

Preventing and Responding to Placement Breakdowns Involving Refugee & Newcomer Children and Youth: Considerations for Providers



Refugee and other ORR-eligible youth, especially those living with non-parent caregivers such as siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, or family friends, may experience unique placement challenges. Sometimes, these challenges lead to family conflict, unstable home environments, and even disruptions or breakdowns of the placement. **Challenges may include:**

Shifting family roles

Balancing heritage culture and U.S. culture

Parenting in a new environment

Impacts of trauma before and after arrival to the U.S.

Financial strain

Increased complexities for non-parent caregivers: lack of prior relationship, differing expectations, family separation

External stressors impacting home life and family relationships



Supporting Newcomer Families Experiencing Conflict and Placement Instability



Guiding Principles

- Center child safety, permanency, and well-being
- Use a trauma-informed, culturally responsive lens
- Work collaboratively with families to build from their existing strengths, resources, and supports
- Ensure youth voice and perspectives guide the process

Strategies for Providers

- Assess concerns in joint and individual conversations
- Teach and model communication skills
- Guide the youth and caregiver to see one another's perspective
- Support development of mutually agreed upon solutions
- Provide education and discuss a safety plan with the family
- Connect the family to community supports

Network of Services for ORR-eligible Children & Youth

ORR funded services & programs

Refugee Resettlement Agency Services

- Employment
- Preferred Communities intensive case management
- Refugee School Impact
- Youth mentoring

Unaccompanied Children's Services

- Post Release Services (PRS) case management

Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM)

- Specialized foster care for ORR-eligible youth

Refugee Youth Resource Center

- Resources and information for providers and families
- Case consultation and training for refugee-serving providers

OTIP funded services

Anti-trafficking Services

- Aspire case management for youth under 18
- Trafficking Victim Assistance Program (TVAP) for youth 18+

Extended community supports:

- School, legal, mental health, faith/religious community, cultural community leaders, child welfare prevention services, and others



Find your local resettlement agency

<https://acf.gov/orr/map/find-resources-and-contacts-your-state>

Contact your State Refugee Coordinator

<https://acf.gov/orr/grant-funding/key-state-contacts>

Contact USCRI TVAP or Aspire

<https://refugees.org/trafficking/>

Request PRS for a former unaccompanied child

<https://acf.gov/orr/outreach-material/office-refugee-resettlement-national-call-center>

Request case consultation with the Refugee Youth Resource Center

<https://www.refugee-youth.org/>

Assessment Questions with the Child/Youth



- Tell me how things have been going living with your caregiver. How have you been adjusting so far?
- Tell me a little bit about your caregiver. How would you describe your relationship with them?
- Now that you are here with your caregiver, what are your goals for the future? What matters most to you right now?
- How safe do you feel living in your home and community? Have there been any significant incidents or changes?
- How would you describe your relationship with the other household members?
- If there was ever an instance when you needed help, who is a trusted adult besides the caregiver who you could reach out to for support?
- Explain to me how your caregiver handles discipline, if you or the other children in the home misbehave?

Assessment Questions with the Caregiver

- Tell me how things have been going with the child living in your home.
- Tell me a little bit about the child/youth. What should I know about them? What are some of the child/youth's strengths or positive qualities?
- How would you describe your relationship with the child/youth?
- Now that the child/youth is with you, what are your goals for the child/youth? When it comes to the child/youth, what matters most to you right now?
- How do you think the child/youth has been adapting and feeling lately? What are your observations of their mood?
- How would you describe the child/youth's behavior at home? At school? In the community?
- Explain how you handle behavioral challenges when they arise.



Assessment Questions for the Joint Meeting

- What does the daily schedule look like in the home?
- What is the supervision plan?
- What expectations do you (caregiver) have of the youth? What are the rules of the household?
- What expectations do you (youth) have of the caregiver? How can the caregiver best support you?
- There are some families who have others who support them in caring for children, such as supportive family and friends, religious or community connections. Who is that for you? What kind of support do they provide?
- What resources are you already familiar with in your community?
- Are there any current concerns or problems that you would like help with? (Anything that needs to be addressed urgently?)
- At the end of services, how would you like things to be different compared to how they are now?
- Since you've been living here in the U.S. together, what have you been able to accomplish? What is working well?
- What do you each love most about your family? What do you each think is your family's biggest strength?

When a Placement Isn't Working: Ensuring Safety and Identifying Alternatives



Assessing the current placement: If there are no child abuse, neglect or safety concerns, can the current placement be preserved?

If not, support the family in considering the following:

Exploring other **family/kinship ties:**

Are there any other immediate relatives willing to care for the child?

Exploring options with **non-relatives:**

Does the youth have other supports, such as family friends, neighbors, or members of the youth's faith or cultural community, who may be able to safely assume responsibility for their care and safety?



If there are any **safety concerns** identified or reported:

Report any suspected abuse, neglect, trafficking, exploitation, or abandonment to your local Child Protective Services

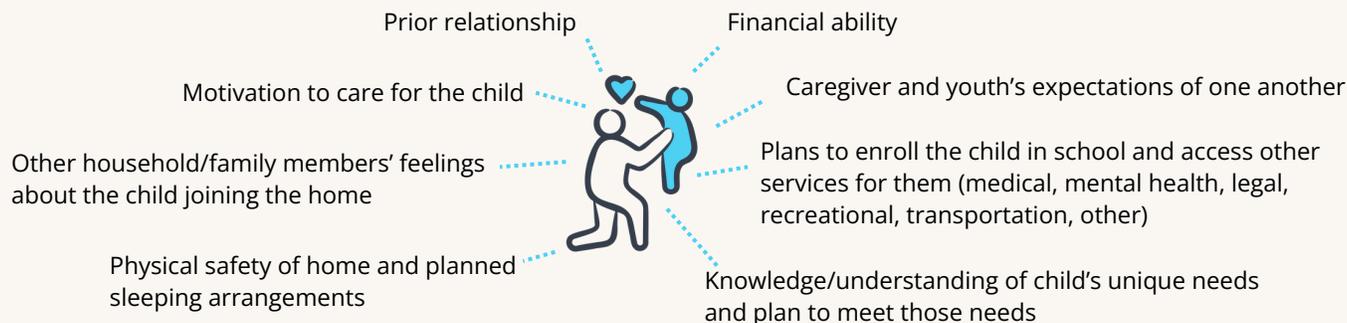
If placement preservation or placement with a relative or non-relative is **not possible:**

Facilitate care with runaway and homeless youth (RHY) programs including crisis shelters and longer-term options for transitional aged youth

Explore additional support through federally-funded programs (Preferred Communities, TVAP, URM, PRS, etc.) and other resources: school, basic needs services, faith/religious community, etc.

Additional Considerations When Helping Families Explore Placement Options:

Assessing a New Caregiver's Willingness & Preparedness to Care for the Child/Youth



Preparing the Youth & New Caregiver



Education and conversations surrounding:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Youth and family's strengths and needs
- Rules and expectations
- Parenting
- Resources available



Supporting placement permanency and long-term stability for newcomer youth involves facilitating systems of care to support the family; ongoing communication to build trust, resolve conflicts, and come to agreed upon solutions; and regular review and revision of the youth and family's goals, case plan, and safety plan. **Centering youth voice** is critical in this process.