

4 Principles:

- Non-discrimination
 - Survival and development
 - Best interests
 - Ensuring children's voice in decisions that affect them.
1. In what ways do current practices or policies provide for the holistic needs of children who have been displaced across borders?
- Unaccompanied Children (UC) Prior to Release from The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR):

Best Interests: Vetting of potential sponsors is conducted, Home Study investigations can be assigned, Child Advocates can be assigned to write "Best Interests" determination.

Children's Voice: Child can speak out as to their preference and feeling regarding placement with proposed sponsors.

- Unaccompanied Children (UC) Post Release from The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR):

Post Release Services (PRS) Program case management allows for holistic assessment and intervention including, but not limited to, the following domains:

- Placement
- Safety
- Guardianship
- Medical
- Mental Health
- Substance Abuse
- Education
- Legal/Immigration Proceedings
- Parenting/Supervision
- Independent Living
- Juvenile/Criminal Justice

Language services available for case managers (non-discrimination).

2. In what ways do current practices or policies make it difficult to respond to the holistic needs of children who have been displaced across borders?

- Not eligible for the majority of public benefits
 - Some exceptions: Harris County Health Plan (Gold Card), MediCal,
- In the shadows
 - Afraid to report to police, afraid to participate in our services, afraid to advocate for themselves (school examples: Enrollment, IEP, and Disciplinary)

-Difficulty in getting Texas Department of Family Protective Services (TDFPS) to intervene in child welfare situations.

- Constant misunderstandings regarding jurisdiction.

3. If you could identify two key aspects of policy or practice that need to be changed to ensure the holistic survival and development of displaced children, what would you recommend and why?

-Education Related Policies & Practices:

- Enrollment Practices (McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, Standardized Testing)
- State Truancy Laws

-Case Management/Follow up for all UC Post Release

- Due to extreme vulnerability of the population all children should be followed (more than just a 30 day follow up call by ORR shelters). The vast majority (over 91%) go unfollowed/unsupported. Anecdotal evidence points to injustices that the population is facing; which may not fully come to light for years.

4. If you could identify one critical question that future research should investigate to address challenges to the healthy survival and development of displaced children, what would that be, and why?

-Of designated Unaccompanied Children who do obtain legal status to remain in the US, how many are able to obtain higher education and/or gainful employment (that brings them above the poverty level)? This longitudinal study would speak to how effective (or ineffective) current policies and practices are in facilitating successful adjustment and integration into the society.