**United States Conference of Catholic Bishops/**

**Migration and Refugee Services**

**Program Operations Manual**

**Afghan Placement and Assistance**

**Community Partners**



**Introduction**

The Afghan Placement and Assistance (APA) program is designed to provide initial resettlement services to Afghan parolees who entered the United States after August 15, 2021. In order to build sufficient capacity to resettle the total caseload of these individuals, USCCB has opened APA up to community partners across the United States to provide initial resettlement services to this group of individuals.

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**Funding**

The APA program is funded through the [Cooperative Agreement](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/SPRMCO21CA3291_APA-Cooperative-Agreement_Redacted.pdf)with the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. The purpose of these Guidelines is to provide direction to local agencies (hereinafter) “Community Partners” that through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agree to provide case management services during the first 90 days post-arrival. Community Partners are established organizations which have accepted in a written agreement (MOU) with the USCCB/MRS responsibility to ensure provision of initial resettlement services to Afghan parolees sponsored by the USCCB/MRS. Individuals or informal groups may not serve as Community Partners.

**Eligible Population**

Eligible clients for APA services include Afghan individuals who arrived to the United States on or after August 15, 2021 and were granted Humanitarian Parole. Individuals may be assigned to a Community Partner through the Hummingbird Database on the behalf of USCCB. Eligible clients also have the option of requesting post-arrival APA services as a “walk-in” case.

**Afghan Placement and Assistance (APA)**

The Department of State’s Reception and Placement program provides assistance for Afghan parolees to settle in the U.S. It supplies APA Community Partners a per capita amount to provide clients with basic necessities and core services within their first three months (30-90 days) in the United States. The goals of the APA program are to ensure that newly arrived refugees: (a) are placed in a safe, stable environment, (b) can navigate appropriate and relevant systems, (c) are connected to means of ongoing support for their family, and (d) understand their surroundings and situation.

The APA’s detailed guidelines are laid out in the current [Cooperative Agreement](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/SPRMCO21CA3291_APA-Cooperative-Agreement_Redacted.pdf)(“FY 2021 Afghan Placement and Ass Basic Terms of the Cooperative Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops”). A copy of the agreement is also available on [MRSConnect](http://www.mrsconnect.org/). This Program Operations Manual highlights *key* portions of the APA placements. For more detailed APA Program Management aspects, staff members must consult the full-length Cooperative Agreement.

**MRS Organizational Structure**

Migration and Refugee Services (MRS) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is the official agency of the Catholic Bishops of the United States in the areas of migration and refugee affairs, among other activities. USCCB serves as the public policy agency of the bishops. USCCB assists the bishops in their service to the Church in the United States by uniting the People of God, where voluntary collective action on a broad interdiocesan level is needed. USCCB coordinates the social concerns of the Church at the national and interdiocesan level. MRS is an office of the USCCB.

In addressing the concerns of the bishops in matters pertaining to migration and refugee affairs, USCCB/MRS engages in worldwide activities. It maintains relationships with government, voluntary agencies, relief, and humanitarian organizations, both international and domestic. USCCB/MRS works closely with United States government agencies, such as the Departments of State, Health and Human Services, and Homeland Security.

**USCCB/MRS Case Management Approach**

The ethical and social work standards that inform the USCCB/MRS approach to assisting refugees are described in the organization’s [Refugee Resettlement Case Management Manual:](https://www.mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/MRS-Case-Management-Manual.pdf)

**Ethical Standard 5. Cultural Competence and Social Diversity.** Social workers should follow these four guidelines: a. Understand the concept of culture and its impact on human behavior and society. b. Know and understand the client’s culture and its impact on service delivery. c. Demonstrate competence in providing services that are sensitive to clients’ cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups. d. Obtain education to better understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with regard to race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, political beliefs, religion, and other social attributes.” (p. 24)

**Case Management:** According to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), case management is a method of providing services whereby a case manager assesses the needs of a client and “arranges, coordinates, monitors, evaluates, and advocates for a package of multiple services to meet the specific client’s complex needs.” The primary goal of case management is to optimize the client’s independent functioning by providing quality services aimed to maximize the client’s physical, social, and emotional well-being in the most efficient and effective manner.

**Principles of Confidentiality:** Confidentiality is essential to ensure the safety and security of refugees and their families. In order to respect the client’s right to privacy, the case manager will explain who is required to know information about the client’s case, who may request information, and who will not have access to information without the client’s informed consent. Whenever information is requested by an entity other than DOS and USCCB/MRS, the client will be informed by the case manager of the reason for the request and the possible impact of releasing information. If consent is given, the case file will then include a Release of Confidential Information, clearly stating the specific information to be exchanged and the expiration of authorization to exchange such information.

**APA Core Services**

For a period of not less than thirty (30) days after arrival, Afghan parolees are provided the following minimum standards of service, the details of which are explained at great length in the [Cooperative Agreement](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/SPRMCO21CA3291_APA-Cooperative-Agreement_Redacted.pdf). The community partners must ensure;

* **Airport pickup** – Refugees assigned to it are met at the airport of final destination and transported to furnished living quarters.
* **Interpretation** – That the refugees assigned to it are provided with appropriate language interpretation as needed.
* **Housing –** In some cases, clients will be arranged with housing provided by the UST that is decent, safe, and sanitary based on federal housing quality standards or local and state standards if they are higher than federal standards. However, if the UST is unable to assist with housing or if the case does not have a UST (free case/NUST), the community partner is responsible for assisting the client with identifying and securing housing with the same standards listed above.
* **Furniture and household items:** The following items do not need to be new, but must be clean, in good condition, and functional: beds, kitchen table, couches, lamps, table wear, food preparation utensils, toiletries, etc.
* **Food and clothing** – Culturally appropriate, ready-to-eat food available upon arrival. If necessary, clients are to be provided with appropriate seasonal clothing required for work, school and everyday use.
* **Pocket money** – An appropriate amount of pocket money for each adult throughout the first thirty (30) days to allow independent spending at the client’s discretion.
* **Intake**– An intake to be conducted within five (5) business days of arrival.
* **Home visits** – At least two (2) home visits within thirty (30) days of arrival, which shall include an assessment of the welfare, living conditions and any current or expected needs of the client(s), and assistance with any basic needs. Virtual home visits are permitted.

*For any case involving an* ***Attached Refugee Minor (ARM),*** *specific home visit and reporting requirements apply, including an additional (third) home visit. Even in cases where the placement is remote, a home visit is* ***required*** *for the Suitability Determination, 30-Day ARM Follow-up Evaluation, and 90-Day ARM Follow-up Evaluations. For further information, see Remote Placement Coordinator or Refugee Child Protection Coordinator.*

* **Transportation** – Assistance with or arrangement for transportation to job interviews and job training.
* **Cultural Orientation and Assessment** – See section on Cultural Orientation within the Program Operations Manual.
* **Applications for social security cards and public assistance** – Assistance in applying for social security card(s) and public assistance (including food stamps, Medicaid, TANF/RCA) within seven (7) working days of arrival. Copies of the Social Security card for each member of the family are to be included in the case file.
* **Assistance in filing change of address form** – Assistance with filing AR-11 to USCIS/DHS within 10 calendar days of arrival
* **Assistance in accessing employment services** – Assistance with enrollment in employment services within fourteen (14) working days of arrival.
* **Assistance in accessing English language programs** – Assistance with enrollment in English language programs, as appropriate, within fourteen (14) working days of arrival.
* **Service plan** – A service plan should be developed for each client within thirty (30) calendar days.
* **Assistance in registering children in school** – Assistance with meeting school enrollment requirements and registering children for school within thirty (30) days of arrival.
* **Assistance in accessing health screenings and appropriate health services:** Ensure that every refugee has a health assessment within ninety (90) days of arrival.
* **Selective Service –** Assistance with registering eligible cases in Selective Service within thirty (30) days of arrival.
* **Attached Refugee Minor services (ARM) –** See the guidelines for assisting attached refugee minors’ section.

**Cultural Orientation**

During the initial reception and placement period, the Community Partner shall ensure that all adult clients are provided orientation, with appropriate language interpretation if needed. Written orientation materials in an appropriate language can be made available to the refugee upon arrival. Cultural orientation materials can be found on the [CORE](https://coresourceexchange.org/) website. Documentation of delivery and assessment of understanding for each refugee adult should be recorded on [APA-09 Cultural Orientation Checklist.](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/APA-09-Cultural-Orientation-Checklist.docx)

Orientation content that must be covered includes:

* Role of the Local Resettlement Agency
* Immigration Status
* English
* Public Assistance
* U.S. Laws
* Your New Community
* Employment
* Health
* Budgeting and Personal Finance
* Housing
* Hygiene
* Safety
* Cultural Adjustment
* Education
* Transportation

**Case File Documentation**

Information on every client must be filed and maintained by the Community Partner for at least three (3) years from the date of program enrollment. Each case shall contain evidence of required basic needs support and core service delivery. The following chart lists features a directory of required case file information (left column) and lists forms that are available for community partners.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Case File Information** | **Form**  |
| Case note log | [Case Note Log Template](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/APA-Community-Partner-Template-Case-Note.xlsx) |
| Pre-arrival forms including housing supply checklist and housing safety checklist | [APA Housing Safety Checklist](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/APA-07-Home-Safety-Checklist.docx)[APA Housing Supply Checklist](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/APA-08-Housing-Supply-Checklist.docx) |
| Record of cash and in-kind support provided to meet the refugees' basic needs for at least the initial thirty (30)-day period | [Cash & In-Kind and Contributions Record Summary](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/APA-06A-Cash-In-Kind-Contributions-Record.docx)[Acknowledgement of Direct Assistance](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/RF-35-Receipt-Acknowledgment-of-Direct-Assistance-RP-APA.docx) |
| Record of home visits provided | [First Home Visit Form](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/APA-10-48-hour-Home-Visit-Report.docx)[30 Day Home Visit Form](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/APA-11-30-Day-Home-Visit-Report.docx)  |
| Record of public assistance applied for and received or denied | Benefit application and approval letter from public assistance office |
| Record of application for Social Security and a copy of the Social Security Card (**both sides)** | Social Security Application Receipt (if applicable) |
| Evidence that housing was provided in accordance with this agreement  | Lease |
| Evidence that an intake interview was conducted | [Client Intake Form](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/RF-6-Client_Intake_Form-RP-APA.docx) |
| Evidence that orientation was completed and understanding assessed | [Cultural Orientation Checklist](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/APA-09-Cultural-Orientation-Checklist.docx) |
| Evidence that the refugee was provided with information on immigration status and family reunion procedures, and assisted with completing and filing Affidavits of Relationship as appropriate | [Cultural Orientation Checklist](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/APA-09-Cultural-Orientation-Checklist.docx) and AORs (as applicable) |
| Evidence that the refugee was provided with information on the legal requirement to notify the U.S. Department of Homeland Security of each change of address and new address | [AR-11 Link](https://www.uscis.gov/ar-11) |
| Evidence that the legal requirement for males between the ages of 18 and 26 to register for the selective service within thirty (30) days of arrival has been completed (as appropriate) | [Selective Service Registration](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CEBayens%5CDocuments%5CRPP%20Documents%5CCultural%20Orientation%20Checklist) |
| Service Plan, including initial assessment of employability | [Service Plan](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/APA-03-Service-Plan.xlsx) |
| Copies of all necessary Attached Refugee Minor documentation, including Suitability Determinations for placement of refugee minors, 30-Day and 90-Day ARM Follow-up Evaluations, the child’s Best Interest Determination (BID), and signed statements concerning responsibilities and legal obligations in the state of residence, as relevant.  | [Attached Parolee Minor Reporting Requirements](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Attached-Parolee-Minor-Reporting-Requirements-APA.pdf)[Minor Codes](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Refugee-Minor-Code-Table.pdf) |
| A legible copy of the front and back of the I-94 form for each refugee in the case | [I-94 Retrieval](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home) |
| An Anchor/Relative Assessment form that will show the communication and acknowledgment of responsibilities for both parties.  | [Anchor/Relative Assessment](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/APA-Anchor-Relative-Assessment-Form.docx) |

**Guidelines for Per Capita Administrative Reimbursements**

The Community Partner will receive a per capita administration amount of $1050 for each client served. This amount is intended to cover staff time and operating expenses for service to these clients.

All expenditures related to APA activities, including program expenditures as well as disbursements for direct assistance, must be properly documented. Documentation is achieved by the proper and timely recording of transactions in accounting records. This includes a time reporting mechanism for staff working on the APA program.

Disbursements of funds should be made by checks authorized by appropriate APA staff. Charges for program costs incurred by other Community Partners providing services to the resettlement program should be properly recorded in the Community Partner’s accounting records.

Receipts for all expenditures for program expenses must be maintained in Community Partner’s offices. It is not necessary to submit receipts with requests to USCCB/MRS for reimbursement.

Documentation of expenditures must be maintained in Community Partner files and made available to USCCB/MRS staff, as requested during on-site reviews, as well as to auditors and federal monitors.

All per capita administrative expenses must be submitted in a timely manner.

**Guidelines for Direct Assistance Disbursements**

*The following APA guidelines for direct assistance disbursement apply to the disbursement of funding to clients:*

**Every client served under the APA Program**, whether a single or part of a family unit, an adult or child, **must receive a minimum of $1,225 in direct assistance support.** Disbursements to or on behalf of refugees must be made in accordance with requirements of the APA Cooperative Agreement (e.g. Basic Needs and Support, 8.C.4). Items that may be covered with this funding to the clients include direct cash, rent, clothing, or anything not available as donations.

The Community Partner should ensure that clear documentation is maintained in the case files, including a summary cover sheet of expenses, concerning all direct assistance disbursements made to or on behalf of the resettled clients. The summary sheet should be placed on top of all signed voucher documentation and/or receipts in the client’s case file.

Disbursements for direct assistance must be properly recorded in the Community Partner’s accounting records and authorized by appropriate APA staff. Disbursements for direct assistance should be made by check either to the client or to a vendor providing services or goods to the client. In either case, the client must sign and date the [Receipt of Acknowledgement of Direct Assistance](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/RF-35-Receipt-Acknowledgment-of-Direct-Assistance-RP-APA.docx). If the disbursement is made to a vendor, then properly identified receipts should be maintained in case files.

Direct assistance expenditures may only be distributed to clients once they have arrived and are within their APA service period (e.g. 30 – 90 days depending on when the agency determines that all service requirements have been met). **APA related expenditures incurred after 90 days will not be reimbursed by USCCB/MRS. However, the service provider is still obligated to provide any direct assistance amount not provided to clients by the 90th day using their own funds. Under the terms of the cooperative agreement, clients must receive all direct assistance.**

**Disbursements of direct assistance to clients are not to be made out to resettlement case workers except in cases of emergency**. In such cases, the case worker must certify in a statement signed by both the caseworker and the Community Partner director the reason(s) payment to the caseworker is necessary. **Prior approval is to be obtained from USCCB/MRS for this type of disbursement.**

To ensure that the per capita limitation is not exceeded on an annual basis, Community Partners should track these expenditures on a monthly basis using an internally-developed monitoring system. The Direct Assistance Budget by Case Report in MRIS also provides an overview of earned direct assistance and case reimbursements to help track direct assistance reimbursements. **To ensure that USCCB/MRS is able to accurately track direct assistance spending levels, and to ensure that Community Partners are reimbursed for these expenditures, reimbursement should be submitted to MRIS on a monthly basis within 30 days of the month the expenses were incurred. Late submissions after the 180th day after arrival will not be reimbursed.**

**Guidelines for Assisting Attached Parolee Minors**

During the initial reception and placement period, the Community Partner is required to facilitate necessary services and meet additional reporting obligations for Attached Parolee Minors (APM), in accordance with a child’s Minor Code. Attached Parolee Minors include Minor Codes M2, M3, M5, M6, and M7.

APM, as separated children, are among the most vulnerable populations in need of assistance, and therefore require additional follow-up and reporting obligations. Community Partners shall provide regular and personal contact with the minor for at least ninety (90) days following arrival, including a series of home visits and evaluative reports. A full list of relevant requirements and deadlines according to Minor Code, can be found on the [Attached Parolee Minor Reporting Requirements](https://mrsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Attached-Parolee-Minor-Reporting-Requirements-APA.pdf) reference sheet. Depending on the child’s Minor Code, the following may be required: a (pre- or post-arrival) Suitability Determination, 30-Day ARM follow-up Evaluation and 90-Day APM Follow-up Evaluation which are submitted to MRIS.

Caregivers for M2, M3, and M6 minors should also be oriented and assisted to understand state requirements for guardianship, foster care, other legal obligations, and child care practice in the local context. A State of Responsibility Form, outlining the above should be clearly explained to and signed by the child’s caretaker (“Responsible Adult”). Copies of the signed statement shall be given to the family unit and retained in the case file covering the minor.

APM case files should include a copy of all relevant APM reports according to the child’s Minor Code, the Best Interest Determination (BID) of the child, and a signed copy of the Statement of Responsibility Form for M2, M3, and M6 minors. APM case files should be readily identified and segregated.

**Pre- and Post-Arrival Suitability Determinations**

As part of the above requirements, the Community Partner shall conduct a home visit and Suitability Determination for all APM. The Suitability Determination includes a home visit and an overall evaluation of whether or not the placement is suitable for the child, to include an assessment of the following: (a) the nature and extent of any previous relationship between the child and the family unit prior to the minor’s arrival in this country; (b) the nature and extent of the current relationship between the child and others in the family unit; (c) whether the family unit is willing and able to provide ongoing care and supervision of the child, and how the family plans to provide for the child; (d) the family unit’s understanding of and intentions regarding securing legal responsibility for the child; and the requirements of state law, including whether the family unit must be licensed as a foster care provider or must acquire legal custody or guardianship so that the child may legally remain in the household.

The child’s care arrangement and M-code dictate whether the Suitability Determination will occur pre- or post-arrival. Pre-arrival Suitability Determinations are conducted prior to case assurance for those children who are reuniting with a caregiver upon their arrival to the US (M5, M6 and some M3). Post-arrival Suitability Determinations are conducted within seven days of arrival for those children who are traveling to the US with their caregiver (M2, and some M3).

**Resources Chart**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Type of Assistance** | **Description** |
| **Health** |
| Medicaid | Reimburses doctor and hospital costs for certain low-income people, primarily pregnant women, families with children, the elderly and disabled. <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/home/medicaid.asp>  |
| Health Screening | A preventative health assessment and treatment program provided by state public health offices. Includes screening for TB, parasites, and hepatitis, and school vaccinations for children.<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/refugee-health>  |
| State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) | The public health insurance program for low income, uninsured minors who do not qualify for Medicaid.<http://www.medicaid.gov/chip/chip-program-information.html>  |
| Federally-FundedHealth Clinics | Provide cost-effective and comprehensive primary and preventive care to medically underserved and uninsured people.<https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/>  |
| Refugee Health Technical Assistance Center | The refugee health technical assistance center offers new research, training materials and other refugee health guidance, including mental health resources.<http://www.refugeehealthta.org> |
| **Cash Assistance** |
| Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) | A monthly cash payment to low-income parents with children under the age of 18.<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/> |
| Social Security Income/Disability Income (SSI/SSDI) | A monthly cash payment to those ages 65 or older, or those who have certain disabilities that prevent them from working and are certified by the Social Security Administration.<http://www.ssa.gov/disability/> |
| Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) | Available to refugees/asylees/certified trafficking survivors regardless of their eligibility for other public assistance programs.<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/cma/about>  |
| **Children** |
| Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program (URM) | Culturally and linguistically appropriate assistance in developing skills to enter adulthood and achieve economic and social self-sufficiency through legal custody. Provides family reunification when appropriate.<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/urm>  |
| Child/Youth Welfare and Schools | The USCCB/MRS Bridging Refugee Youth and Children Services (BRYCS) project provides resources for refugee children, youth and their families.[Http://www.brycs.org](http://www.brycs.org) |
| **Employment** |
| Wilson Fish | Designed to facilitate early self-sufficiency through job preparation, placement, and ESL.<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/wilson-fish>  |
| Match Grant | An early employment program administered by refugee resettlement agencies as an alternative to cash assistance programs. Provides job counseling, placement, case management, and cash and living assistance. <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/matching-grants>  |
| One-Stop Career Center System | Free job search and employment centers that provide information and assistance in job placement, education, and training.<http://www.careeronestop.org>  |
| Higher Advantage (formerly known as RefugeeWorks) | This ORR-funded technical assistance provider on refugee employment provides resources, training materials and on-site consulting services to R&P and MG resettlement sites.[Http://www.higheradvantage.org](http://www.higheradvantage.org)  |
| Job Corps  | DOL residential and job education program for youth aged 16 -24.<http://www.jobcorps.gov/>  |
| **English Learning** |
| Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning | The Spring Institute offer technical assistance services, curriculum development assistance and other resources related to English as a Second Language.<http://www.spring-institute.org/>  |
| **Housing** |
| Public Housing | Eligibility for public housing authority assistance.<http://www.hud.gov>  |
| **Misc.** |
| State – specific Programs | Individual states may offer additional programs. Contact your state refugee coordinator for information.<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resource/orr-funded-programs-key-contacts>  |
| Victim Compensation Funds | Victims of eligible crimes can apply for compensation through the state.[http://www.nacvcb.org](http://www.nacvcb.org/)  |
| Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) | Allow low income people to buy food necessary for good health.<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>  |
| Torture Survivor Program | HHS-funded social, legal, health and psychological services for victims of torture as defined by the Torture Victim’s Relief Act of 1988.<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/survivors-of-torture>  |
| Welcome Guide to the United States | Funded by the federal government, this is a one stop shop for those new to the US<https://www.uscis.gov/tools/settling-us/welcome-united-states>  |