

BUREAU OF REFUGEE SERVICES BRIEFING

- The Bureau of Refugee Services (BRS) is a 100% federally funded state agency under the Iowa Department of Human Services Division of Field Operations.
- BRS has 20 FTEs (filled) and an operating budget of almost \$3.4 Million, of which almost \$1 Million is straight pass through to DHS program funds to reimburse the state for refugee cash and refugee medical assistance, and to provide discretionary grants with Des Moines Public Schools and a potential elderly project in Polk County.
- BRS has been in existence since 1975 and has three primary service programs:
 - The Reception and Placement of newly arriving refugees through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Department of State. This program serves 230-300 persons annually with a budget of \$456,000.
 - The provision of employment, employment related and social services for refugees living in Iowa. This program serves 550 persons annually with a budget of \$905,590.
 - The provision of Promise Jobs services to refugees living in Iowa funded through the TANF Family Investment Program. This program serves 570 persons annually with a budget of \$560,000.
- On December 1, 2009, the Bureau of Refugee Services (BRS) was given notice by the U.S. Department of State that FFY10 will be the last year that the Bureau will receive a Cooperative Agreement to participate in the reception and placement program, because BRS does not meet the qualifications to be considered for participation in the program. Specifically, BRS is not a non-profit organization with multiple locations across the United States and is challenged to meet the private financial requirements necessary. In total, BRS receives \$456,300 for this purpose, \$135,000 for personnel and administrative costs and \$321,300 for services based on 230 refugees.
- In addition to not being granted a continued exemption to qualify as a National Resettlement Agency, *BRS does not received sufficient funding to support its resettlement efforts.*
 - Through December 31, 2009, BRS received \$900 for each refugee (103 refugees) in the reception and placement program which is used for initial housing, utilities, clothing, food, as well as staff costs. However, the actual average cost of resettlement is now \$3,500. The increase is due to the substantial and continuing increase in housing costs; the down turn in the economy which has increased the length of time it takes for refugees to obtain employment from an average of 3 months to more than 6 months; and the lack of education and work experience and health related issues of newly arriving refugees. In order to cut costs, BRS has had to shift more of the burden to the newly arriving refugees requiring them to spend 80% of their cash assistance grants on housing. In SFY 08, BRS had to "borrow" \$50,000 in funding from its Office of Refugee Resettlement Social Services Funds, as well as redirect resources from employment services and project management to supplement the resettlement program. The increase in Administrative costs from \$88,000 in FY 09 to \$134,000 for FY 10 will enable BRS to reimburse the \$50,000 owed to the Office of Refugee Resettlement Social Services Funds.

- Although the U.S. Department of State recently announced the per capita grant would increase to \$1,800 effective January 1, 2010, this amount will still be insufficient for personnel and administrative costs and cannot be used to offset any costs for refugees for the 103 refugees who arrived prior to January 1, 2010.
- In addition, the Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Department of State requires that BRS secure private funding for some of the costs of the Reception and Placement program. This year, BRS indicated that it would attempt to secure \$50,000.
- Therefore, even though BRS will begin to receive \$1,800 per refugee for reception and placement effective January 1, 2010, it will still need \$250,000-300,000 of state dollars to meet the average cost of providing service.
- BRS is one of three agencies that have been providing reception and placement services in Iowa. The other two agencies are Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) and Catholic Charities, Des Moines Diocese.
- On January 26, 2010, Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) announced they would suspend their resettlement of refugees through the reception and placement program effective January 29, and would end their supplemental services to refugees July 30, 2010. Their decision was also due to resettlement costs continuing to exceed revenues.
- The notification from the U.S. Department of State that BRS will no longer qualify to participate in the reception and placement program will result in a reduction of \$135,000 in personnel and administrative funding for BRS. *No immediate reduction in staff is necessary in FFY 10*, as the reduction can be managed through attrition and early retirements. BRS can better serve refugees by focusing staff resources on providing employment and Promise Jobs services, while resettlement services are provided by non-profits.
- The effect on BRS funding in *future years* depends on the number of refugees resettled in Iowa needing employment services. *BRS and LSI have provided 84% of resettlement services* for newly arriving refugees in Iowa over the past three years. If no other non-profit steps in to provide the resettlement services that BRS and LSI were providing, the resulting reduction in refugees being resettled in Iowa would progressively reduce the formula dollars granted to BRS from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement and may eventually reduce the Promise Jobs funding as well.

Agency	FFY 07	FFY 08	FFY 09	Total	Projected FY10
Bureau of Refugee Services	202	279	426	907	230
Lutheran Services of Iowa	167	203	354	724	300
Des Moines Diocese	66	111	129	306	100
Total	435	593	909	1937	630



United States Department of State

Bureau of Population, Refugees,
and Migration

Washington, D.C. 20520

December 1, 2009

Mr. John Wilken
Bureau of Refugee Programs
Iowa Department of Human Services
1200 University Avenue, Suite D
Des Moines, Iowa 50314

Dear Mr. Wilken:

I am writing to thank you and the State of Iowa for years of dedicated service to thousands of refugees as a participant in the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. Iowa has been a valued partner of the Department of State since November 17, 1975 when the first Laotian Tai Dam refugees arrived, and has gone on to resettle more than 13,000 individuals. Iowa's refugee resettlement history tracks that of U.S. resettlement history, continually adjusting to serve different populations throughout the years. The Iowa program was built on the dedication of Iowa Governor Robert Ray as he responded to President Gerald Ford's urgent request for Americans to resettle refugees from Southeast Asia. Governor Ray's dedication has been carried on by each successive administration. Iowa's program philosophy of promoting jobs over welfare has assisted refugees to establish themselves and become valued members of their new communities. Iowa's role in refugee resettlement is commendable and I thank you for your years of service.

The Iowa Bureau of Refugee Programs functions as an affiliate with headquarters funding, does not meet the criteria of a non-profit organization with multiple locations across the United States, and is challenged to meet the private financial requirements necessary to serve refugees through the Reception and Placement Program. Therefore, this is to inform you that FY2010 will be the last fiscal year that Iowa will receive a Cooperative Agreement to participate in the Reception and Placement Program. We are ready to discuss any questions you may wish to discuss with us at your convenience.

Admissions office staff will be pleased to work with you throughout this year to ensure a smooth transition in the closure of your reception and placement program. Please feel free to contact Barbara Day or Susan Kyle with any questions.

Again, many thanks to the state of Iowa for your outstanding contributions to the U.S. resettlement program.

Sincerely,

Theresa L. Rusch

Director

Office of Admissions

Cc: David Robinson
Eric Hembree

