



## STATE OF OREGON

## INTEROFFICE MEMO

Victor Atiyeh  
Governor

DATE: March 19, 1982

FROM: Leo Hegstrom, Director  
Department of Human Resources

SUBJECT: Refugee Program Changes - Briefing Paper

Current federal rules permit refugees to receive cash and medical assistance for their first 36 months of residency in the U.S. regardless of their family or household composition. About 80% of the refugees on assistance in Oregon are singles, childless couples or two-parent families who only qualify for assistance due to these waivers.

On March 12, 1982 interim final rules were published in the Federal Register which reduce eligibility for those not qualifying for ongoing programs from 36 months to 18 months.

Over 6,000 refugees (57% of the refugee assistance caseload and 35% of state refugee population) will lose assistance on the day of implementation of these policies.

I would like to share several general items of information, then review our implementation plans and local activities.

#### General Items

1. The interim final rules are the culmination of nearly a year of federal bungling that has included funding interruptions, unreliable official directives and meaningless consultation.
2. Oregon, Washington, and Florida are the only three states who will be severely impacted due to this change. Other states have either a low refugee population, low unemployment and thus, low welfare dependency or ongoing programs that refugees can shift into after 18 months under continued full federal funding. Florida will be affected because the policy applies to Cuban entrants. Oregon, with only 3% of the nations refugees, represents 15% of expected federal savings. Washington is in a similar position.
3. The interim rule stipulates implementation on April 1, 1982; thirteen working days after its publication. The National Office of Refugee Resettlement ignored a letter I sent on March 2 requesting directives by March 5. On March 9 I informed them in writing that we would make no changes in policy until May 1. Not only do I object to the lack of administrative lead time, but April implementation would not have permitted adequate notice to this unique population. Washington is implementing April 1.

4. Senator Hatfield's office has taken an active interest in this issue. The Senator will be advocating for impact aid to Oregon and Washington (such funding has already been identified for Florida).

#### Implementation Schedule

1. March 15 - April 1

We will make contact face-to-face or in small groups with as many of those to be terminated as possible to explain the policy changes.

2. April 1

A letter will be sent to all those affected by the policy repeating the May 1 implement date.

3. April 19

A translated 10-day formal notice will be sent to each case losing assistance on May 1.

4. March - Ongoing

Individual consultation will be provided by state and other local workers to those affected regarding their options and needs.

#### State and Local Activities

Following is a list of some of the actions that have taken place and services that will be available by May 1:

1. Formation of a hotline with a base of bilingual volunteer support.
2. Formation of broad-based Crisis Planning Committees.
3. Systems for interagency case reviews and individual refugee consultation.
4. Provision of community resource training.
5. Provision of suicide prevention training.
6. Preparation, translation and distribution of emergency pamphlets.
7. Preparation and distribution of pamphlets on conditions in other states.
8. Revisions in service strategies and priorities of local contract agencies.
9. Provision of a formal impact study with pre and post interviews.
10. Creation of local service tracking systems.

11. Contingency plans for emergency shelter.
12. Linkage with local emergency funds.
13. Contingency plans for use of federal impact aid.

While this is a rather lengthy list, the reality is we will only meet a small fraction of the need. We will openly encourage refugees to consider moving to other states where the federal Refugee Program and local conditions are more responsive to their needs.

Ultimately the solution is linkage of federal funding to the arrival rate. The government should not bring more refugees to this country than it can afford to adequately service.

A letter is attached for your signature to AFS Branch Managers requesting their support and sensitivity to the situation. A separate letter for your signature is included to be sent to one of the branch managers who has made outstanding contributions to this program and to the agency over the years. Jerry Burns, the Refugee Program Coordinator, will handle most media contacts (373-7177).

LTH:vmg

Attachments

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cc: Denny Miles  
Paul Phillips  
Bob Oliver