Descriptive Study of the URM Program: Interview Guide for URM Program Managers

Guidance for Review of URM Site Visit Interview Guides

The Descriptive Study of the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program information collection request includes five interview guides (Attachments D-H). The different guides focus on different sets of respondents, and each respondent will participate in only one interview during the site visits. There are some subjects that will be useful to cover with different sets of respondents, and therefore many questions are identical or similar across the guides (specifically Appendices D, E, G, and H). To help reviewers know which questions are shared across all guides, we have included a parenthetical note for each question that is asked across multiple interview guides. An asterisk indicates that the corresponding question contains small differences from the other guides, but the question is still very similar. For example, multiple guides contain questions asking the respondent to describe their place of work, but the wording is slightly different: the guide for interviewing school staff asks the respondent to describe their "school," while the guide for interviewing staff of other types of partners asks the respondent to describe their "organization."

Below are some examples to illustrate what we mean:

> Example 1: What is your official job title? **(Asked in Appendices D, E, G, and H)**

> Example 2: Please briefly describe your school, including the programs and services your school provides. **(Asked in Appendix G*)** *Here, the asterisk indicates that "school" is replaced by "organization" in other guides, but the basic structure of the question is the same.*

DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINORS (URM) PROGRAM
INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS OF MANAGERS OF URM PROGRAMS AND PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

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. This interview will take about 90 minutes. Interview topics focus on features of your organization; services provided by the URM Program; services youth who are part of the program receive from other organizations; partnerships between local URM programs and other organizations and agencies; the experiences of youth in the program as they adjust to life in the U.S.; 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.

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 90 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/XX.

DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINORS (URM) PROGRAM

VERBAL INTRODUCTION AND CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWS OF STAFF OF URM PROGRAMS AND PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

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.

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 90 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?

I. Respondent Background (Section asked in Appendix E)

1. What is your official job title? **(Asked in Appendices G and H)**

2. Please briefly describe your current position and job responsibilities. **(Asked in Appendices G and H)**

3. What was your professional background before this position?

    Probe on previous experiences relevant to working with foreign-born youth (e.g., Peace Corps, previous positions working with similar populations)

    Probe on degrees and licenses (e.g., licensed counselors, clinical social workers)

II. Characteristics of URM Youth Served By Agency/Organization

1. Our understanding from data we received from ORR is that the biggest refugee populations served by your URM Program are [*Note to interviewer: Consult ORR data and mention top 2-3 populations by national origin, language, and ethnicity*]. Is that still accurate or have there been changes to the populations you have been serving? If so, from what countries are the youth you have been serving more recently?

2. Our understanding is that the statuses of the youth your URM program serves are roughly as follows: *[Note to interviewer: Consult ORR data and state the proportions of the top 2-3 statuses:]* Is that still roughly right or have there been any big changes to the proportions you have been serving? If so, which youth you have been serving more recently?

3. What is the prevalence of physical disabilities or health issues among youth in your URM program? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

4. What is the prevalence of mental health issues among youth in your URM program? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

5. How do changes in the number or characteristics of URM youth arriving from year to year affect your service planning and service provision?

    a. How does the program address this?

III. Organization and Program Background

Consult survey response, information from ORR, and annual report (if obtained before visit) beforehand, and where that information answers question below, simply confirm it.

1. Please briefly describe your organization, including the programs and services your organization provides. **(Asked in Appendices G* and H*)**

2. What geographic region does this agency serve? **(Asked in Appendices G* and H*)**

   a.   Is this the only office in this city/county? If not, how many others are there?

   b.   *If there are sub-offices of the URM program:*

        i.   What area does the sub-office(s) serve?

        ii.   What is your role in oversight of the sub-office(s)?

3. How does the URM program fit within the overall mission and services of your organization?

4. Please describe the custody arrangement in your URM program. What role, if any, does the domestic child welfare agency play?

5. How many staff members does your agency have in total? How many are part of the URM program?

   a.   *[If there is a sub-office]* How many are in this office's program, and how many in the sub-office?

   b.   How many case managers for youth in the URM program does your agency have?

        i.   What is the average caseload each case manager maintains?

6. What steps does your URM program take to make sure staff can serve refugees in a culturally competent manner?

   a.   Are there contracts with CBOs or other organizations to help with language access or culturally-specific issues?

   b.   Do staff receive special training about serving youth from specific cultures?

        i.   Do staff participate in any community events or cultural organizations that help them learn about and connect with communities related to the groups the URM program serves? Please describe.

        ii.   In staff's training or in their practice, do they use any curriculum or protocols related to cultural competency?

7. Do volunteers provide services as part of your URM program? If so, what services?

   a.   What does the process for screening volunteers involve?

        Probe on costs of vetting volunteers

   b.   Where do you get the volunteers from?

        Probe on MSW and other students and whether they serve as a training/practicum site.

   c.   What have been the advantages and disadvantages of using volunteers to provide services?

8. *[Note to interviewer – if you obtained information on program funding from the survey or ORR in advance, and it contains this information, simply confirm it.]* What is the annual budget for your URM program?

   a.   What are the funding sources, and what services do they cover?

b. What kinds of in-kind support do you receive?

    i. What businesses or organizations provide this in-kind support?

c. Do youth who are part of your URM program receive services or benefits from any other programs that your organization administers? If so, please explain.

IV.   **Local Context**

Now we would like to get a general sense of the local community in which the youth you serve are living.

1. Are there communities of refugees (including adults and families) who have been resettled in the area over the past few years? From what countries? Has this changed over time? **(Asked in Appendices E, G, and H)**

2. What other immigrant groups are there in the area? **(Asked in Appendices E, G, and H)**

3. What are the predominant languages spoken in the area, other than English? **(Asked in Appendices E, G, and H)**

4. How would you describe the level of community support for refugees in the area? **(Asked in Appendices E, G, and H)**

5. How does the local environment for refugees affect your ability to provide services to URM youth? **(Asked in Appendix G)**

V.   **Arrivals** (Asked in Appendix E)

We would now like to understand the processes by which youth come to your program and the early services you provide to them when they arrive.

1. What information does this agency receive about upcoming arrivals of refugee youth?

2. What preparations do you make for the youth's arrival?

3. Does the agency have discretion about whether to accept a referral? If so, what factors do you consider in deciding?

VI.   **Placements**

1. Our understanding is that the following types of placements are available to youth in the URM program: *[Consult state plan and survey response, as well as data from ORR on how often each has been used, and confirm information available from those sources. If the data show some are used only infrequently, do not spend much time on questions about those types.]*

a. How do you determine the appropriate placement for each youth? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

b. How does your organization maintain your license and accreditation as a child placement agency?

The following sets of questions are specific to each type of placement. Ask only those that are relevant to the organization and to the respondent. (Not every organization offers all types of placements, and not every manager may be involved in the placement process)

2. Foster care

    a. Please describe the process for finding a placement for a youth who will be placed into foster care. **(Asked in Appendix E)**

        i. What factors do you take into account before determining a placement match? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

            Probe on extent to which program takes into account cultural and/or linguistic match

    b. What methods are the most successful in recruiting foster families? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

    c. How do relative or kinship foster care placements differ from other foster care placements? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

        If needed, probe on process for arranging placements and on services and supports provided.

        i. What are the advantages/disadvantages of relative foster care placements? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

            Probe on challenges that arise with youth placed with family members and how addressed

    d. How do therapeutic foster care placements differ from other foster care placements? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

        If needed, probe on process for arranging placements and on services and supports provided.

        i. What are the advantages/disadvantages of therapeutic foster care placements? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

        ii. Who has responsibility for preparing and certifying parents to provide therapeutic foster care? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

        iii. What steps do you take to maintain your organization's ability to make placements in therapeutic foster situations?

3. Group Home

    a. Where are the group homes in the area that are available for placements for youth in the URM program? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

    b. What organizations operate them? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

      i. *[If other organizations operate some of the homes available to the URM program]* What is the nature of your partnership with the organization operating the group homes? Are you under a contract? MOU? How are these placements funded?

   c. Please describe what the group homes are like. **(Asked in Appendix E)**

   d. What are the advantages/disadvantages of such placements? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

   e. *[If the agency operates its own group home(s)]* Please describe the staffing at the group home(s) that your organization operates. How many of your organization's staff work there?

      i. How does this compare to the state licensing requirements for group home staffing?

      If needed, probe on what numbers of staff, staffing roles, and qualifications are required by state licensing requirements

4. Independent and semi-independent living

   a. How do you prepare youth to be placed in independent or semi-independent living arrangements for living independently? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

   b. What kinds of semi-independent living arrangements, if any, are available to youth in your program? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

   c. What are the advantages/disadvantages of such placements? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

5. Monitoring

   a. What kind of monitoring do you do to ensure the youth's safety in their placements? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

      i. Have there been any safety incidents? If so, how have you handled them? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

VII. Services (Section asked in Appendix E)

1. What are the key services your agency provides to URM youth? Please describe the major services. *[Note to interviewer: If information on types of services is available from the survey, confirm it and ask for description.]* **(Asked in Appendix G)**

   a. *Probe on:*

      i. *Healthcare*

      ii. *Counseling*

      iii. *Mental Health assessment and treatment*

      iv. *Education (i.e., classes offered by the organization itself, and services to support the URM's success in school, such as tutoring)*

      v. *Social adjustment and cultural orientation services*

      vi. *Services for preservation of ethnic and religious heritage*

     vii.   *Connection with public resources (e.g., food or housing assistance)*

    viii.   *Employment/training/job readiness*

    ix.   *Legal services*

    x.   *Life skills/preparation for independent living*

    xi.   *Family tracing/family reunification*

    xii.   *Permanency services*

    xiii.   *Other services*

2. How do the services provided vary for different groups of youth in the URM program? **(Asked in Appendix G)**

    Probe on refugee versus SIJS, trafficking victim, asylee or other; different national origins of refugees.

3. We now want to ask a couple of questions about the relationship between your URM program and the domestic foster care system. How familiar are you with the domestic system? *[If respondent is not very familiar, ask the respondent to describe what they do know, and treat the following questions as probes.]*

    a. In what ways are your services similar or different from the services offered by the domestic child welfare system to domestic youth?

        i.   Do they offer any services you do not?

        ii.   Do you offer any services they do not?

        iii.   Do you deliver the same range of services but in a different way?

    b. Do you coordinate services with them in serving URM youth? If so, what does this coordination involve?

        i.   Which services do they provide to URM youth, and which do you provide?

           Probe, if needed, on duplicated services

        ii.   Do you have formal partnerships with the domestic child welfare agency? What does the partnerships consist of?

    c. Do you feel you are in competition with the domestic program for foster families or resources? If so, please describe in what ways.

4. What other services does your organization provide that fall outside the URM program but that youth who are in the URM program receive?

    a. Do all URM youth receive these services, or just some? How do you determine which?

VIII.   **Partnerships**

Note: Some of these may have been addressed by responses to the previous section.

1. What are the main services that youth receive from sources other than your organization? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

   a. What other organizations provide these services? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

      Probe on other community organizations and religious institutions that may provide support to URM youth.

      i. In your judgment, how helpful are these services to the youth you serve in the URM program? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

   b. Do you have formal partnerships with any of these organizations? What do those partnerships consist of?

2. Which partnerships with other organizations do you feel have contributed to positive or promising outcomes for the youth you serve? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

3. National resettlement agencies **(Asked in Appendix E)**

   a. Tell us more about your relationship to the resettlement agency that your program is affiliated with (i.e., USCCB and/or LIRS.) **(Asked in Appendix E)**

   b. What kind of training or technical assistance do they provide? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

      i. How helpful do you find their training and assistance? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

   c. What other resources does the resettlement agency provide to your program? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

4. What is the relationship to immigration courts? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

5. What is the relationship to the child welfare courts? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

   [Interviewer: If need to, can add: It might be called family court or something else here. We mean the court that oversees the child welfare case, permanency hearings, etc.]

IX. Schools

1. Tell us about the types of schools URM youth attend. **(Asked in Appendix E)**

2. In general, what have the experiences of URM youth at these schools been like? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

3. What kind of problems arise with your youth at the schools? What do you do to help address these problems when they arise? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

   Probe on bullying and on discrimination.

4. Other than education, what services or resources do your URM youth receive from the schools? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

5. What is your relationship with the schools like? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

    a. Do you have formal relationships with the schools? What do those partnerships consist of?

X. **Youth Well-Being** (Section asked in Appendix E)

1. How are the URM youth you serve adjusting to living in the U.S.?

    a. What are the biggest challenges they face?

    Probe on the range of challenges encountered and if strengths differ by youth characteristics (e.g., pathway into program, immigration status, country or origin, age

    b. What are the biggest strengths youth use to overcome these challenges?

    Probe on the range of strengths encountered and if strengths differ by youth characteristics (e.g., pathway into program, immigration status, country or origin, age

    i. Are the services you provide well-tailored to leverage these strengths?

    c. What are their biggest needs?

    i. How well tailored are your services to meet these needs?

2. Are there gaps in support for these youth? That is, are there supports or services that they really need but that your program does not provide and are not easily available from other sources?

3. To what extent do youth you serve successfully integrate into the local community?

    If needed, ask the respondent how they think about "integration".

    a. How successful are they in learning English?

    b. How many of them are taking steps towards legal permanent residency or citizenship?

    c. In what ways do youth "give back" or contribute to the local community?

    Probe on volunteering

    Probe on special events or other ways that youth help the community learn about their experiences and their cultures

4. To what extent do youth develop or maintain a connection to their ethnic or religious communities?

    a. What are the benefits or challenges with these connections for your youth?

    Probe on whether there is a clear and cohesive ethnic community in the area that the youth fit into, or whether there are divisions within ethnic communities (or a lack of community with shared ethnic background) that make connections difficult.

    b. What facilitates this connection? What barriers get in the way of this connection?

    c. Are there services or opportunities to help youth maintain their home language? If so, what are they?

      i.   Do youth take advantage of them?

      ii.   Probe on services or opportunities to help youth develop literacy in their home language

   d.   To what extent do youth keep connections to their ethnic or religious communities beyond the local community through the internet or social media? In what ways?

XI. Promising Practices and Challenges (Section asked in Appendix E)

1. Are there any special programs, services, or initiatives offered by your URM program, elsewhere in your organization, or by others in the community that you think are particularly effective, innovative, or unique in how they meet the needs of the youth served by the URM program?

2. Beyond those you have already mentioned, what do you think are the main promising practices your organization has had in working with URM youth?

3. Beyond those you have already mentioned, what are some of the challenges your organization has faced in working with URM youth?

4. Are there particular groups served by the URM program who are not being well served or whose needs are not being met? If so, what groups, and in what ways are their needs not being met? Why?

5. Are there any ways you would improve the services you provide to URM youth? Are there trainings, assistance or resources that you would find helpful from ORR or from some other source? If so, what would you like them to do to support your program?

   a.   Who would you think is best positioned to provide this support?

XII. Outcomes

Note to interviewer: Review survey responses, and to the extent possible, confirm that information instead of asking questions anew.

1. One thing we are trying to learn from our study is how to measure how programs like yours contribute to the success of the youth they have served. **(Asked in Appendix E)**

   a.   What outcomes do you currently measure? **(Asked in Appendices E and G)**

   b.   What performance measures or other goals does your agency monitor in administering the URM program? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

      i.   Which organizations require these performance measures?

          Probe specifically on: ORR, state refugee office, resettlement agencies, child welfare system, and other.

      ii.   What are your participants' outcomes with regards to these measures?

      iii.   Could you provide us with a copy of a list of required measures and/or any reporting forms you use for these measures? If not, do you know where we might be able to get one?

    c.   How do you gather the information to track these outcomes? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

    d.   Thinking not just of the outcomes you measure, how would you define when a youth served by [*URM program organization*] had succeeded? **(Asked in Appendices E and G)**

    e.   Are there long-term outcomes you would be interested in measuring if there were a way to do so?

2. How would you define success for your URM Program? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

    a.   By that definition, how successful do you think your program has been? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

3. Are you part of any evaluations or studies that involve your URM program?

    a.   If so, please describe what is being studied.

4. Do you conduct any internal evaluations of your URM program?

5. If there were to be a national evaluation of what strategies are effective in serving URM youth, what areas would you be interested in seeing it focus on? **(Asked in Appendix E)**

XIII. Data (Section asked in Appendix E)

Note to interviewer: Review survey responses, and to the extent possible, confirm that information instead of asking questions anew.

1. What data do you currently collect on the characteristics of, services provided to, and outcomes of the youth in the URM program? **(Asked in Appendix G)**

    a.   How frequently do you gather it? **(Asked in Appendix G)**

2. How do you use this data? **(Asked in Appendix G)**

    a.   Does your organization have any practices for using data to improve services that you think similar programs might be interested in knowing about? If so, please briefly describe.

3. What systems do you use to maintain and store this data? **(Asked in Appendices G and H)**

    Probe on who provides the system (e.g., own system; state refugee program system; resettlement agency system)

    Probe on whether it is a shared system used by other organizations

    a.   Does your program have direct access to your state's child welfare database (e.g., SACWIS)

        3.a.i.   Why or why not?

3.a.ii.   If yes, for data entry, data reports, or both?

4.   Are there data you are not currently collecting that would be helpful to you?

5.   What challenges do you face in gathering useful data?

6.   Do you have to report any information on services provided to the youth served by your URM program? If so, to whom, and what information?

   Probe on ORR, resettlement agencies, state, child welfare, and other funders.

7.   Beyond required reporting, do you share data on the youth served by your URM program with other organizations? Which ones? What data do you share?

8.   Is there documentation of the information that you collect in your data systems that you can share (e.g., data dictionaries, manuals)?