UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINORS PROGRAM

Background

- The Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) program developed in 1979 to address the needs of thousands of children in Southeast Asia, who entered the U.S. as refugees, without a parent or guardian to care for them. Since 1980, almost 12,000 minors have entered the URM program. At its peak in 1985, ORR provided protection to almost 3,828 children in care. In FY 2007, in various states, ORR had 600 children in URM care.

- Two lead voluntary agencies (volags) --- The Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) --- work in conjunction with Department of State and ORR on the unaccompanied refugee minor program. Affiliate sites are located in: Phoenix, AZ; San Jose, CA; Washington, DC; Miami, FL; Boston, MA; Grand Rapids, MI; Lansing, MI; Jackson, MS; Fargo, ND; Rochester, NY; Syracuse, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Dallas, TX; Houston, TX; Salt Lake City, UT; Seattle, WA; and Tacoma, WA.

- The URM program assists unaccompanied minors in developing appropriate skills to enter adulthood and to achieve economic and social self-sufficiency. Services provided through the program include English language training; career planning; health/mental health needs; socialization skills/adjustment support; family reunification; care and placement appropriate to the child’s needs; education/training and linguistic/ethnic/religious preservation. Minors must be under the age of 18 in order to qualify for the program, but can remain, in most cases, until age 20 or 21 depending on state guidelines for emancipation. Generally, unaccompanied minors are not eligible for adoption.

- Unaccompanied youth eligible for the URM program include refugees, Cuban and Haitian entrants, asylees and victims of a severe form of trafficking. In addition, accompanied minors can become eligible for URM program services after arrival in the U.S. through a reclassification process (e.g. following family breakdown, a death in the family, etc.).

- ORR provides for State URM administration program regulations at 45CFR 400 Subpart H – Child Welfare Services. Required reporting forms include the ORR-1 (budget estimate), ORR-6 (schedules A and B), ORR-3 (placement report) and ORR-4 (individual minor progress report). These report forms and their instructions are found in this section.