

Frequently Asked Questions: Unaccompanied Alien Children

1. Q: Who are Unaccompanied Alien Children [UAC]?

A: Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) are youth under the age of 18 who have no lawful immigration status in the United States and who are not in the care of a parent or legal guardian at the time they come into federal custody.

To learn more about UAC, please click on this link:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/ucs/about>

2. Q: Are UAC refugees?

A: The status of UAC has not yet been determined. Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) is a different status that is given to youth under the age of 18 who have been approved for refugee status. For more information on URM, please click on this link:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/urm/about>

3. Q: Why have UAC been in the news recently?

A: A recent surge in the number of UAC has caught the attention of our national news services. Between 2003 and 2011 the average number of UAC coming to the United States was under 7,000 per year. In 2012, the number jumped to over 13,000. The number jumped again in 2013 to nearly 25,000. This year (2014) the number is expected to reach to around 60,000 children.

4. Q: Why are such large numbers of unaccompanied children migrating to the United States?

A: Some of the reasons for the large numbers of children entering the United States include:

- a. To escape violence, abuse or persecution in their home countries
- b. To find family members already residing in the United States
- c. To seek work to support themselves; their family, or their own children
- d. Were brought into the United States by human trafficking rings

5. Q: What are the ages of the children?

A: 24% of UAC are under 14. The rest of the children are between the ages of 14 and 17.

6. Q: What is the gender distribution of the children?

A: Seventy-three percent (73%) are boys and twenty-seven percent (27%) are girls.

7. Q: What countries are the children coming from?

A: In 2013, 93% of the UAC came from one of three countries, Guatemala, Honduras, or El Salvador

8. Q: Who is responsible for taking care of the children?

A: Federal law requires the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to feed, shelter, and provide medical care for the children. During the recent surge, HHS has placed some of the children, through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), into approximately 100 shelters that have been authorized for this purpose across the United States. Currently, there are no ORR sponsored shelters in Connecticut. However, if ORR identifies a sponsor, usually a parent or other family member who is already living in the United States or a foster parent who wishes to sponsor a child, ORR may place the child with the sponsor. Once placed with a sponsor, the sponsor becomes responsible for the provision of food, shelter, medical care and education.

9. Q: Will the children be returned to their country of origin or will they be allowed to stay in the United States?

A: The Department of Justice's Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR) through an immigration judge will determine who will receive immigration benefits and who will be deported from the United States (normally to their countries of origin).

10.Q: Will the unaccompanied children be eligible for receiving the benefits of the current pending immigration reform legislation?

A: According to Homeland Security, the UAC are not eligible for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or earned citizenship provisions in pending immigration reform legislation.

11.Q: How are the medical needs of the children addressed?

A: When children come into the HHS program, they are given a well-child medical exam, are screened for tuberculosis, and provided with all childhood vaccinations they need to protect them against communicable diseases. If a child is determined to have been exposed to or to have any communicable disease, they are placed in a program that has the capacity to quarantine. The children also receive a mental health exam. If there are any behavioral health concerns, they are similarly placed in a specialized facility to address their needs.

12.Q: How many UAC have come to Norwalk?

A: Between January 1, 2014 and September, 2014, 74 UAC have registered for the first time with the Norwalk Public Schools. It is possible that additional UAC are in our community but have not identified themselves to the public school system.

You can learn about the number of unaccompanied children by state and county when you click on this link:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/unaccompanied-children-released-to-sponsors-by-county>

13.Q: How can the community learn more about the unaccompanied children and help?

A: You can learn more about the children by clicking on this website:

<http://fas.org/sgp/crs/homesec/R43599.pdf>

You can help by providing assistance to any of the local agencies that provide services to UAC. A listing of local resources for UAC and their

sponsors can be found by clicking on this link:

<http://www.norwalkct.org/DocumentCenter/View/7952>

You can also help by supporting several refugee resettlement non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the U.S. The federal agencies supporting these facilities are unable to accept donations or volunteers to assist the unaccompanied children program but the NGOs are accepting monetary donations and experienced volunteers to assist incoming refugee families.

If you want to support the efforts of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program in the State of Connecticut, you can contact any of the following federally appointed organizations:

- i. Catholic Charities Migration & Refugee Services, 125 Market Street, Hartford, CT 06103, (860) 548-0059, www.ccaoh.org
- ii. International Institute of CT, Inc., 670 Clinton Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06605, (203) 336-0141, www.iiconn.org
Episcopal Social Services Doing Business As (dba)
- iii. Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services, 235 Nicoll Street, New Haven, CT 06511, (203) 562-2095, www.irisct.org
- iv. Jewish Federation of CT, Inc., 40 Woodland Street, Hartford, CT 06105, (860) 727-5701, www.jfact.org
- v. Connecticut Coalition of Mutual Assistance Associations, Inc., 143 Madison Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106, (860) 236-6452, www.ccmaa.org

For more information please click on the State Department's Refugee Processing Center (RPC) webpage at:
<http://www.wrapsnet.org/Home/RPAgencyContacts> or the HHS Office of

Refugee Resettlement (ORR) webpage at:
www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/state-programs-annual-overview.

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