

# Program Snapshot:

## Crittenton Services for Children and Families

Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program

Fullerton, California

OPRE Report #2021-48

March 2021

This program snapshot describes the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) program provided by Crittenton Services for Children and Families (“Crittenton”) in Fullerton, California. 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 Crittenton’s URM program structure, participants served, services offered, and notable practices.



### Crittenton Services for Children and Families

Crittenton was incorporated in 1966 and has operated a URM program since 2009. The URM program is one of several child welfare programs provided by the agency, including domestic foster care, mental health services, transitional housing, and family preservation. Crittenton has offices in Fullerton and Moreno Valley and serves a large geographic area surrounding these offices, reaching as far as Santa Barbara and San Diego.

### 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>.

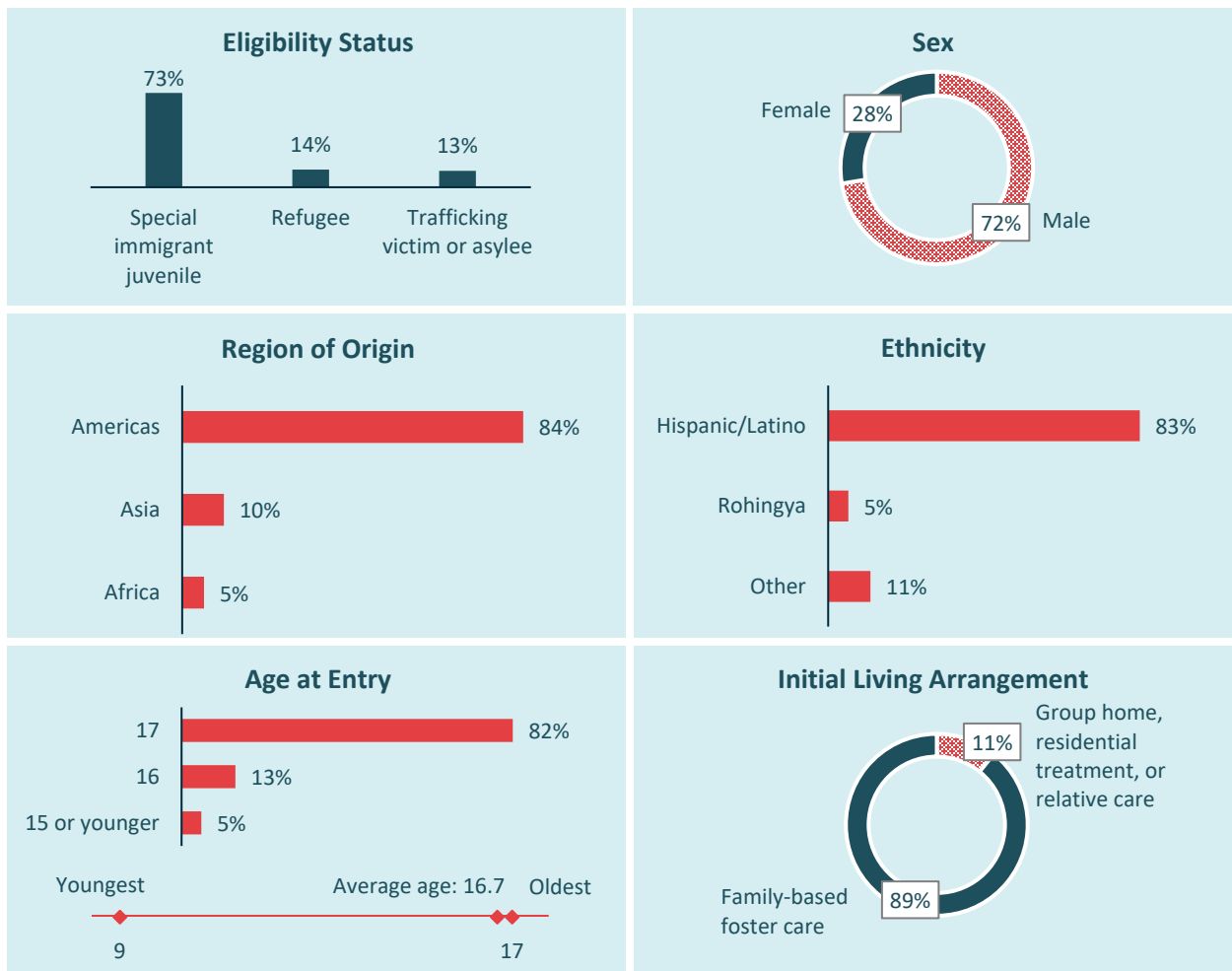
Crittenton also operates a large Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) program and many of the youth in the URM program were first served in the UAC program. Crittenton has approximately 15 staff who help provide case management services to URM youth and their foster families to ensure that their needs are met. All staff work with both UAC and URM youth. Crittenton is also responsible for ensuring the services provided to URM youth mirror those provided to youth in the domestic foster care system. Crittenton is licensed as a child-placing agency by the California Department of Social Services.

### Key Facts about the Crittenton URM Program

- Year program started: **2009**
- Custody arrangement: **Private**
- Number of youth who entered program in FY2014-FY2018: **203**
- Number of youth served by the program in FY2018: **169**
- Number of program staff as of November 2019: **15**

### Crittenton URM program participants

From federal fiscal year (FY) 2014 to FY2018, 203 youth entered Crittenton’s URM program. The graphs below show the characteristics of these 203 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 and Eritrean, Tigrinya, Somali, Saho, Oromo, and Amharic/Amhara.

## Crittenton URM program services

### Services Offered

Crittenton provides a wide array of services for URM youth within their agency and through partnerships with external organizations. Crittenton 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 Crittenton and through partners

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

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, Crittenton 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 Crittenton has the capability to offer all of these living arrangements, Crittenton assesses which placement type is the best fit and based on this assessment initially places nearly all youth (89 percent) in family-based settings with foster parents. However, many of Crittenton’s URM youth were in the UAC program and already lived with foster parents prior to entering the URM program; they are often able to stay with the same parents after transitioning programs. See the Innovative Practices section for more details.

Table 2. Living arrangements available within Crittenton and through partners

Through Crittenton	Through both Crittenton and partners	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><li>• Therapeutic foster care</li><li>• Group homes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Residential treatment facilities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Semi-independent/supervised living facilities</li><li>• Medical foster homes</li></ul>

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

## Coordination with the child welfare system

California has a private custody arrangement, meaning Crittenton has legal custody of URM youth in their program. Crittenton employs a recruitment specialist who performs yearly and as needed monitoring visits to URM foster homes to make sure that paperwork is up-to-date for each individual family, and to help them address any needed updates (e.g., CPR certification). Additionally, social workers conduct monthly home inspections and collaborate with the recruitment specialist to ensure each foster home meets licensing standards. To ensure the URM program provides parity of services with the domestic system, Crittenton has hired a retired social worker to perform third-party reviews of treatment plans that mimic the 6-month permanency hearings in the domestic foster care system. The reviewer ensures that treatment plans are moving forward and appropriately meet the youths’ needs. Overall, Crittenton reported on a fall 2019 survey that, outside of licensing foster parents, state and local/county child welfare agencies are “rarely” and “somewhat” involved in providing direct services for URM youth, respectively. Crittenton also reported that program staff interact approximately “a few times per month” with the state and local/county child welfare agencies regarding services for URM youth.

## Crittenton innovative practices

Crittenton 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.

### Seamless transition between UAC and URM programs

The majority of youth served by Crittenton’s URM program were first in Crittenton’s UAC program. All of Crittenton’s staff and foster families serve youth in both programs. Therefore, when youth are able to transition from the UAC program to the URM program, Crittenton can often make this transition seamless. Youth often stay with the same foster family and case worker which provides stability and a continuum of care.

## On-site medical services

Crittenton has an in-house medical department that serves domestic, UAC, and URM youth. The department includes a psychiatrist who is on-site one day per week and a doctor who has been with the agency for 19 years. The department also partners with two dentists, both of whom are familiar with the URM program. The medical staff provide direct services to youth in Crittenton facilities and consult with youth in foster care arrangements, when needed. Program leadership and medical department staff feel this mutual understanding of the program and the youths' needs encourages a higher level of care.

## Independent and semi-independent living programs

Crittenton has a semi-independent living program and an independent living program: Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP+) for youth ages 18-21, and the Transitional Housing Program (THP) for youth ages 21-24. When a URM youth turns 18, they may choose to stay with their foster family, voluntarily exit the URM program, or transition to THPP+. Through THPP+, youth are provided with a furnished apartment, for which Crittenton pays the rent, and given a monthly living stipend, a clothing allowance, and money for savings. Youth in THPP+ are not required to be working. Their case worker checks in with them weekly. Crittenton created THPP+ in 2019 so only a few youth had participated as of November 2019.

At age 21, youth can transfer to the THP program. This program is similar to THPP+ but is described as more "hands off" and requires that youth work full- or part-time or be enrolled in school. Youth must find and arrange their own housing and receive a Crittenton-funded stipend to help cover rent and other expenses; this stipend decreases over time. Case workers check in with youth weekly via phone and meet with youth quarterly. THP is well established and had approximately 30 youth enrolled in November 2019.

## For more information on Crittenton



<https://crittentonsocal.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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