

**Memorandum**

Date *JUL 12 1994*
June Gibbs Brown
From Inspector General

Subject Review of the Miami, Florida Office of Refugee Resettlement (CIN: A-04-94-00075)

To Mary Jo Bane
Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families

The attached final report summarizes the results of our review of the Miami, Florida Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) (the Miami office). The purpose of our review was to assess the Miami office's contribution to the national Refugee Resettlement Program goals. In our opinion, there is no longer a need for the functions performed by the ORR office in Miami.

We found that functions previously performed by the Miami office are now performed by the State refugee agency. Further, the Miami office maintains obsolete refugee information and disseminates incorrect information on the refugee status of individuals which is causing erroneous payments to be made. At one time, the Miami office had a vital role in the resettlement of Cuban refugees; however, this role has vanished with the transfer of responsibilities to the State of Florida. Moreover, the Miami staff is not responsible for any of ORR's priority functions of monitoring, oversight or technical assistance and has limited contact with the State refugee agency.

We were advised by ORR that the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has initiated action to close the Miami office. Accordingly, we are recommending that those resources be used to further improve ACF's monitoring, oversight and technical assistance of its programs.

In written comments to our draft report, ACF officials agreed with our findings and recommendation. The ACF's comments are summarized in the Results of Review section of the report. The complete text of ACF's comments is included in the Appendix.

Page 2 - Mary Jo Bane

We would appreciate receiving a written response on any further actions taken with regard to this report within the next 60 days. Should you wish to discuss this report, please call me or have your staff contact John A. Ferris, Assistant Inspector General for Administrations of Children, Family, and Aging Audits, at (202) 619-1175.

Attachment

Department of Health and Human Services

**OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL**

**REVIEW OF THE MIAMI, FLORIDA
OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT**



**JUNE GIBBS BROWN
Inspector General**

**JULY 1994
A-04-94-00075**

**Memorandum**

JUL 12 1994

Date

From

June Gibbs Brown
June Gibbs Brown
Inspector General

Subject

Review of the Miami, Florida Office of Refugee Resettlement (CIN: A-04-94-00075)

To

Mary Jo Bane
Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families

This report provides you with the results of our review of the Miami, Florida Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) (the Miami office). The purpose of our review was to assess the Miami office's contribution to the national Refugee Resettlement Program goals. In our opinion, there is no longer a need for the functions performed by the ORR office in Miami.

We found that functions previously performed by the Miami office are now performed by the State refugee agency. Further, the Miami office maintains obsolete refugee information and disseminates incorrect information on the refugee status of individuals which is causing erroneous payments to be made. At one time, the Miami office had a vital role in the resettlement of Cuban refugees; however, this role has vanished with the transfer of responsibilities to the State of Florida. Moreover, the Miami staff is not responsible for any of ORR's priority functions of monitoring, oversight or technical assistance and has limited contact with the State refugee agency.

We were advised by ORR that the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has initiated action to close the Miami office. Accordingly, we are recommending that those resources be used to further improve ACF's monitoring, oversight and technical assistance of its programs.

In written comments to our draft report, ACF officials agreed with our findings and recommendation. The ACF's comments are summarized in the Results of Review section of this report. The complete text of ACF's comments is included in the Appendix.

BACKGROUND

In December 1960, the Cuban Refugee Emergency Center was established in Miami with an initial allocation of \$1 million from the President's Contingency Fund under the Mutual Security Act of 1954. The Miami office began assisting Cuban refugees with, among other things, food, training, financial, health and resettlement services in the 1960s and similar services for Cuban and Haitian entrants in the 1980s. Since 1975, in total over 1 million refugees have settled in the United States. To facilitate refugee resettlements, the Congress passed the Refugee Act of 1980 (Section 413(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act) which created the Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP). The ORR within the ACF funds and administers the program. Under Title 8 USC 1522(c)(1)(A), the Director awards grants to, and contracts with, public or private nonprofit agencies for projects specifically designed to assist refugees in obtaining the skills which are necessary for economic self-sufficiency. These include temporary cash and medical assistance, projects for job training, social services, employment services, day care, English language training, professional refresher training, and other recertification services.

The ORR Headquarters and the ACF Office of Financial Management have responsibility for the priority functions of RRP oversight, monitoring, and technical assistance. The Miami office is now a branch office (the only field office ORR uses) reporting directly to the ORR Director. The Miami office's mission statement as published in the Federal Register states:

"The Office also provides information and referral services, consistent with available resources, to refugees and entrants, service providers and state and federal agencies in the state of Florida. It maintains data on refugees and Cuban and Haitian entrants and provides such information as needed to national, state and local agencies working with these populations."

SCOPE

Our review was performed in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. The purpose of the review was to determine the effectiveness of the Miami ORR office in facilitating the accomplishment of the national Refugee Resettlement Program goals. Our

objectives also included identifying the purpose and function of the Miami office and their interaction with ORR Headquarters.

We interviewed ORR Headquarters and Miami officials and reviewed documentation prepared by the Miami office. The information included, among other things, organization charts, position descriptions, budget data, and current activity reports.

We also performed limited testing of the Miami office's refugee database. We compared the refugee status of 200 statistically selected individuals receiving refugee services to the status of those individuals as shown in the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) database. The INS is responsible for having the current status of all individuals who enter the country as refugees or Cuban/Haitian entrants.

Our review was made in ORR Headquarters, Washington, D.C. and the Miami office from August 1993 through March 1994.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

We found that the Miami office is no longer needed because the services it provides are duplicative of services provided by the State of Florida and the INS. Savings to the Government of at least \$570 thousand annually would result if the office was closed.

Prior to September 1981, all Cuban refugees arriving in Dade County, Florida went to the Miami office to receive services. Refugees no longer need to process through the Miami office to obtain services. Since 1981, voluntary agencies or the State have taken over the responsibility for assisting newly arriving refugees. Now, the Miami office only occasionally provides referrals to Cuban/Haitian refugees. In any event, the Miami office's service duplicates the service provided by the State agency. Unlike the State agency, the Miami office itself does not have the authority to contract for services with providers, so they refer refugees to the State of Florida or their contract providers.

The ORR's high priority functions are to monitor State agencies' progress in accomplishing the purposes for which grants are awarded and to provide State agencies any needed oversight and technical assistance. The Miami ORR office does not perform any of these priority functions. The ORR Headquarters has had minimal contact with the Miami office and the only information that they receive from the Miami office are monthly activity

reports. These reports are circulated through ORR Headquarters but are not used to manage or coordinate the Miami operations.

While current refugee status data is available to providers through the INS, the Miami office retains its own data on each Cuban/Haitian entrant who has come into the Miami office. The Miami office uses this data to advise providers as to client eligibility. Service providers rely on this data to determine whether to provide services to individuals. Through our analysis of services paid for by the refugee program we confirmed that it is neither current nor accurate. When we discussed the database accuracy with the Miami office staff, they confirmed that their data has not been up to date since September 1981 when the Cuban and Haitian entrants no longer routinely processed through the Miami office.

As a result, the taxpayers are bearing the burden of reimbursing providers for services given to individuals who are not eligible. Because the Miami office database is not up to date, the Miami office has misinformed providers as to the eligibility of clients.

Information provided by the ACF shows that in Fiscal Year 1992, in excess of \$570,000 was spent to operate the Miami office. This includes payroll for 12 Federal employees ranging from a GS-4 to a GS-14, over 3,300 square feet of work space, a vehicle, 3,000 square feet of parking space, equipment and supplies. We believe that the RRP is not receiving the maximum benefit from the expenditure of these resources.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the ORR priorities of providing oversight, monitoring and technical assistance, we believe there is no longer a need for the functions performed by the Miami office. The usefulness of the Miami office has greatly diminished as responsibility for the functions has been assumed by the State agency. We found the functions currently performed by the Miami office are not facilitating the accomplishment of the overall ORR mission.

Since the ACF has initiated action to close the Miami office, we are recommending that those resources be used to further improve ACF's monitoring, oversight and technical assistance of its programs.

ACF COMMENTS

The ACF agreed (Appendix) with the findings and recommendation. The ACF plans to use savings from closing the Miami office to improve monitoring, oversight and technical assistance of its programs.

- - - - -

Please advise us regarding any further actions taken on our findings and recommendation within the next 60 days. If you have any questions, please call me or have your staff contact John A. Ferris, Assistant Inspector General for Administrations of Children, Family and Aging Audits.



ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
Office of the Assistant Secretary, Suite 600
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20447

June 16, 1994

TO: June Gibbs Brown
Inspector General

FROM: Mary Jo Bane *MJ Bane*
Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families

SUBJECT: Comments on Office of Inspector General's "Review of
the Miami, Florida Office of Refugee Resettlement,"
CIN: A-04-94-00075

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft report,
"Review of the Miami, Florida Office of Refugee Resettlement
(ORR).

OIG Recommendation

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) having
initiated action to close the Miami office, should use those
resources to further improve ACF's monitoring, oversight and
technical assistance of its programs.

ACF COMMENTS

The ACF agrees with this recommendation. ACF concurred with the
finding that the Miami Office should be closed and the annual
saving of \$570,000 be used to improve monitoring, oversight and
technical assistance as recommended in the subject draft audit
report.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the recommendation
in this report. If I can be of further assistance in this
regard, please let me know.