

# ***Connecting Refugees to TANF Services in Minnesota and Utah*** **Webinar Transcript**

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**June 27, 2013**

**Coordinator:** Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen-only mode for the duration of today's conference. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time. Now I would like to turn today's meeting over to Mitiku Ashebir. Thank you, you may begin.

**Mitiku Ashebir:** Thank you. Greetings and welcome to this Office of Refugee Resettlement Webinar on Connecting Refugees to TANF Services in Minnesota and Utah. My name is, as introduced, Mitiku Ashebir. I am the Director of the Division of Refugee Assistance and Placement Coordinator for ORR.

This Webinar is sponsored by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement. This Webinar will provide an overview of two states approach in connecting refugees to TANF services. Those two states are, as I mentioned, Utah and Minnesota.

ORR through the quarterly placement meetings and other opportunities of engagement with stakeholders, we are at heightened attention with regard to TANF and TANF utilization in settling refugees. We have noticed in some states shortening of the duration of payment period for refugees, institution of new requirements to access TANF, and in some cases reductions in the amount of TANF paid to refugees. As you can imagine, all these areas interest ORR and I believe all the participants of this Webinar.

ORR in partnership with the Office of Family Assistance is focusing on promoting increased collaboration between both federal agencies. Actually our Deputy Director Mr. Ken Tota has attended a few regional, you know, TANF meetings in the past year and a half.

Also ORR is keen about connecting with other federal agencies, one, to mention as an example closely related to our discussion today, is collaboration with the Employment and Training Administration of the US Department of Labor to focus on adding five vocational training programs and highlight employment programs and relevant resources that might be available for refugees. I would like to stress that improving the connection between agencies serving refugees is a key starting point to providing the best opportunities for refugees to succeed in obtaining employment in a stable career pathway.

I would like to point out that many refugees accessing TANF use the cash but in many instances most go back to the resettlement agencies for employment and support services, although, I should add, quite a few states' TANF programs offer social services to TANF clients which could be and might be very useful for refugees to transition to employment.

Through this technical assistance program and continued deliberations on the issue, ORR hopes to fully understand the circumstances around this situation to be able to help refugees.

Before we get started with introductions, our presenters want to know a little information about our attendees so they best assist Webinar participants in enhancing their current or future collaborations between refugee agents, agencies, organizations, and TANF.

I will turn it over to Louisa Jones and Lynn Carrier of ICF International to run several poll questions and to discuss how to submit questions and answers throughout the Webinar.

**Louisa Jones:** Thank you. Good afternoon and good morning to those on the West Coast. We just wanted to take the opportunity to actually ask a few questions, just kind of see who is on - who is actually on the Webinar and kind of get a feel for where you are in collaboration integration.

So the first question is what agency or type of organization do you work for? We will just give you a few seconds to keep responding to that. Okay. Great. We are going to go to the next question. Which best describes your collaboration stage in your state or local area regarding collaboration between TANF and refugee services? That is great to know. We will share with the presenters in a second. The next question, what is the largest barrier to collaboration between agencies and organizations serving refugees? We have a few more seconds. Okay. Great.

So it looks like, just to summarize, agencies and organizations, it looks like we have about 24 percent from ORR agencies, about 21 percent from TANF, other social service agencies we have about 33 percent, and then nonprofit plus vendors we have about 21 percent.

In terms of what stage of collaboration are you in your state or local area between TANF and refugees, we actually - it seems that we had about 50 to 60 percent actually say that you were in the stage of our state and local agencies have an integrated approach to connecting refugees with TANF services.

And then in terms of the largest barrier, the collaboration between agencies and organizations serving refugees, a lot of people did address forming partnerships and addressing language needs and navigating fiscal funding streams. The large majority of you, about 59, 60 percent actually said TANF policies around grant levels, income disregards, time limits, and allowable activities which are unfavorable to refugees.

I just wanted to say thank you for replying to that because that will help our speakers from Utah and Minnesota actually gear towards where you may be on the continuum.

And so I am going to turn it back over to Mitiku.

**Mitiku Ashebir:** Thank you.

**Louisa Jones:** Oh, sorry. One more thing. Sorry. I have on the screen how to ask questions. We are not going to actually be doing any questions via phones today. We are going to have you submit all your questions via the Web and via the screen.

You can do this by tapping on the Q&A button at the top of your screen and then type in your question in the top box and then submit it - hitting ask to submit the question. We will be collecting these throughout the Webinar. You can ask questions as our presenters go along or you can ask questions afterwards. We will also review this right at the end of the presentation just to make sure everyone knows how to submit a question and then we will go to the Q&A period. And now I will turn it back.

**Mitiku Ashebir:** Mitiku again. I am joined on the Webinar today by four presenters. The first two presenters are from the State of Utah, Gerald Brown and Sisifo Taatiti. Gerald Brown is the Director of the Refugee Services Office of the Utah Department of Workforce Services. He has his bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Gerald has worked with poor youth in Cairo, Egypt; taught English in Taichung, Taiwan; resettled refugees in Vincent, Texas; worked with Bosnian refugees while on assignment with UNHCR in Croatia; worked with Iraqi refugees while on assignment in Saudi Arabia; worked with Haitian and Cuban refugees in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; worked as asylum officer for the US INS in the New York City office where he was featured in the award-winning PBS documentary *A Well-Founded Fear*; worked with Kosovo refugees in Macedonia; served as a senior program analyst for the Institute for Social and Economic Development, ISED; conducted nonprofit training for organizations in Bahrain on behalf of the Department of State.

In 2008, Gerald was named the first Director of the new Utah Refugee Service Office within the Department of Workforce Services.

Joining Gerald is Sisifo Taatiti-- I hope I am saying your name correctly -- Master of Social Work. She is the current TANF Program Manager for Utah and has been in this position since December, 2012. Prior to this position, Sisifo worked as a juvenile justice counselor while attending graduate school. She also worked as an eligibility specialist working with refugee customers. Sisifo has a master's degree in social work from the University of Utah and a bachelor degree in social work from Birmingham Young University - Oh, Brigham Young University. Sorry.

So we will now hear about Utah's approach to connecting refugees to TANF and other social services.

**Gerald Brown:** Hello. I think it is my turn. This is Gerald Brown with Utah's Department of Workforce Services, Refugee Services Office. And one of the unique things about use of TANF funding in Utah is that we have been able to use some of TANF funding for refugee programs that serve TANF eligible clients. We have three of them that are funded by TANF.

One is we fund case management, intensive case management for two years after arrival. And that is invaluable as you all certainly can appreciate. Before we were able to do that after the initial resettlement period was over, after three to six months, it was very hard to keep track of people and make sure that they got the services they needed and to make sure that they were empowered to become self-sufficient. Now it is much, much easier to do that because they have case managers stay with them from day one till the end of two years.

The second program that we are able to provide because of TANF is a partnership with the LDS church. It is called our Humanitarian Center project. And in this program refugees are able to study English for four hours a day and then get exper- work experience for four hours a day and get paid a minimum wage to do that and they do it for a year and then they are placed in jobs. So people - the English language gains have been amazing and our placement rate and retention rate for jobs after the year has been pretty impressive. Around 70 percent retain jobs after 90 days through this program.

The third program that we are funding with TANF is housing assistance for families that are TANF eligible that have children under 18 years old and that are income eligible and just helps us hou- keep single mothers with children in housing until they can get jobs that can support the housing themselves.

The other thing that I would like to mention before turning it over to Sisifo is that in Utah for new arrivals we have a refugee team within the Department of Workforce Services that helps refugees through the eligibility process for DWS provided services such as food stamps, TANF, childcare, et cetera, and after the assessment is done there are employment counselors that can also in person help people meet the requirements to get the support that they need.

So with that, I will turn you over to my dear friend, Sisifo.

**Sisifo Taatiti:** Thanks, Gerald. I just wanted to add just a response to one of - I think it was the last question that was asked in the poll about some of the barriers to using TANF and kind of - but it sounds like a lot of the states or a lot of the participants are saying that a strength - if I - if - correct me if I am wrong, but that the approach in most states is an integrated approach, which is, I think, good. I do not know if we define it the same way, but one thing that I think is really unique about Utah, and Gerald touched upon it, is our integrated approach.

And although we are tied to strict TANF policies, we have tried to be more seamless in our approach - our case management approach. And so Gerald talked about the refugee teams. We have an eligibility team and an employment counseling team. They are housed under the same office and they work intimately together to serve the refugee customers when they first arrive in the state. And then we also have really good relationships with the refugee resettlement agencies and then another local agency that provides extended case management for refugee families.

I think just kind of in response to that last question on the poll, we do not have any special policies for refugees in terms of income limits or having any special income limits or an additional grant amount for refugees. It is the same across the board. And for a lot of the TANF, you know, program administrators or managers on the line, you understand kind of the federal regulations that we are tied to in terms of that.

And just - so we have tried to be really innovative in some of the ideas that we have implemented and some of the programs that we have implemented. We - because we - because how much we are tied to those federal guidelines. Although I will say, I understand that states are - states do have the ability to relook at those income limits and kind of - we have some - it is pretty open and subjective on some level and so that is something that

maybe we can look at in the future and could be - something that we could propose, I guess, and it is got me thinking as well.

So I do not know if that answered that question or if anybody has any questions for me, but that is kind of just what I wanted to add. Thank you.

**Louisa Jones:** Great. Speakers, if you - can you talk about how many clients does each case manager have as far as with starting with the refugee from day one to two years? What is the usual caseload for a case manager?

**Gerald Brown:** Twenty-five to 30 people. Or no, that is wrong. Twenty-five to 30 cases.

**Louisa Jones:** And then also what were the arrivals in Utah for the last few fiscal years?

**Gerald Brown:** A thousand to 1100 people.

**Mitiku Ashebir:** Thank you, Gerald and Sisifo. Our next two speakers will be from Minnesota, Gus Avenido and Jane Delage. Gus Avenido has been the Refugee Coordinator for the State of Minnesota since November 2001.

Gus joined the Department of Human Services in 1985 as a senior management analyst and organizational development consultant and then administered and evaluated the key state initiative the five year project pilot project between the State and the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement. In 1995, Gus moved into the role of the state planning director and joined the department's welfare reform team was responsible in obtaining federal waivers and developing a pilot project that reflected strong work requirements.

During the welfare reform era, he was the project manager of Minnesota's workforce programs. After the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, TANF, was signed into law, Avenido joined the department unit which was charged with developing and implementing Minnesota's version of TANF which is now popularly known as the Minnesota Family Investment Program.

Over the years, Gus has participated in various workgroups that focused on immigrant integration, workforce development, disparity reduction, lean management and performance accountability measures. Most recently, he designed a stakeholder resource scan and risk assessment matrix to provide a framework for collaboration and partnerships. The matrix is being piloted in several sites in Minnesota.

Jane has been the manager of Minnesota's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program since May 2004. In that role, she is responsible for managing the development and implementation of policy and the allocation of funds for Minnesota's cash assistance and employment service programs for needy families.

Gus and Jane.

**Gus Avenido:** Go ahead, Jane.

**Jane Delage:** Gus. Hello, this is Jane Delage and I will be starting us off by explaining a little bit about the Minnesota program. What you see now is really a poster of the refugee program and you can see that Minnesota has become the home for thousands of refugees. We have a lot of secondary migration as well as

people who come directly here. And we feel that we are doing a pretty good job of integrating them into our communities here.

But let me tell you a little bit about Minnesota's approach. So if you will go to the next slide, please. Okay. And the next. Okay. So as was mentioned, our program is called the Minnesota Family Investment Program and our policy for MFIP, as we call it, was designed from the very beginning to include the TANF applicants and recipients who are refugees. So throughout our policy, which is mostly in statute, there are various times in which we talk about culturally appropriate services and services to refugees.

Our program provides the main cash and employment services to refugee families in Minnesota. So TANF really is the main service for those who are TANF eligible and the other services really are meant to and do supplement and provide additional supports for some of those families.

Refugee families apply for MFIP right away when they arrive and they are assigned to MFIP job counselors within a month, although we are actually working on having that occur more - in a shorter time period and working on having it be a seven working days until the cases are assigned to an employment services agency.

The MFIP job counselor develops the employment services plan with individual refugees and that plan serves as the starting place for additional employment services that are funded by the Refugee Services Office.

There are some key policies that we feel - next slide. There are some key MFIP policies that benefit refugees. For one thing, MFIP combines the SNAP, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and TANF into one program with one set of rules. And we know that all of our rules are very confusing to people who are new to the US, so having one set we feel is of benefit to everyone but especially to refugees. Like other MFIP participants, refugees can receive childcare assistance and transportation to support activities in their employment plan.

And then a big difference in our program is that we have what is called family stabilization services that are state funded, and that is a special tract that new immigrants and others who are unable to immediately meet the work participation rate are put into. And it enables us to not worry so much about the specific activities that are core or non-core and about specific hourly requirements in the case of a refugee family for that first year and they can focus then more on getting the family stabilized and removing any barriers to employment, such as language, acquisition of language skills, so that can be a focus in that first year.

Now some of our refugees will qualify for family stabilization services for more than a year. They can qualify if their English skills do not reach a certain level. But also this tract serves people who are ill or incapacitated for more than 30 days, whose presence is required in the home as a caregiver for someone who has - is ill or incapacitated, caregivers who have a family member with a disability or special medical needs, and caregivers with a developmental disability or mental illness or an IQ below 80.

So there are a number of ways in which people who are refugees might also qualify for family stabilization services even if they are no longer in their first year in the country. So this is one of the ways that we have tried to be more flexible in what kinds of services can be provided.

Now if you would switch slides here. Okay. We do require that throughout the state that our employment services providers provide culturally appropriate services and language services. We also have worked with our childcare folks on the development of specialized childcare that is culturally and language specific. Also many of our counties have bilingual or bicultural staff as do our ES providers.

And to mention another part of MFIP, we are a state supervised, county administered program. So the ES providers, the employment services providers actually are under contract with the counties. And I would say that our counties primary- those that have large refugee populations have done a good job of using the refugee agencies as ES providers for their refugee population. So they actually contract using TANF dollars with refugee agencies to provide bilingual, bicultural services to refugees who are on TANF.

Next slide. We believe that our - that we do not have some of the kinds of policies that are discouraging for refugees. Our grant, while still low, is one of the higher grants, it is - we are kind of higher tier of grants in the US and our income disregard currently is at 40 percent and will be rising to 50 percent in 2014, so it does encourage work and reward work.

And we have a five year time limit, even though more than - about 75 percent of our folks go off within a three year period. We actually measure success using not only the work participation rate but also a self-support index which looks at what people are doing in three years and that if they are - they are considered a success if they are off assistance or working 30 hours a week, and about 75 percent of our immigrant population has been successful at doing so.

We have a five year time limit, but we do have extensions for those that are working or that have the conditions that I mentioned when I talked about the family stabilization services. So I think that policy-wise we are doing fairly well at addressing the needs of refugees.

And now I am going to turn it over to Gus.

**Gus Avenido:** Hello, everyone. Here I would like - just like to briefly discuss how the two programs, the TANF employment services and the refugee services interact. First of all, MFIP, as Jane has said, MFIP employment services is the primary services that are provided to refugees. So every participant are referred to refugee services, these are the services that are paid for by ORR funds, by their MFIP job counselor. In other words, they cannot be enrolled in the refugee funded services unless there is a paper referral to us by the MFIP job counselors. The refugee service providers, case managers report hours to the MFIP job counselors, the work participation rates.

In the current fiscal year only 25 percent or (6718) refugees are receiving additional employment services from ORR funded services. So in essence, about 75 percent are mainstream MFIP employment services. Our refugees that are more independent do well in regular MFIP services without specialized providers or referral to ORR funded employment services.

Next slide, please. So how do we know that Minnesota's approach is working? The first is that refugees do well under the Minnesota self-support index. As Jane has already mentioned, there is a metric for those working 30

hours a week or are off other assistance or after three years. Compared to other populations, the refugees are ranked probably a couple of percentage points than the mainstream white population. I think refugees in general have a 73, 74 self-support index.

The second reason why we think our approach is working is that the approach that is used in our programming in the ORR funded services has been actually replicated as a model for services for other populations in the state who have disparate outcomes. And last but not least, Minnesota's large refugee migration from other states indicates that refugees choose to live here.

Next slide, please. So how do we - and I say we, how do refugee funded services add value to TANF employment services? The value added is as follows. The refugee providers are able to provide more hands-on case management or job supported - job search. The refugee providers are able to help bridge cultural gaps, explain more thoroughly job duties to new workers, work onsite with employers to meet employers' needs especially when there are problems at work sites.

In addition, the refugee providers are able to help with work support and assess what is available from MFIP. An example would be transportation. As you probably know, TANF is - has a shortage of funding right now. Transportation may be - by refugees may be needed more. Or for training, for tuition. So we may use a refugee funded - or funds to provide training funds or tuition to refugees who may need the specific training to improve their employability.

Providers help with housing issues as well as interpret program rules, help fill out forms, and generally smooth the way for refugees as they navigate the TANF employment services.

Next slide, please. In the last - in this slide, we would like to - Jane and I would like to share with you lessons we have learned over the years since TANF was implemented. The first, so when TANF policies on cash assistance and employment services accommodate refugees we know that employment results occur.

We also know that refugees are able to have statewide access to TANF cash benefits and employment services. In other words, there are many places in the State of Minnesota where there are no refugee agencies or even mutual assistance associations. Still, the refugees are able to access TANF and employment services because the system, the TANF system in Minnesota is structured that way.

**Jane Delage:** We also find that co-case management by TANF job counselors and the refugee services job counselors demonstrate a high level of collaboration and help to serve people whose needs are a little higher than others. Refugees are not diverted from TANF. In fact, we were talking about, well, maybe we need to have a few more of them referred to the refugee services. So I think that our accommodation within the TANF program has been very good. We need to just now figure out could more people be served by refugee services, would they benefit.

And I just want to state that we have looked at how some of the refugee services are provided and some of the relationships with training and with employers and we have some disparities in other populations, native populations, and we are looking at the way that refugees are served as a model for how we can improve

outcomes for other populations, so that more intensive model, and actually some of the culturally specific services are things that we are replicating in other areas.

So it has been an interesting journey. And actually developing this slide presentation has been an interesting format for us to further discuss how things work in Minnesota and to think about what might be some next steps. We do have a conference every year and often we talk about cultural issues at the conference as well and the refugee population counselors are there and en force. So I guess that is about it for now.

**Gus Avenido:** The last slide.

**Jane Delage:** You can contact us if you want to know more about what we are doing and we are always glad to share and learn from you and hopefully give you some of our insights.

**Gus Avenido:** Thank you.

**Mitiku Ashebir:** Thank you, Jane and Gus. I will now turn it over to Louisa Jones from the Welfare Peers Technical Assistance Network who will review how to submit questions to our speakers and ask our presenters your questions you have been submitting throughout the Webinar. Thank you.

**Louisa Jones:** Thank you. And we have been receiving some questions, but just as a reminder, if you go to the top of your screen and hit on the Q&A button you can type in your question and hit ask and then it will be submitted to the queue.

My - one of the first questions is, are family stabilization services linked to TANF and SNAP benefits? If they do not participate, are they sanctioned?

**Jane Delage:** Okay, that - this is Jane. And we state fund our FSS services so they are the same - it is part of the Minnesota Family Investment Program just as our other services are, but they are state funded so they are pulled from the work participation rate. There is a sanction process, but given some of the barriers that are common in that population it is more difficult to sanction. We need to be sure that people are - we need to be able to show that the people were actually able to comply with the requirements before a sanction can be imposed.

**Louisa Jones:** And this question is for Utah. In terms of referring out to other partner agencies, how does that relationship work between TANF and refugee services and what other partners do you work with? Is Gerald and Sisifo, can you - you may be on mute.

**Gerald Brown:** Sorry, Louisa. I missed that.

**Louisa Jones:** The question was looking at other partners that you work with with TANF and refugee services. What other partners do you work with and how do you - like who do you make referrals to and what other services are provided to refugees by other agencies?

**Gerald Brown:** Well, we work with 22 refugee community organizations because we think that the best way to support refugees long term is to for refugee community organizations with the capacity to team with mainstream volunteers who have been trained. So those are important partners.

We also have more mainstream refugee service providers. We only have two resettlement agencies here in Utah. Both of them are here in Salt Lake City. And - so they obviously resettle new refugees, but we also contract with them to do the two years of case management.

There is a third large refugee service provider, the Asian Association of Utah, and we contract with them for targeted assistance. And they help with some social work, I mean, social work case management for the Catholics. We - our major ESL provider is the Granite School District where most our refugees reside, and they in turn subcontract with several ESL providers.

We have several private sector partners that we are working on projects with. One is a goat ranch that will include the Burundi, the Bantu, and Somali Bajuni, but those folks have been here for more than five years. They are still very poor. And so no refugee money is being - I mean, no ORR money is being used on that, but that is private sector money.

And we are also, our dream here is to build a refugee community center so that we can have a place that the refugee community organizations and the mainstream volunteers can come together to serve people long term and so that refugees can effectively serve themselves.

So we are trying a bunch of stuff and we have got great partners here. One of the advantages of being in Salt Lake City is the LDS church is a great partner. And, you know, if it were not for them, I do not know that we could have done the Humanitarian Center project that I talked about earlier.

**Louisa Jones:** Thank you, Gerald. I am going to stay with Utah for a second and ask a few more questions. What advantages have you seen from having a refugee specific team for the TANF program and what advice would you give for marketing this idea to a county that does not currently have this model?

**Gerald Brown:** Well, I think it is much a huge difference. If it were not for them then people would have to use the computer, you know, pathways that everybody else has to and that is very difficult for refugees that have, you know, come from refugee camps in the third world. Even after people have been here a while and they have to be transferred to the computer system, although DWS works vigilantly to make it as accessible as possible, people still have difficulty and that is after they have been here, you know, 2, 3, 4 years. So I think the fact that people can talk to someone in person, often, you know, in the same language is just, you know, it cannot be underestimated.

**Louisa Jones:** Okay.

**Sisifo Taatiti:** I think another good point, too, that we are reminded of is some of - a lot of the eligibility workers and also the employment counselors, they speak the languages of the refugees that are coming and so - but in the event that they do not speak the language we have resources through Language Line and whatnot

that we can use too for interpretation services. But I think something that is really special in that I think was that was kind of tailored in that way was to have that language service ready and available through the employment counselors themselves.

I think a good thing to note as well is the good communication lines we have with the resettlement agencies. They give a heads up to the refugee team prior to the families coming in to the state to give them an idea of how many, you know, applications they can anticipate in that month and then there is a lot of prep work that goes into it. And then when they are- you know, when the refugees arrive in the state they are escorted by, you know, a case manager from the resettlement agency to the office where the refugee teams are and they help kind of facilitate the conversation there. And the goal and the vision is to have a seamless process and to get refugees up and going as quickly as possible. And I - yes, if there is any other questions about that I would - I will be more than happy to share.

**Lynn Carrier:** Okay. Thank you. We have another question for Minnesota regarding your special tract. The question was how were you able to secure the ORR funding to develop the special tract and exclude the refugees for the first year for the core and non-core hourly requirement?

**Jane Delage:** The funding is state funding. It is state general fund money not ORR money.

**Gus Avenido:** Or TANF.

**Jane Delage:** So it is our TANF program but we state fund some of these folks in our TANF program so that we are not subject to the federal work participation rate and the limited activities.

**Louisa Jones:** Okay. Another question for Utah. Can you provide a little bit more information on the housing assistance that is available to refugee families and how is Utah doing in regards to housing affordability and availability for large families?

**Gerald Brown:** I am going to need Sisifo's help on this. People have to FEP eligible, is that right?

**Sisifo Taatiti:** Yes, so they need to be...

**Gerald Brown:** And FEP is what?

**Sisifo Taatiti:** Okay. So our Family Employment Program is the TANF employment program for the State of Utah. And so the housing program, in order to be eligible for the housing assistance program they have to meet those eligibility requirements and - through the FEP program. I do not know very many details, but...

**Sisifo Taatiti:** Well, jump on. I do not want to say it wrong. So sorry, we have a refugee program specialist who knows more about the con- these programs than we do. So this is Irina Pierpont. She is just going to jump on real quick and - I do not - because I do not want to misspeak, so...

**Irina Pierpont:** Hi, everyone. This - we are in a partnership with the county housing program and they administer this program. They deal with - we do eligibility and they are checking with - within our system if the family is eligible based on their income and if they are on financial assistance they can get the housing through

this project. Once they are enrolled, they - their responsibility is 30 percent of their income or financial assistance they are receiving.

And they have - they can be on this assistance - on this housing assistance until they are staying on financial benefits. Once they start getting income from employment or social security benefits or child support or alimony, which is not happening very often, they can be off that assistance or they can be approved for a different housing subsidized assistance and just move on.

**Louisa Jones:** Great. Thank you.

**Sisifo Taatiti:** Just real quickly, so just in response to the availability of affordable housing.

**Louisa Jones:** Of course, of course.

**Sisifo Taatiti:** Do you know anything?

**Gerald Brown:** It is just a problem. I mean the public housing, the wait list, when I - we started this office five years ago was two years, now its five years, so it is a mess.

**Sisifo Taatiti:** And that is the truth. Thanks, Louisa.

**Louisa Jones:** Thank you. And on a similar note in terms of - around housing and rent for Minnesota, do TANF funds cover rent expenses and, if not, if refugees focus on English instead of work how do they pay their rent? Is there another housing program to cover any gap and, if so, how is that funded?

**Gus Avenido:** Go ahead.

**Jane Delage:** Well, the grant is the primary source that all of our TANF participants have for paying their rent. We do have numbers of refugees who are in our public housing. We also just recently, legislation was passed to provide a \$110 in a housing subsidy for those who do not already have a HUD subsidy or are not a child only case. And that piece of legislation, I am just going to do a quick look here about the effective date, it will be effective July 1 of 2015.

So we recognize that housing is a big issue for everyone in the state and have - there were also some specific housing initiatives that were funded this year. Ending homelessness is certainly big push here within Minnesota, but we too have problems with waiting lists for housing and that sort of thing.

So there is not a special housing grant for refugees. They are to use their grant and their earnings from any unsubsidized work to fund their housing. And they too here the HUD programs, of course you pay 30 percent of your income, which includes whatever your public assistance grant is.

**Gus Avenido:** One of the things that affiliates try to do when they resettle new arriving families is to make sure that the housing cost is at the same level as the TANF or MFIP grant in Minnesota. And if there excess amount of (RNP) per capita, what volunteer agencies would do would be vendor paid amount probably over

three or four months while people are get - looking for a job. But as Jane or as Sisifo noted, housing is a major, major issue not only in Minnesota but across the nation not only for refugees but among poor people as well.

**Lynn Carrier:** Thank you. Gerald, there was a request for your to give some more details around the Humanitarian Center project.

**Gerald Brown:** Well, participants have to be TANF eligible obviously. They have to be people that want to work but have not been able to get a job and they - and one of the reasons that they have not been able to get a job has got to be that their English is very poor. We have 100 people in the program. We screen them very carefully to make sure that they are highly motivated because these positions are precious. We have a three month probation period. If people do not study hard and, you know, try their best then we kick them out.

We have good English teachers over there from the - as I noted before, from the Granite school district, professional certified English teachers, but we also have volunteer teachers who work in smaller groups after the major English class is done. So half the people study English from morning until lunchtime and then do the work practice after lunch, and the other half work in the morning and study English in the afternoon. It is really cool to watch. I take visitors over there all the time and it is pretty cool. Because people are - and again, the English level gains are, you know, off the charts.

So we are able to do, for these 100 people, what everybody who works with refugees knows you need to do if you can, which is give people intensive English training for a long time if they come without English and especially if they come without English and no formal education at all.

And as I said, we have got a job developer who - and we have case managers involved. We have got people at the Humanitarian Center, work coaches involved. They meet on every client once a month. The job developer gets intensely involved at the nine-month period because we need to have a job for the person when the 12 months is over.

That is probably more information than you wanted, but when I get started on this it is hard to shut me up.

**Louisa Jones:** That is wonderful, Gerald.

**Lynn Carrier:** We actually have one that sort of follows up on that. What community and process planning went into developing these innovative projects and who are the key partners and stakeholders who participated?

**Gerald Brown:** Well, the good thing here, we start off with that the Refugee Services Office is within the Department of Workforce Services, and Workforce Services is the state entity that manages TANF and other supported programs like food stamps and stuff like that, Medicaid. So you start there.

Then I think the next is very important that the director of the department is 100 percent supportive of helping refugees. If that were not the case then we could not have done this. And then you get to the point that we had TANF reserves because the program was well-managed for years and years and continues to be well-managed. Obviously if we had not had the money, we could not have done it.

And again, the church. I mean, they have a huge facility where work practice stuff was already being done with another population, and after talking with them for about a year they agreed to partner with us and it is the first partnership of this sort in Utah between the church and a government agency.

So I think that, you know, I think that a lot of the reasons we could do this are unique to Utah. I do not want to be discouraging, but there is just a lot of stuff was in place.

**Louisa Jones:** Thanks, Gerald. I am going to go to Minnesota. I am actually going to ask you two questions and then a question for both states. In terms of your - I know a state supervised county administered state, but in terms of caseload per case worker do you have kind of an average amount maybe for some of your larger counties versus your rural?

**Jane Delage:** The case - yes, I guess that there are two caseloads. One would be for the cash assistance and one for the employment services and they vary greatly throughout the state, so I do not know that I would be comfortable trying to give you a number.

**Louisa Jones:** Okay. And how much of state funding goes to support MFIP?

**Jane Delage:** How much state funding? I do not have that number right now, but we have a significant amount of state funding that is non-MOE that goes to support the family stabilization services and we also have pulled our two parent families out of the work participation rate which is a number of refugee families as well. So I do not have that number with me at the moment, so I cannot give you that.

**Louisa Jones:** And this is actually for both states. I know Minnesota you spoke about the secondary migration. Can you talk a little bit about what the numbers look like for that? And then the same question to Utah. And how it - and maybe different services or how you are dealing with that?

**Gus Avenido:** Sure. For fiscal year '12 our primary arrivals was about 1900 refugees that came in directly to United - to Minnesota. ORR reported to us that another 1900 came to Minnesota from other states. Previously in fiscal year '12 our primary arrivals were about 1800 and ORR reported to us about 1900 - almost 2000 secondary arrivals. So in essence, our TANF caseload is about 50 percent from other states and 50 percent directly arriving to Minnesota. It is about 40 percent - I mean 4000.

**Louisa Jones:** Okay. Then the same question to Utah.

**Gerald Brown:** Can you repeat the question?

**Louisa Jones:** Can you talk about secondary migration in terms of maybe numbers or kind of things that you know about who is coming into Utah and then any specific programs or activities that you are doing to address their needs as well.

**Gerald Brown:** Well, we do have a program that tries to help secondary migrants. From where I sit and everything I can gleam, it is kind of a wash. I believe that there are probably as many people moving out as there

are moving in. And I do not - do we know the number? Off the top of my head, I do not know the number that they serve that come in, but I can get you that if it would help.

**Louisa Jones:** Thank you.

**Lynn Carrier:** Thank you. We are getting to some of our final questions. Utah, this is a follow up to a point you made previously. The question asks, collaboration seems key to your approaches but collaboration can be hard. How do you ensure ongoing positive relationships and collaboration? Is there anyone who is the official convener?

**Gerald Brown:** Well, I am kind of the official convener on refugee stuff. If it is health related, we have got a good refugee health coordinator and she kind of takes the lead on that. On other refugee stuff, our office tries to convene. I think that - huh.

**Sisifo Taatiti:** They also meet quite frequently though, right, with community partners.

**Gerald Brown:** Yes. We have regular meetings. We have a monthly providers meeting and everybody that messes with refugees comes to that. One of the strange things about Utah is that all of the refugees in the state or 99 percent of them are in the Salt Lake Valley, so we are all - we are very close together. I mean, we are different than Minnesota or California or Texas where there is, you know, a lot more people and they are more spread out.

So here people are in the valley and it is a relatively small community. We know each other. So that certainly helps with collaboration. We – it is very easy to see that we are in the same boat. And yes, anything I - else I would say I would be kind of making it up, so I will not.

**Sisifo Taatiti:** Irina has a good point about collaboration.

**Gerald Brown:** Irina wants to say something.

**Irina Pierpont:** No, the - our good partner is the county.

**Gerald Brown:** Oh yes, with - yes.

**Irina Pierpont:** Government.

**Gerald Brown:** I - and when I say the valley I could say - the same – it is the same as saying the county and they are a great partner so that helps.

**Lynn Carrier:** Great. Thank you. Minnesota, do you have anything to add on your approach to collaboration and how you keep it a strong partnership?

**Gus Avenido:** I think from what I see, especially in cities and county - counties where there are no affiliates or mutual assistance associations the statewide ESL features became - become a focal point in terms of addressing

refugees. As well, the county people interact with our state TANF here as well as with our office to be able to see how more collaboration could be eked out of the TANF providers and other providers in the area.

**Jane Delage:** I would say that our major counties that have larger numbers really have pretty strong programs and are very concerned about the success of refugees. I live in Ramsey County and we have large numbers of refugees here in this county and the counties, I think, have done a pretty good job of - in selecting their employment services providers keeping in the forefront the needs of their refugee population. As was mentioned, having bilingual workers, having culturally appropriate services, developing the support services that are needed as well in those areas.

So we look forward to continued coordination and collaboration. We always want to do better, but I think that our counties really have tried to do a good job of that. And we do have consolidated plan requirements that talk about some of that.

**Louisa Jones:** Great. Thank you so much. We are going to take you off the hot seat now and ask two final poll questions before we turn it back to Mitiku for some closing remarks, so you will see those on your screen in just a moment. Great. And one more.

And Mitiku, we are going to turn it right back to you for closing remarks.

**Mitiku Ashebir:** Thank you. Well, thank you all for attending this Webinar. It is my thinking, you know, this is only the beginning. We will have more such in the future. And thank you all presenters for sharing their thoughts and answering questions on how they are connecting refugees to TANF services in their states.

We hope that this was beneficial to you all and the communities that you serve and encourage you to begin thinking about ideas for next steps in your communities as a result of knowledge gain from this Webinar. The PowerPoint, transcript, and audio recording will be made available for everyone within the coming weeks.

Before I close I will just provide a reminder, last Friday a notice went out from ORR on the setting of ORR regional offices. And I am thinking, you know, I am talking, you know, about TANF, our connection to TANF and then working with, you know, different stakeholders in around TANF, it is hoped, I mean, that the thing is that this regional arrangement will enhance outreach to and engagement with regional TANF offices and states around or in those regions.

By closing, on behalf of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, thank you again. Please participate in the poll so we can collect your valuable feedback on this technical assistance activity. Thank you all very much.

**END**