

## Descriptive Study of the URM Program: Interview Guide for Child Welfare Agency Administrators

### DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINORS (URM) PROGRAM INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY ADMINISTRATORS

You are invited to participate in an interview for a study of the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) Program. This form will help you decide if you want to participate in the study.

#### Background

Researchers from two companies, MEF Associates and Child Trends, are conducting the study under contract to the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its goal is to better understand the range of child welfare services and benefits provided through the URM Program.

#### What will I need to do?

We are talking with individuals who help implement or operate URM programs, as well as individuals who help implement or operate other programs and services accessed by unaccompanied refugee minors in the same communities, including representatives from state or local child welfare agencies. This interview will take about 60 minutes and focuses on: characteristics of your agency; child welfare system context in your jurisdiction; services URM youth receive from your agency or your partner agencies; promising practices and challenges in serving URM youth; and data that might support future evaluations.

#### What are the risks and benefits of participating in this interview?

There are no significant risks to your participation. Sometimes people feel uncomfortable answering some questions. If that happens, you do not have to answer them.

Participating in the interview will not help you directly, but sharing your thoughts and experiences may help improve the services offered through the URM Program.

#### Will you share information from the interview?

Only the study team will see the notes or hear the recordings. Your name will not be listed in any published reports, and comments will not be attributed to you. Your answers will be kept private to the extent permissible by law. We will destroy the notes and recordings at the end of the study.

#### Do I have to do the interview?

Your participation in the interview is voluntary. Your participation will have no effect on your employment.

#### Questions:

If you have questions about the study, you can call the project director, Sam Elkin at MEF Associates at 703-838-2722.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a study participant, you can contact Child Trends' Institutional Review Board (IRB), a group that reviewed this study for your protection, at 1-855-288-3506 or by e-mail at [irbparticipant@childtrends.org](mailto:irbparticipant@childtrends.org).

**The Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This collection of information is voluntary and will be used to document features of the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program and the provision of services to youth served by that program. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 60 minutes per response, including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, collaboration, and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB control number for this collection is XXXX-XXXX and it expires XX/XX/XXX.

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**DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINORS (URM) PROGRAM**  
**VERBAL INTRODUCTION AND CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWS OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCY ADMINISTRATORS**

We are members of the research team conducting the “Descriptive Study of the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program.” Its purpose is to better understand the range of child welfare services and benefits provided through the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) Program. The study is funded by the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees and funds the national URM Program. As part of the study, we are visiting several URM program sites across the country. We are talking with individuals who help implement or operate the programs, as well as individuals who help implement or operate other programs and services accessed by unaccompanied refugee minors in the same communities, including representatives from state or local child welfare agencies.

Before beginning our discussion, we want to thank you for agreeing to talk with us today. We know you are busy and we will try to be as focused as possible. The interview will take about 60 minutes. Your participation is voluntary, and there are no penalties for choosing not to take part in the interview. Although your answers are important to the study, you can refuse to answer any questions or stop the interview at any time. Our aim is to learn from your insights and experience, not to audit or judge your agency or programs. You will not benefit personally by participating, however, what we learn from you can help improve the services URM Program provides to youth. Your answers will be kept private to the extent permissible by law. Information you provide will not be shared with other staff at your program or organization. Only the study team will have access to the information you provide through this interview. Your name will not be listed in any published reports, and comments will not be attributed to you. Instead, your information will be combined with information provided by others. However, because of the relatively small number of organizations participating in the study, there is a possibility that a response could be correctly attributed to you. [If a group interview, add: Respecting the privacy of other people in the group is important; please do not talk about anything people say here. We cannot guarantee that others in the group will keep private what is said here.]

If it is alright with you, we would like to record the interview, so we can fill in our notes and make sure we accurately report your thoughts and opinions. If anyone objects to our recording the discussion, please let us know now. You can also ask us to pause the recorder at any time during the interview.

We are very pleased to have you here today, and we thank you for your time and your opinions. Do you have any questions for us before we begin?

*Note to interviewer: If the respondent is not familiar with the URM program (which we anticipate will be the case for respondents associated with the private custody sites), adapt questions and probes about services to be about youth who likely experience similar services to URM youth in the domestic child welfare system. This could include the following youth:*

- Youth in transition to adulthood
- Youth with experiences of trauma
- Youth whose parents are unavailable or whose whereabouts are unknown
- Foreign-born/immigrant youth
- Youth with language barriers/English Language Learners

*For phone interviews, we anticipate that there will be time for fewer questions as compared to the in-person interviews. In these cases, prioritize topics that we want to ensure we cover with all public custody respondents. This includes background, child welfare system context, coordination with the URM program, and services provided.*

## **I. Background on respondent**

First, I'd like to learn about you and your role, as well as your agency and how it is involved with unaccompanied refugee minors (URMs). *[If necessary, describe URM youth and URM program.]*

1. Can you please describe your position and role at [agency]?

*Probe: How long have you been in this position?*

2. Please describe the overall structure of the child welfare agency.

- a. How does your position fit within it?

*Note to interviewer: Ask for org chart (in advance if possible).*

3. Does your agency have a role in providing services to URM youth?

- a. If so, what role?

*Probe on respondent's familiarity with the URM program and URM populations served by the agency.*

## **II. Child Welfare System Context and Policy Approaches**

I'd like to ask you some general questions about the child welfare system in your [state/county].

*Note to interviewer: To the extent possible, review available information about child welfare system in the relevant locality and confirm this information with respondents rather than asking for the first time.*

1. Confirm how the local child welfare system is administered and who has custody of youth in the domestic child welfare system (e.g., state, county).
  - a. Who provides oversight for the domestic child welfare cases? For URM cases?

*Probe: What agencies are involved in the child welfare system (e.g., state-level agency, county-level agency, other)? Probe on relationship between state and county, if respondent is part of a county-administered system.*

2. Are there any important considerations we should be aware of in your state/county?

*Probe: Consent decrees, major recent policy changes/legislation, influx of immigrant/refugee groups*

- b. How have these considerations affected your agency's operations?

### III. Coordination with the URM Program

*Note to interviewer: Ask this section for all public custody respondents, but gauge which questions are appropriate for a private custody respondent. If the respondent works with multiple URM programs, ask for each program and about differences between their interactions with each program.*

Now I'd like to ask some questions about how your agency works with the URM program(s) in your state/county/jurisdiction.

1. How closely does your agency collaborate with [state refugee agency/State Refugee Coordinator's (SRC) Office]?

*Probe: In what ways do you collaborate?*

*Probe: How often do you communicate with representatives from the [state refugee agency/SRC Office]?*

*Probe: How do you communicate? Frequency (standing meetings, as needed), format (meetings, phone calls, other)?*

2. *[Note to interviewer: It is possible that the respondent may not be familiar with issues related to funding. Determine whether the respondent is familiar with these topics before asking.]* How do you work with the [state refugee agency/SRC Office] to allocate funding for URM program services?
3. How closely does your agency collaborate with the [URM program organization(s)]?

*Probe: In what ways do you collaborate?*

*Probe: Do you work with [URM program organization] to help them understand state/local foster care policy or the services/benefits that are available to domestic foster care youth?*

*Probe: How often do you communicate with representatives from the [URM program organization(s)]?*

*Probe: How do you communicate? Frequency (standing meetings, as needed), format (meetings, phone calls, other)?*

4. How does your agency work with the URM program as a child placing agency?

- a. Is the process of licensing the URM program as a child placing agency different from non-URM agencies? If so, how?
5. What promising approaches has your agency implemented in coordinating with the URM program? What has worked well?

*Probe on administrative arrangements, communication strategies, staffing approaches.*

#### **IV. Custody and Dependency**

We'd like to learn more about the processes by which domestic foster care youth and URM youth enter the custody of [your agency/the URM program].

1. *[Note to interviewer: Tailor this question for public and private custody sites. For private custody sites, it may be better to ask about filing for dependency and learning about how this process works from the perspective of the child welfare agency, even if URM youth do not enter the custody of the state or county.]* Can you please describe the process by which a child is brought into the custody of your agency or for filing for dependency? What are the steps?

*Probe: Court processes, required timeline, participants (e.g., attorneys and whether representation is required by state, guardian ad litem, other adults involved), age at which court jurisdiction ends*

2. How does this process differ for URM youth, if at all?

*Probe: Does your agency have a role in determining which URM youth are accepted for placement in the URM program?*

*Probe: How do your agency and the courts in your jurisdiction handle permanency planning for URM youth? How is this different from domestic foster care?*

*Probe: Do the same judges work on both URM and domestic cases? How does this difference/similarity affect URM cases?*

*Probe: Are there any differences in approach if the child is about to turn 18?*

*Probe: How do the court processes described above differ for different populations of URM youth, especially by legal status (e.g., refugee, SIJS)? Probe on permanency goals, reunification, family tracing.*

#### **V. Placements and Services Provided**

We'd like to discuss the services and processes provided by the domestic child welfare system to URM youth, if any, and how these might differ from services provided to youth in the domestic foster care system.

1. Is your agency involved in finding placements for URM youth?
  - a. If yes: Can you please describe this process?

*Probe: Who identifies/recruits placements, requirements, etc.*

- i. What are the most common placements for URM youth? How does this differ for domestic youth? *[Note to interviewer: If possible, research beforehand and confirm with respondent.]*
- ii. Are there specific challenges to placing URM youth? How does this differ from placing domestic youth?  
  
*Probe on recruiting foster families, capacity in residential placements, appropriate levels of care in placements (e.g., therapeutic foster care or residential care for youth with severe mental health needs) for complex cases.*
- iii. How does your agency address these challenges?
- b. Can you describe the process for family tracing for foreign born youth, or for youth whose families may be in another state or country?
  - i. How does your agency connect to the local refugee and/or ethnic communities to find kin and kin-like permanency options?
2. How would you describe the continuum of care in your jurisdiction? By continuum of care, we mean the range of placements and services available in your community that can serve youth with a wide range of needs.
  - a. Are there any gaps in the continuum of care and/or services provided in your community? How does this differ for URM youth and domestic youth?  
  
*Probe: Why do these gaps exist? Probe on availability/scheduling, challenges making referrals, challenges due to language barrier*
  - b. What services are particularly difficult to connect URM youth to?  
  
*Probe: Why? Probe on permanency/another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA), medical care, mental health/substance abuse, education.*
  - c. Are there any promising approaches that your [state/county/agency] uses related to level of care or placement recruitment?
3. What services, aside from placements, does your agency provide to URM youth?  
  
*Probe on comparable services to domestic child welfare system: case management, mentoring, permanency planning, counseling, mental health assessment and treatment, education support, independent living, family finding/tracing [Note to interviewer: This may be covered earlier but probe here if not.]*  
  
*Probe on services that may be particularly important for URM youth:*
  - Trauma-informed care (Sanctuary Model)
  - Immigration services
  - Social integration (e.g., services to support youth to integrate into the local community) and preservation of ethnic and religious heritage services

- *English Language services*
- *Other services not listed*

*Probe: How are these services affected if URM youth are not eligible for Title IV-E funding?*

*Probe: How does immigration status affect the services that youth can receive through the domestic child welfare system? Probe on refugee, SIJS, etc.*

- a. Does your agency consider cultural needs of youth in providing services, such as mental health services?

4. What services does your agency partner with, if any, to provide services to URM youth?

*Probe: Same as Question 3.*

5. *[For private custody respondents]* Are there certain services that youth who are not in state/county custody are ineligible to receive?

We'd also like to learn about the Chafee-funded services that your agency provides to youth.

6. Can you describe the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program in your state? What can ETVs be used for?

7. Are URM youth eligible for ETVs?

- a. If so, do they follow the same eligibility requirements and application processes as domestic foster care youth?
- b. How are these services different/tailored to URM youth, if at all?
- c. How do URM youth's legal status affect whether they are eligible for these services?

*Probe on refugee, SIJ-classified youth who have not received legal permanent residency, youth with SIJS who have received legal permanent residency, trafficking victim, etc.*

- d. Does your agency implement any promising approaches in implementing ETVs for URM youth?

8. Can you describe the independent living services your agency provides to youth?

9. Are URM youth eligible for independent living services?

*Probe on who provides services, partnerships, eligibility (age) and requirements, available benefits/services, types of living arrangements (in an independent living facility, unlicensed), availability of staff with a cultural, ethnic, religious, or linguistic background that matches those of the youth.*

- a. If so, how are these services different/tailored to URM youth, if at all?
- b. How do URM youth's legal status affect whether they are eligible for these services?



*Probe on refugee, SIJ-classified youth who have not received legal permanent residency, youth with SIJS who have received legal permanent residency, trafficking victim, etc.*

- c. Does your agency implement any promising approaches in implementing independent living services for URM youth?
10. We'd like to learn about the services you provide for foster parents, as well. How does your agency monitor and support foster families once they are licensed? Is this different for URM foster families?
  11. What type of ongoing training and support do you provide to foster families who have received a placement? Is this different for URM foster families?
  12. Reflecting on the services available to URM youth, how do you think the services available to URM youth are similar to or different from those available to domestic foster youth? Why?

## **VI. Promising Practices, Outcomes, and Evaluation**

We are interested in learning more about how you define success for youth in foster care, as well as how the practices your agency uses supports the achievement of success for youth.

1. How does your agency define "well-being" when considering outcomes for youth involved with your agency?

*Probe on differences for URM youth and domestic youth.*

2. How would you define "self-sufficiency" when considering outcomes for youth involved with your agency?

*Probe on differences for URM youth and domestic youth.*

3. How do you think the goals of the URM program fit with the goals of the domestic child welfare system?
4. Has your agency implemented any practices that you think are promising for serving foster youth which we have not yet mentioned? For URM youth specifically?

*Probe on services for youth in transition to adulthood, education, mental health, trauma-informed care.*

- a. How do these practices contribute to achieving short- or long-term outcomes for youth?
5. Have you implemented promising practices related to communication and collaboration with partners?

*Probe on relationships with other organizations, other jurisdictions (especially if county-administered).*

- a. How do these practices contribute to achieving short- or long-term outcomes for youth?

*Probe on differences for URM youth and domestic youth.*

6. Are there ongoing research efforts that your agency is involved in, not specific to the URM program, that you think can inform a future evaluation of the URM program?

*Probe: If so, what are they? Probe on evaluations that focus on independent living, education, or other services that are relevant to URM youth, even if not specific to URM youth; research that considers definitions and indicators of “well-being” as measurable through child welfare data.*

## VII. Challenges

We'd like to discuss the challenges that your agency faces in serving URM youth through the child welfare system.

1. *[Note to interviewer: Tailor based on previous answers about URM youth's eligibility for services]* Are there challenges ensuring that URM youth can access services through the domestic child welfare system?

*Probe on eligibility, funding, identification of URM youth.*

- a. How has your agency worked to address these challenges?
2. Are there barriers to URM youth receiving services?
  - a. How are these addressed, if at all?
3. Are there challenges in providing services that are specific to URM youth?

*Probe: Court, foster parent recruitment, continuum of care, independent living, ETVs, culturally and linguistically appropriate services.*

## VIII. Data

We'd like to talk about the data your agency collects on URM youth, and how this fits in with the data collected on youth in the domestic system.

1. Are URM youth included in your state's/agency's SACWIS/database?
  - a. *[If yes]* Is there a flag identifying these as URM youth or as having immigration statuses that make them eligible for the URM program?

*Probe: Does your agency face challenges tracking URM youth in your database? If so, what challenges?*

- b. *[If no]* Does your agency collect any data on URM youth?
2. What data does your agency track on youth receiving ETVs and in independent living programs?

*Probe on URM youth and domestic foster care youth.*

3. Is your database integrated with other agencies' data systems?

*Probe: If so, in what way? Probe on public assistance, Medicaid, criminal justice.*

4. Does your agency collect data on youth who have left the child welfare system or the URM program?

*Probe on both those who have aged out of the child welfare system and those who have left before age 18 for other reasons, National Youth in Transition Database.*

- a. If so, what do you collect?

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