



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Charlie Crist
Governor

George H. Sheldon
Secretary

DATE: January 21, 2010

TO: Circuit Administrators

THROUGH: Pete Digre, Assistant Secretary for Operations
David L. Fairbanks, Assistant Secretary for Programs

FROM: Alan Abramowitz, State Director
Office of Family Safety

SUBJECT: Guidance and Contact Information Regarding Arrival of Children from Haiti
ACTION REQUIRED: Disseminate to Child Protective Investigators,
Children's Legal Services and Other Interested Parties
DUE DATE: TODAY

The following is to provide background, guidance and contact information in the event of the arrival of children from Haiti, through the repatriation process or other means.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is required to screen all individuals arriving to the U.S. and establish, to the best of their ability, identity, age and immigration status. Most children should arrive with a parent or guardian, but in cases in which children arrive without an adult, there are existing procedures in place. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) is the federal agency designated to care for non-citizen children.

Children who are U.S. citizens

Department staff should continue to support efforts to repatriate US citizen children who were in Haiti at the time of the quake and are returning to the US with their parents or guardians.

For unaccompanied children determined by the Department of Homeland Security to be US citizens, DCF may be asked to coordinate efforts to return the unaccompanied children to family or other safe living arrangements and provide services and support until the child can be reunited with his/her family. If it is determined that there is no family available to care for the child, the Regional Children's Legal Services Director in your Region must be contacted. The Regional Legal Services Director will coordinate the decision with the Refugee Services and Family Safety Program offices on a case-by-case basis.

1317 Winewood Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700

Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

Children who are not U.S. citizens

Non-US citizen children (children who are citizens of Haiti or other countries) identified as unaccompanied alien children (UAC) by the Department of Homeland Security should be taken into custody by DHS at the port of entry.

DHS staff is expected to contact ORR's 24/7 line when they encounter unaccompanied alien children. ORR will then place the child in facilities under contract with ORR through the Division of Unaccompanied Children's Services (DUCS) program. ORR is placing these children through their federal grants and contracts with state-licensed facilities. Florida has these programs in the Miami area.

Children with no immigration status will be given a designation by DHS as they enter the U.S. We anticipate these children may be given a humanitarian parole. For Haitian children, this status conveys eligibility for status as a Haitian entrant. Haitian entrants are eligible for services to the same degree as refugees, including eligibility for Medicaid, TANF, Refugee Medical Assistance and the Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) program. The URM program provides foster care and independent living services to refugee youth in 19 locations nationwide. DCF's Refugee Services administers this program through a contracted provider in Miami. ORR plans to place unaccompanied noncitizen children who arrive to the U.S. into DUCS facilities, anticipating that most will be reunited with families. Those who are not reunited may be placed in the URM program (in Florida or in other locations) at some point in the future.

Any non-citizen child encountered through the repatriation program must be referred to the Department of Homeland Security for placement in ORR programs. If there are any difficulties with this process, Florida's contact at ORR is Ann Marie Bena. Please contact her relating to any foreign national children.

Her contact information is: Office 202 260 3530 or Cell 240 426 0949.

While DHS is to arrange for the care of non-US citizen children through the ORR process, given the unique challenges facing DHS and ORR, Florida is willing to support our federal partners when requested. If such requests for assistance materialize, further guidance will be provided as to the role of our staff.

Non-US children whose adoptions are pending may present additional circumstances. The Department of Homeland Security announced in coordination with the U.S. Department of State the authorization of humanitarian parole for orphans who are eligible for adoption in the United States and have been matched with an adoptive family. DHS and ORR are required to confirm the validity of adoptions prior to the release of children to the adoptive parents. News reports indicate there may be as many as 900 of these cases in the United States.

The Department will cooperate with federal policy regarding the placement of children and is available to assist in providing care as needed to any child requiring immediate assistance.

If there are any additional questions or additional guidance specifically related to how the Department is handling children arriving from Haiti, please contact your Children's Legal Services Regional Director and they will assist you with obtaining answers to your questions and/or coordinating with the appropriate person/agency.

Central Region: Karlene Cole-Palmer: (407) 873- 3795

Southern/Southeast Region: Esther Jacobo: (305) 794-0141 or

DJ Cannava at (305) 389- 4281;

Suncoast Region: Bronwyn Stanford at (941) 650-1430;

Northeast Region: George Beckwith at (386) 985-7577;

Northwest Region: Jennifer Greenberg at (954) 732-3345.

Additionally, 24/7 you can contact the Department's Family Safety Program Office Director Alan Abramowitz at (850) 566 5670; Children's Legal Services Statewide Director Mary Cagle at (850) 228-6792; Refugee Services Program Supervisor Patti Grogan (850) 210-8165.

cc: Regional Directors
Mary Cagle