A. Program Intent and Overview

1. Program intent

The Refugee Program is designed to serve single adults and childless couples (and in rare circumstances emancipated minors) with cash assistance, medical assistance and employment services, who do not meet the eligibility standards for other programs administered by the Department of Human Services (DHS). Individuals must have been admitted or paroled into the United States as: Refugees, Asylees, Cuban/Haitian Entrants (which includes Cuban/Haitian Parolees), Amerasians from Vietnam, Victims of Trafficking and Iraqi/Afghan SIVs. The single adult or childless couple must be in the first eight months of arrival in the U.S. or from the date in which one of these eligible statuses were granted.

For ease of use, when the Family Services Manual refers to ‘refugees,’ it is including all the alien status mentioned above. When the need arises to discuss only those admitted specifically as refugees, it will be stated as such.

Remember, TANF is a prior resource, so if a family with dependent children applies for cash benefits, look at TANF. There is not a separate type of TANF program for newly arrived refugees – if they are eligible for TANF, they will receive TANF. (See TANF rules). Also, keep in mind that the eight-month time limit is for REF only, not TANF.

The program intent is to:

- Provide for the effective resettlement of refugees and to assist them to achieve economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible;
- Provide an opportunity for individuals to assess their own strengths, needs, and goals;
- Offer screenings to identify client strengths, needs, and barriers to self-sufficiency;
- Help individuals recognize their own capacity and find employment or other alternatives, so they can be independent from ongoing public benefits.

2. Program overview

The first refugees who began resettling in the Portland Metropolitan area in 1975 came mostly from the Southeast Asian nations of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. The Refugee Program was created to serve their needs for resettlement services. The Southeast Asians were soon joined by refugees from Eastern Europe and Afghanistan. Since 1975, refugees have continued to resettle in Oregon from all over the world. While many have
since moved out of Oregon, many have also chosen to relocate here after initially resettling in other states.

The Refugee Program is funded by the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). These ORR funds are used by DHS to provide cash assistance, medical assistance, case services and employment services to newly arriving refugees who do not qualify for other programs.

Starting February 1, 2018, all newly arriving refugees with a REF or TANF filing date of February 1, 2018, will receive all benefits and services through their local branch or designated branch office (as directed by district) – no matter where they reside. Those refugees who were served through RCSP and closed prior to February 1, 2018, but are reapplying for benefits will continue to be served through RCSP for the remainder of their eight-month limit.

The Refugee Case Services Project (RCSP) is an alternative provider model that provided cash assistance to most refugees (both REF and TANF) who have arrived since October 1, 1997, in the Portland Metro area. Case services and cash assistance administration are supplied by Portland Resettlement Agencies.

Eligible refugees participating in RCSP receive SNAP benefits from either the Northeast Portland Self-Sufficiency branch office or their local DHS Self-Sufficiency branch office. It is their choice.

Refugees who live outside the RCSP service area receive all of their benefits through their local DHS Self-Sufficiency branch office.

For those refugees who reside in Multnomah, Washington or Clackamas Counties: English language training, vocational training, support services and job placement services are provided by the Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS) project at the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) to refugees during their first 12 months in the U.S.

Refugees follow the normal Oregon Health Authority (OHA) procedure when applying for medical assistance. For those refugees not eligible for medical assistance through OHA, the Refugee Program provides time-limited medical assistance through DHS.