

# Program Snapshot: Catholic Charities Community Services

Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program

OPRE Report #2021-49

Phoenix, Arizona

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This program snapshot describes the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) program provided by Catholic Charities Community Services (CCCS) in Phoenix, Arizona. This snapshot is one of six developed as a part of the Descriptive Study of the URM Program. The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation awarded MEF Associates and its subcontractor, Child Trends, a contract to conduct this study (for more information see textbox on page 5). The overall goal of the snapshots is to highlight variation across URM programs. This snapshot describes CCCS's URM program structure, participants served, services offered, and notable practices.



## Catholic Charities Community Services

CCCS opened in 1933 and has operated a URM program since 1980. The URM program is one of CCCS's many programs; the agency provides more than 20 programs to a broad range of populations throughout Phoenix and its outlying suburbs (Glendale, Tempe, and Chandler). Examples of other CCCS programs include adult refugee resettlement, long-term foster care for Unaccompanied Alien Children (UACs), domestic foster care, domestic violence services, and

### About the URM Program

The URM Program serves refugees and other eligible youth within the United States who do not have a parent or relative available to care for them. The Program is funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Administration for Children and Families. The URM Program has served more than 13,000 minors since the federal program was founded in 1980. Many URM youth come from abroad, where the State Department identifies youth who are refugees who are under 18, and unaccompanied (i.e., without an adult to care for them). These youth are placed in the URM Program once they are resettled in the United States. Others are identified by ORR after arrival in the United States. These youth are often first identified as unaccompanied alien children (UAC; for more information on the UAC Program see: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/ucs>) and referred to the URM Program after an eligibility determination. Currently, eligible youth include refugees, asylees, victims of trafficking, Cuban and Haitian entrants, youth with Special Immigrant Juvenile classification, and youth with U-status.

As of 2020, there were 22 local URM provider agencies in 15 states throughout the country offering URM programs, some of which operate in multiple locations in their state. URM programs are expected to provide the same range of services to URM youth as are provided to youth in the domestic foster care system in the state. URM programs provide out-of-home placements (e.g., foster care, group homes) and other child welfare services to promote youths' well-being. URM programs also include services focused on integrating the youth into their new communities while preserving the youth's ethnic and religious heritage. However, providers' implementation of these services differs from program to program. This program snapshot highlights how one program implements its services. For more information on the URM Program, see the URM Program website: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/urm>.

affordable housing. CCCS has in-house interpretation services and cultural expertise provided by staff, many of whom are refugees, bi-lingual, and bi-cultural.

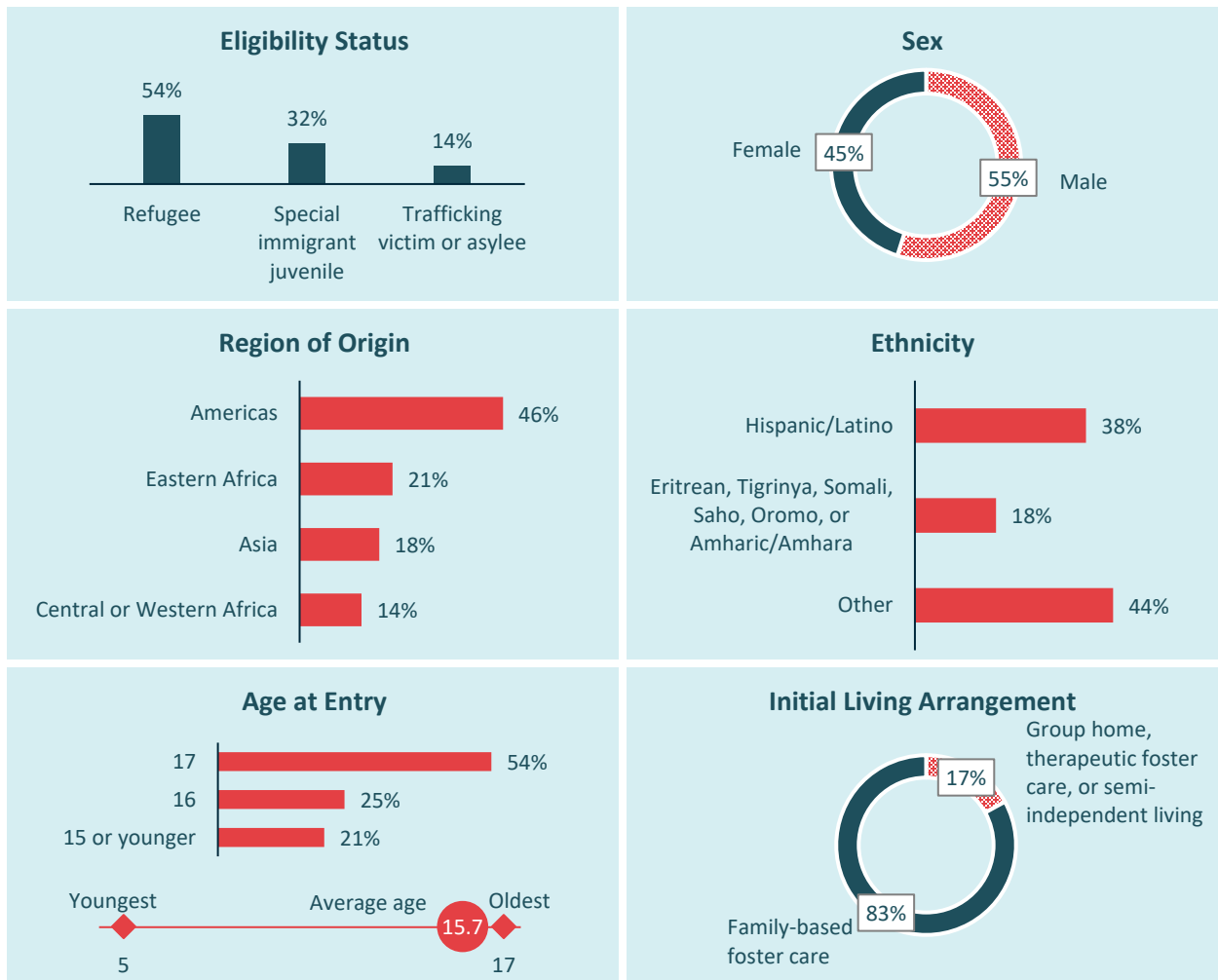
CCCS has 15 staff who run their URM program. These staff help provide case management services for URM youth and their foster families to ensure that their needs are met. CCCS is also responsible for ensuring the services provided to URM youth mirror those provided to youth in the domestic foster care system. CCCS is licensed as a child-placing agency by the Arizona Office of Licensing and Regulation.

### Key Facts about the CCCS URM Program

- Year program started: **1980**
- Custody arrangement: **Private**
- Number of youth who entered program in FY2014-FY2018: **71**
- Number of youth served by the program in FY2018: **63**
- Number of program staff as of September 2019: **15**

### CCCS URM program participants

From federal fiscal year (FY) 2014 to FY2018, 71 youth entered CCCS’s URM program. The graphs below show the characteristics of these 71 youth.



Notes: These figures are based on original analysis of data from ORR’s Refugee Arrivals Data Systems (RADS). To protect the identity of program participants, categories with less than 10 youth were combined with other categories. Therefore, countries of origin were collapsed into global regions, with the Middle East included within Asia. No youth came from Europe or Australia. For ethnicity, the next largest ethnicity groupings placed within ‘other’ included Hazara; Rohingya; and Banyamulenge, Congo, Tutsi, or Hutu.

## CCCS URM program services

### Services offered

CCCS provides a wide array of services for URM youth within their agency and through partnerships with external organizations. CCCS provides all basic services expected from a child welfare agency for domestic youth, such as case management and permanency services, in addition to services tailored to the needs and experiences of URM youth. Below is a summary of the services available to URM youth and who provides them.

Table 1. Services provided within CCCS and through partners

Types of services	Provided within CCCS	Provided through partners
<b>Acculturation services</b>	Cultural orientation/integration classes, one-on-one discussions, activities to support ethnic and religious heritage, and opportunities to socialize with other youth	N/A
<b>Health services</b>	Routine doctor visits, mental health screenings, and group or individual therapy/counseling	Psychotropic medication management, substance abuse treatment, and services for survivors of torture
<b>Education services</b>	Tuition assistance, workforce development training, job search assistance, and assistance with college/vocational school applications	Tutoring, English classes, and GED classes/testing
<b>Life skills/independent living training or services</b>	Financial literacy, household management, finding/managing housing, personal care and hygiene, access to transportation, and problem solving	N/A
<b>Legal assistance services</b>	Legal services for adjustment of status and legal services for work authorization	Legal assistance for establishment and maintenance of legal responsibility within the foster care system, legal assistance for immigration relief, and legal advocacy services
<b>Permanency services</b>	N/A	Relative search/engagement and reunification efforts

Data source: Survey of URM Program Directors administered in Fall 2019.

## Living arrangements available

In addition to the wide variety of services available to URM youth, CCCS offers many different types of living arrangements, either directly or through partnerships with external providers (see Table 2 below). Living arrangements are determined based on the needs and required level of care for each youth. While CCCS has the capability to offer all of these living arrangements, CCCS assesses which placement type is the best fit and based on this assessment, initially places nearly all youth (83 percent) in family-based settings with foster parents.

Table 2. Living arrangements available within CCCS and through partners

Through CCCS	Through partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family-based foster care</li><li>• Kinship care/relative foster care</li><li>• Independent living arrangements</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Semi-independent/supervised living facilities</li><li>• Therapeutic foster care</li><li>• Medical foster homes</li><li>• Group homes</li><li>• Residential treatment facilities</li></ul>

Data source: Survey of URM Program Directors administered in Fall 2019.

## Coordination with the child welfare system

Arizona has a private custody arrangement, meaning CCCS has legal custody of URM youth in their program. All foster parents (both in the domestic foster care system and URM program) are approved by the state Office of Licensing and Regulation. URM licensing specialists perform quarterly monitoring visits to URM foster homes as required by the state. To ensure the URM program provides parity of services with the domestic system, licensing specialists from the URM program may consult with domestic foster care program staff to compare strategies for handling cases and meeting youth's needs. Overall, CCCS reported on a Fall 2019 survey that, outside of licensing foster parents, state and local/county child welfare agencies are "rarely" involved in providing direct services for URM youth. However, CCCS also reported that program staff interact "a few times per month" with the state and local/county child welfare agencies regarding services for URM youth.

## CCCS innovative practices

CCCS has many notable innovative practices in their URM program. We highlight three of these practices below to facilitate peer-to-peer learning among URM programs.

### Community member placements

In addition to the living arrangements described above, in 2019, CCCS launched "community member placements" for some older URM youth. Youth in the URM program are sometimes waiting for an Employment Authorization Document and during this time are not able to work, which can present challenges to living independently when they turn 18. This is because the independent living stipend is generally not sufficient to support renting an apartment or to cover other costs of living without additional income. CCCS can arrange for such youth to live with a community member (often of their same ethnic or cultural background) and use a part of their independent living stipend from the URM program to pay affordable rent to this person. This helps youth progressively build their independent living skills and connect with the community. These community members are not licensed as foster parents, but they go through a background check and CCCS's standard onboarding process for volunteers. As of November 2019, CCCS had recently started these placements and therefore only placed a small number of youth.

## Streamlined administrative structure

CCCS merged the agency’s refugee resettlement services and URM program under a single administrative umbrella. This has improved cost-effectiveness, as the two programs share staff across contracts, and improved their URM program’s access to donations, opportunities for foster parent outreach, and subject-matter expertise (e.g., medical services, LGBT services).

## Refugee healthcare navigators

URM youth sometimes have a difficult time understanding the health care system in the United States. CCCS has a partnership with a clinic specifically for refugee women. The clinic matches “navigators” to all their clients to advocate for the clients’ needs and act as “cultural health brokers.” Navigators are refugees themselves and are paired with clients from the same country or region of the world. As the navigators share similar values and traditions with their clients, they aim to help them navigate the U.S. health care system in a way that is responsive to their experiences and preferences. A small number of URM youth have used this service. The clinic has plans to expand services to male clients in the future.

## For more information on CCCS



<https://www.catholiccharitiesaz.org/>



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## About the Descriptive Study of the URM Program

The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families awarded MEF Associates and its subcontractor, Child Trends, a contract to conduct a descriptive study of the URM Program to better understand the range of child welfare services and benefits provided through the URM Program. The study included three primary components to answer our research questions: a survey of URM providers, State Refugee Coordinators, and child welfare administrators; analysis of existing program data; and site visits to six URM programs (conducted between November 2019 and January 2020). This snapshot highlights one of the programs visited by the study team. Please see our study overview for more information on the study, including the study’s research questions: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/descriptive-study-of-unaccompanied-refugee-minors-urm-program>. The Federal Project Officer is Gabrielle Newell at OPRE and the Project Director is Sam Elkin at MEF Associates.

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