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FACT SHEET

Unaccompanied Alien Child Shelter at Homestead Job Corps Site, Homestead, Florida

The Homestead Job Corp site was activated in February 2018 as a temporary emergency influx shelter for “Unaccompanied Alien Children” (UAC) by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) for minors crossing the border without their parents.

The UAC Program is managed by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), an operational division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Comprehensive Health Services (CHS) – one of the nation’s largest and most experienced providers of medical management services – is operating the child care and wrap-around support services at the Homestead shelter.

The Homestead Shelter was previously vacant and had not been in operation as a Jobs Corps center since August 2015. From June 2016 to April 2017, ORR used the Homestead shelter to care for over 8,500 UAC during the last migrant surge at the southern U.S. border.

In February 2018, state and local community leaders were notified about the re-activation of the Homestead shelter. The first UAC arrived safely and were welcomed in March 2018. Since March 2018 over 14,300 UAC have been placed at the shelter and more than 13,300 children have been unified with a parent, close family relative or other sponsor.

Due to the crisis on the southern border, ORR has seen a dramatic increase in referrals of UAC from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) this Fiscal Year (FY) and continues to operate in emergency influx mode. As of June 2019 (FY19-YTD), DHS has referred over 58,500 UAC to ORR, an increase of over 57 percent from the same time period in FY 2018.

The number of referrals is unpredictable. It is likely this fiscal year ORR will care for the largest number of UAC in the program's history. Because of the large fluctuations in arrival numbers throughout the year, ORR maintains a mix of “standard” beds that are available year-round, and “temporary” beds that can be added or reduced as needed. Continuing to operate in emergency influx mode will successfully accommodate fluctuations in immigration patterns at this time. Keeping the Homestead shelter open is a prudent step to ensure that ORR is able to meet its responsibility, by law, to provide shelter for UAC referred to its care by DHS.

As soon as children enter ORR care, they are put in contact with their parents, guardians or relatives and the process of finding a suitable sponsor begins. The vast majority of sponsors are

a parent or a close family relative living in the United States. While ORR programs are looking for sponsors, children are provided age-appropriate care and wraparound services in one of the 168 facilities and programs in 23 states funded by HHS's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).

As of July 22, there are approximately 10,000 UAC in ORR care. At the end of May 2019, the system-wide length of care in our shelters is 45 days, down from a recent high of 93 days in November 2018. ORR is working to further reduce length of care, to deal with capacity issues, in ways that do not jeopardize the safety or welfare of the children.

Similar to other temporary shelter locations funded by ORR, Homestead Shelter visits are being offered and scheduled for elected officials, media and key stakeholders.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has provided HHS use of the facility while DOL assesses its future use of the property. HHS assumes full responsibility for the facility during its use, including wear and tear on buildings and grounds. The facility will revert to DOL upon DOL's request and the temporary use by HHS will have no bearing on DOL's decision about whether to resume Job Corps operations at this location. Currently DOL and HHS have a licensing agreement through December 31, 2019.

Unaccompanied alien children at Homestead Shelter:

The task of assigning each child to the most appropriate shelter is complex and done with great care. All UAC placed at the Homestead shelter are in the custody of ORR. The shelter is subject to all applicable federal regulations and ORR policies and procedures.

Current capacity at the Homestead shelter is 2,700. As of July 22, 2019, there were approximately 990 UAC, placed at Homestead. Approximately 67 percent are male and 33 percent are female. As of July 14 the average length of stay for UAC currently at Homestead is 36 days (this number is subject to change frequently based on many factors). No children at Homestead are there due to the Zero Tolerance Policy that ended in June 2018. ORR works in close coordination with local officials on security and safety of the children and community.

Homestead is an emergency influx shelter for use when the standard shelter system is near capacity. Given ORR has dramatically reduced the average length of care by speeding up the unification of children with parents, close family relatives or other sponsor and the decline in numbers of UAC crossing the border, space is beginning to open up in the standard network of shelters. As a result no additional UAC have been placed at Homestead since July 3. Since July 3, almost 800 UAC have been unified with a parent, close family relative or other sponsor and about 100 have been transferred to other ORR shelters.

Legal Services at Homestead:

UAC are expected to receive a *Know Your Rights* presentation and an individual legal screening within 7-10 days of admission into ORR care. Children who have to attend immigration court while in ORR care have access to an attorney, through an ORR-funded legal service provider, who may provide representation either as the UAC's attorney of record or as a Friend of Court.

Educational Services at Homestead:

The UAC do not attend local public schools. The Homestead ICF education department offers all UAC a General Assessment Test to evaluate their knowledge for proper academic placement while at the facility. The placement test focuses on three major fields: Spanish, English, and Mathematics. Certified teachers supervise educators at the facility and all educational staff are bilingual in English and Spanish, have a bachelor's degree and a cleared criminal background check. All children at the facility receive educational services.

Security of the unaccompanied alien children:

While utilizing space at the Homestead Job Corps facility to temporarily shelter UAC, HHS arranges for the security of UAC. DHS Federal Protective Services (FPS) and CHS provides on-site security 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Health of the unaccompanied alien children:

UAC receive an initial screening for visible and obvious health issues when they first arrive at U.S. Border Patrol facilities. Border Patrol must determine that a child is "fit to travel" before they are transferred from a border patrol station to an HHS-funded care provider.

UAC are medically screened and receive initial vaccinations within 48 hours of arriving at a HHS funded care provider. The initial screening includes a general health assessment, including a mental health screening and a review of vaccination history. If a vaccination record is not located or a child is not up-to-date, the child receives all vaccinations recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Some health conditions may manifest after the UAC is transferred to an influx care facility. If a health issue arises, the UAC will receive prompt attention and medical care is provided.

About unaccompanied alien children:

Congress has defined a UAC as a child who (1) has no lawful immigration status in the United States; (2) has not attained 18 years of age; and, (3) with respect to whom, there is no parent or legal guardian in the United States, or no parent or legal guardian in the United States available to provide care and physical custody. See 6 U.S.C. § 279(g)(2).

HHS plays no role in the apprehension or initial detention of alien children prior to their referral to HHS custody. HHS does not provide care or custody for adult aliens or family units that include adults.

By law, HHS provides care for each UAC who is referred to HHS custody by another federal department. HHS is not involved in caring for UACs prior to referral.

Most UAC are referred to ORR by DHS. Some UAC may be referred to ORR because they were apprehended by U.S. Border Patrol while trying to cross the border. Others are referred after coming to the attention of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in the interior of the United States.

After referral, UAC remain in the care and custody of HHS until they are unified with a sponsor, usually a parent or close family relative, while their immigration cases are adjudicated.

At this time, most UAC come primarily from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Donation guidelines:

Members of the public have expressed interest in donating or volunteering to help UAC. There are several voluntary, community, faith-based or international organizations assisting unaccompanied children. You can find resources and contacts in your state at the following online address: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/state-programs-annual-overview>.