

February 25, 2019

Dear Legislators,

As the sole refugee resettlement agency in Vermont, USCRI has been providing comprehensive, wrap-around services (e.g. case management, employment, English Language Learning) to refugees in Vermont for more than 35 years. Nearly all staff members are multilingual, and the majority are former refugees themselves.

Changes to Federal regulations effective October 1, 2010 meant that the State of Vermont would begin serving newly-arrived refugees under its TANF (Reach Up) Program. After evaluating its options, the State decided that it would make sense to award USCRI Vermont a contract to provide RU Case Management and Employment Services to refugees and other New Americans.

Since that time, USCRI Vermont has provided extremely effective services, with a very high percentage of clients becoming economically self-sufficient and exiting RU cash assistance due to employment within several months. This leads to a very high "Work Participation Rate" (WPR) among our RU clients; one that is well above the district average and which helps raise the average WPR for the district (see attachment).

Many of our clients, despite achieving economic self-sufficiency and exiting the RU caseload, face challenges with becoming oriented to life in Vermont. USCRI Vermont is funded to provide resettlement case management for only 90 days. However, after the initial 90-day period ends, clients are still in need of support. USCRI's RU case manager provides a great deal of ongoing support while clients are in RU or are working and enrolled in Reach Ahead. Clients still need help navigating social service, medical, education, and housing program bureaucracies; reading mail and communicating with others; and understanding cultural expectations and local laws.

Prior to this contract, USCRI found that clients that enrolled in RU after exiting USCRI programs struggled to work with a RU system that was not culturally and linguistically suitable. For the sake of our clients' well-being, we urge you not to discontinue funding for this valuable partnership.

Sincerely,

  
Anjila Merdzanovic  
Director, Vermont Field Office

Attachment(s): Caseload & Work Participation Rate Data

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Caseload & Work Participation Rate Data from DCF/ESD/RU Program

Federal Fiscal Year	Quarter	USCRI Vermont		USCRI Vermont	
		Total RU Caseload	Total RA Caseload	All Family WPR	Two Parent WPR
FY17	Q1	46	34	65.6%	79.0%
	Q2	41	45	57.6%	78.2%
	Q3	44	37	56.5%	74.3%
	Q4	32	45	74.0%	80.2%
FY18	Q1	16	47	78.5%	90.8%
	Q2	36	36	56.9%	90.8%
	Q3	41	38	61.0%	95.4%
	Q4	32	44	63.9%	95.0%
<b>AVG</b>		<b>36</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>64.3%</b>	<b>85.5%</b>

RA = Reach Ahead  
 RU = Reach Up  
 WPR = Work Participation Rate

USCRI RU 'All Family Rates' are 22% higher than Burlington District; 'Two Parent' are 34.6% higher than Burlington District

Month	Burlington District		Statewide	
	All Family WPR	Two Parent WPR	All Family WPR	Two Parent WPR
Mar-18	28.5%	72.5%	26.6%	40.7%
Apr-18	29.9%	64.4%	27.5%	42.5%
May-18	29.3%	66.7%	26.6%	40.7%
Jun-18 *				
Jul-18	30.9%	60.0%	26.7%	42.5%
Aug-18 *				
Sep-18	29.8%	52.0%	26.7%	42.5%
<b>AVG</b>	<b>29.7%</b>	<b>63.1%</b>	<b>26.8%</b>	<b>41.8%</b>

\* Data not provided by the State