
DSS-6234, NC RAP ELT Learner Initial Assessment Form	8
DSS-6235, NC RAP Quarterly Review Form	8, 10
DSS-6236, NC RAP Informed Consent for Release of Information Form	9
DSS-6237, NC RAP Client Rights Form	8, 9
DSS-6239A, NC RAP Refugee Mutual Responsibility Agreement	10
DSS-6239B, Plan of Action Requirements	10
Eligible Refugees	1, 2, 6
ELT	2
Employment Services	1, 2, 3
English Language Training	1, 4, 7, 8
NC Refugee Information System (RIS)	10
NC Refugee Service Providers	2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
NC State Refugee Office (SRO)	2
Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)	1
Refugee Assistance Program	10
Refugee Support Services (RSS)	1
RSS	1, 4
Self-Sufficiency	1, 3, 5
SRO	2, 6, 10, 11
U.S. Department of State (DOS)	1
VOLAG	1