

Report in Brief

Date: June 2019

Report No. A-04-18-02011



Why OIG Did This Review

The Refugee Act of 1980 created the Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP) to provide for the effective resettlement of refugees and to assist them in achieving economic self-sufficiency after arriving in the United States. The Act provides Federal grants to States for cash and medical assistance, social services, and targeted assistance to help qualified refugees. Within HHS, the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) runs the RRP program. In 2015 and 2016, ORR obligated \$286 million and \$417 million, respectively, to States for the RRP.

We selected for audit Florida's Department of Children and Families (DCF) because a previous OAS audit, as well as an ORR monitoring report, identified errors. DCF coordinates and oversees many of the services provided to refugees and entrants in Florida to help them become economically self-sufficient.

Our objective was to determine whether Florida's DCF refugee cash assistance (RCA) payments to beneficiaries were allowable in accordance with Federal and State regulations.

How OIG Did This Review

Our audit covered 413,990 RCA payments totaling almost \$71 million that DCF made to beneficiaries from October 1, 2015, through September 30, 2017 (audit period). From these payments, we selected a random sample of 100 RCA payments totaling \$16,880 for review.

The Florida Department of Children and Families Made Some Unallowable Refugee Cash Assistance Payments

What OIG Found

Florida's RCA payments to beneficiaries were generally allowable in accordance with Federal and State regulations. However, Florida made some unallowable payments. Of the 100 RCA payments totaling \$16,880 in our sample, 97 were correct. For the remaining 3 RCA payments, Florida made unallowable payments totaling \$540.

These unallowable payments occurred because workers lacked adequate training from Florida to ensure that they were obtaining sufficient documentation to verify eligibility for some beneficiaries.

On the basis of our sample results, we estimated that Florida made unallowable RCA payments totaling at least \$114,504 during our audit period.

What OIG Recommends and Florida Comments

We recommend that Florida (1) refund \$114,504 to the Federal Government; (2) provide staff training on Federal regulations and State policies and procedures related to the eligibility review process and on maintaining sufficient documentation to verify entry and asylum dates; and (3) revise current policy to ensure the recovery of overpayments.

In response to our draft report, Florida outlined steps that it had taken or planned to take to address our findings and recommendations. Florida also provided additional documentation to support some of the sample items we determined to be in error and provided policies and procedures that it developed in response to some of our findings. We revised our findings, as appropriate, based on our review of the additional documentation that Florida provided.