



October 28, 2021

INFORMATION  ACTION

**SUBJECT: REFUGEE FAMILY SUPPORT**

**Strategic Priority Area 1: Child Health**

**Goal:** All children thrive by achieving optimal health prenatal through age 5.

**Strategic Priority Area II: Child Development**

**Goal:** All children birth through age 5 have high-quality, nurturing environments that ensure their learning readiness.

**Strategic Priority Area III: Family Functioning**

**Goal:** All families have the knowledge, skills, and resources to support their children's optimal development.

**RECOMMENDATION**

First 5 California (F5CA) staff recommends the Commission authorize up to \$10 million over 3 years to support refugee families with young children ages 0 to 5 years old resettling in counties across the state. Currently, the plight of Afghan refugees prompted F5CA to take immediate action with the Administration to determine how to best support the current refugee efforts. F5CA's support from this investment could go towards supporting other displaced refugee families in the future.

This crucial investment will provide targeted county-level support for childcare, family supports, and resettlement coordination for Afghan refugees (and other refugee communities) through the following:

- Expansion of the Refugee Family Child Care Microenterprise Development Program
- Short-term childcare subsidies
- State and local support through translation and legal services, basic needs assistance, and culturally responsive family outreach, engagement, and system navigation

## SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

Beginning in the fall of 2021, approximately 124,000 people have fled Afghanistan after the United States (U.S.) withdrew its troops after nearly twenty years, ceding control to the Taliban. As the events in Afghanistan continue to unfold and families flee from the political chaos, many are seeking refuge in the U.S. and a significant number have arrived or plan to resettle in California in the coming months. Many who have escaped the chaos and have arrived in the U.S. now face the daunting task of rebuilding their lives and resettling in a country and communities that look unfamiliar. According to State officials, approximately thirty-five percent or more of the Afghan refugees will resettle in California, noting that Sacramento is the largest resettlement area in the nation.

Members of California's congressional delegation sent a letter to President Biden in August stating that the Golden State has a moral obligation to house vulnerable Afghan refugees and special immigrant visa applicants. The letter noted that California became home to more Afghan refugees last year than any other state and that it's the country's duty to relocate those who assisted the U.S. military and others who would be targeted by the Taliban.

There are three main immigration status categories allowing Afghan arrivals to enter California: Special Immigrant Visas (SIV), Special Immigrant Parolees (SIP), and Humanitarian Parolee status.

According to data recently publicized by the Federal Government, approximately 63,000 evacuees from Afghanistan have been placed across eight domestic safe haven military bases, waiting to go through medical and security screenings. There are an additional 15,000 Afghan evacuees overseas who are completing their processing and will also resettle in the U.S. Refugees are assigned to a resettlement agency before they arrive in the U.S., but rising tensions are causing some to finish their process in the U.S. after screening.

Sacramento is hosting the largest population of refugees, San Diego being the second, and the Central Valley the third.<sup>1</sup> Several counties have been identified by the State as highly impacted areas, including Sacramento, San Diego, Stanislaus, Los Angeles, Contra Costa, Alameda, and Santa Clara.

The state is expecting tens of thousands of Afghan arrivals, mostly in family units, with over 35% of those with children under the age of 18, and approximately 11% being children ages 0–4. Given the urgency and timing, visa processes would be slow, so many arriving via a Humanitarian Parolee designation make acquiring benefits for basic needs and other critical services difficult. Federal resettlement agencies are only required to provide support for the first 90 days post-arrival.

Therefore, over the course of this program, F5CA can fill in the gaps and leverage its funding flexibility to provide innovative and timely supports for families which can lead to

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<sup>1</sup> [More Afghans to come as resettlement centers face challenges | Modesto Bee \(modbee.com\)](#)

longer-term infrastructure as families transition to life in California. This program will help to provide support for enrollment into state programs and services, working with county agencies, non-profits, and other partners to provide the following needs:

- Housing assistance (highest need)
- Childcare and school enrollment
- Culturally and linguistically accessible supports
- Basic needs, including food, clothing, healthcare, etc.
- Translation services, legal aid, and job placement

Complicating these needs are the high costs of both housing and childcare. Like in so many California neighborhoods, the average rent for a two-bedroom home in the Afghan-heavy Sacramento community of North Highlands and Arden Arcade has doubled in just the past five years.

As research has shown, childcare costs represent more than half a household's budget in many counties. Without access to affordable childcare, parents may struggle to find and keep jobs or go to school. To that end, California ranks as one of the least affordable states in the nation based on the cost of childcare. Statewide, the median annual cost of care for an infant in a licensed childcare center is over \$15,000. In a family with two working parents earning low wages, each parent would have to work 147 hours per week to avoid paying more than the federally recommended 7% of income on the cost of childcare for their infant. The annual cost of care in a licensed center for older children is also out of reach for many families — \$10,200 for a preschool-age child and \$5,800 for a school-age child. While prices may be lower with a licensed home-based provider, this option is still prohibitively expensive for families who are struggling to cover basic expenses.<sup>2</sup>

As part of this request, F5CA staff are proposing funds be directed to help alleviate issues related to housing and childcare and provide immediate coordination of basic needs and family outreach services. For instance, funds could be used to expand the Refugee Family Child Care Microenterprise Development program (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/refugees/refugee-family-child-care>), which helps recently arrived refugees start and run family childcare businesses in their homes. This would support economic development and increase access to cultural and linguistically competent providers for refugee children. Additionally, funds could be used for short-term childcare subsidies that could support refugee families that are experiencing a gap between arrival and school enrollment and employment opportunities. The childcare providers from the Microenterprise Development program could provide much-needed childcare and help parents and caregivers be available to find employment, housing,

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<sup>2</sup> [The High Cost of Child Care Underscores the Need for Supporting Families With Children of All Ages - California Budget & Policy Center \(calbudgetcenter.org\)](https://www.calbudgetcenter.org/)

enroll in benefits, etc. Furthermore, funds could also be allocated to cover culturally and linguistically competent support services to assist refugee families with other basic needs such as housing, healthcare, translation services, legal aid, and job placement.

### **SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND ACTION**

The Commission has not previously discussed or taken action on this subject.

### **FISCAL DETAIL**

This request would be funded through the Child Care, Education, and Unallocated accounts in the amount up to \$10 million for fiscal years 2021–22 through 2024–25.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

A. Refugee Family Support PowerPoint