



LIRS

80 Years
of Welcome

acrc

together, the voice

Children and Family Services (CFS) Division Foster Care Program

Presenters:

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History: Who is LIRS?

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) is a faith-based non-profit dedicated to serving vulnerable immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in the U.S.

Founded in 1939 to help those displaced by WWII, LIRS began building its network of partners with local, on-the-ground agencies nationwide to provide core services

Refugee & Migrant Services

Resettlement & case management, employment preparation, services for migrants

Children and Family Services

Short and long-term foster care, family reunification, and Post-Release Services

Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program, and Mental Health Services

External Affairs

Policy, advocacy, and outreach



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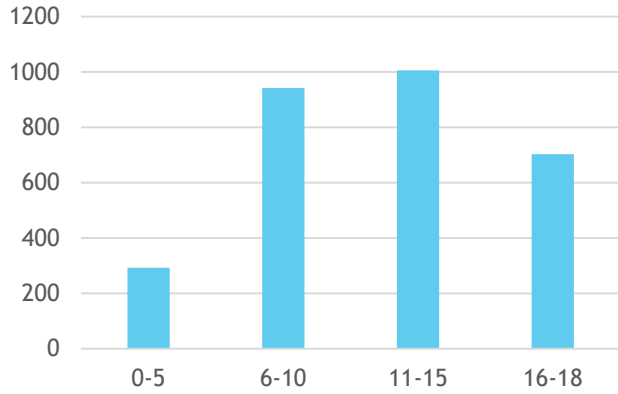
LIRS Foster Care Network



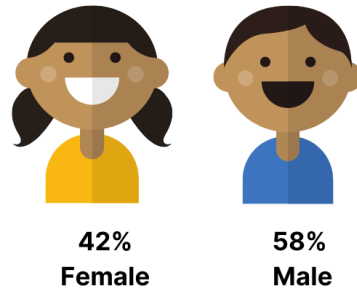
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Youth Served Since 2021

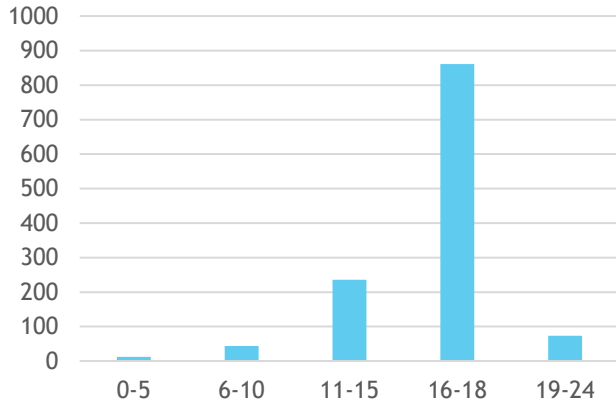
UC Age



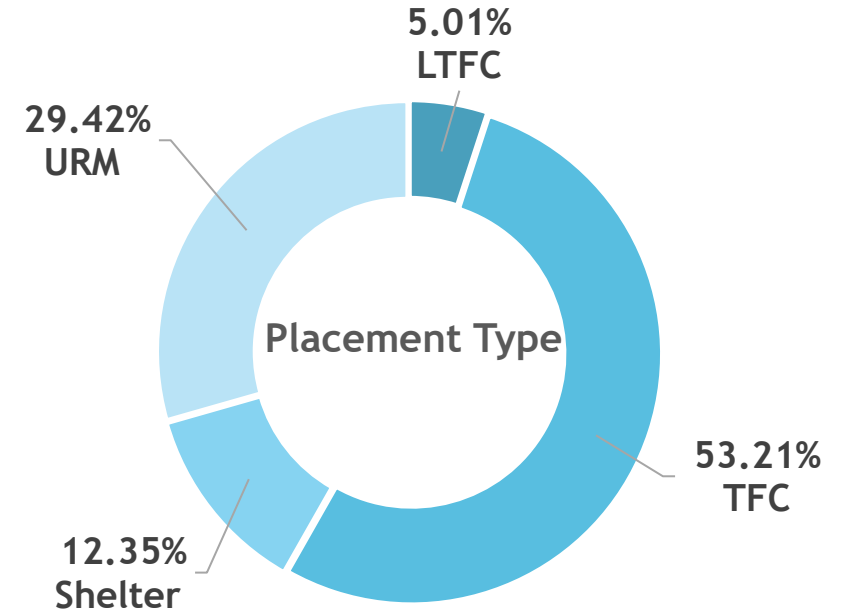
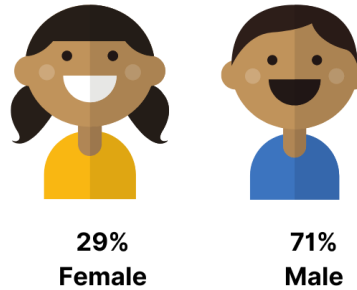
UC Gender



URM Age



URM Gender



227 Unaccompanied Afghan Minors



2,491 UC Reunified with Family



LIRS | Session Objectives

- **Who are Unaccompanied Children (UC), and how do they enter our Foster Care Network?**
- **Permanency Planning Goals & Post-Release options for Immigrant Youth**
- **Practices for Effective Permanency Planning**
- **Resources Available for Youth Post-Release**
- **Engagement with Community Providers in Permanency Planning**



LIRS | Who is an Unaccompanied Child (UC/UAC)?

Per the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA):

Minors Under 18

Non-US Citizen

Entered the US without legal documentation (either "arriving alien" or "entered without inspection")

Did not come with a parent or legal guardian (or parent/legal guardian is unable to care for them)



LIRS | How does a UC enter the Foster Care Network?

**At the border, the
Department of
Homeland Security
(DHS)**

Gains custody of the
UC for border
apprehension.



**DHS transfers custody
of UC to the Office of
Refugee Resettlement
(ORR)**

Approximately 170
facilities and programs
in 23 states funded by
ORR. Minors may be
placed in Emergency
Intake Sites (EIS)



**ORR funded facilities
(LIRS partners)**

Provide Foster Care
services for the UC
while assessing the
prospect of Family
Reunification



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Shelter

- Temporary care for male youth aged 14 and older who have recently arrived

Transitional Foster Care

- For youth who will be reunited with family/sponsor

Long Term Foster Care

- Serves youth with no reunification options, until 18

Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program (URM)

- Expansive program with certain requirements, lasts until 22/23

Average Length of Stay in LIRS Programs

	2021	2022
Shelter	50	42
TFC	41	23
LTFC	262	155



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Legal Relief Options for Unaccompanied Children

- Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)
- T and U Visa
- Asylum
- Cuban/Haitian & Afghan Humanitarian Parolee status

- All minors in ORR care receive a Know Your Rights (KYR) presentation and Legal Resource Guide
- Family reunification; sponsor expected to ensure minor's presence at all future legal proceedings
- Immigrant youth who entered U.S. with family may not know how to access legal resources in the community
- Delays in legal proceedings

What Does Permanency Planning Mean to your Agency/Organization?





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General Permanency Planning Goals

Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) outlines five potential permanency goals:

- 1. Reunification** with the parent
- 2. Termination of parental rights (TPR) and Adoption**
- 3. Guardianship** with a permanent guardian
- 4. Guardianship** with a "fit and willing relative" while remaining in the State's legal custody
- 5. Another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA)** while remaining in the State's legal custody¹

1. Achieving Permanency. Child and Family Services Review, HHS. <https://training.cfsrportal.acf.hhs.gov/section-2-understanding-child-welfare-system/3030>



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Permanency Planning Options for Immigrant Youth

**Unaccompanied
Refugee Minor
Program**

**Post-18
Planning**

**Family
Reunification**



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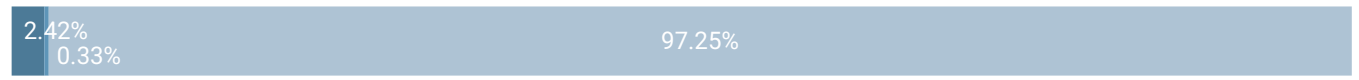
Permanency Planning for Unaccompanied Children

Release Type by Program LIRS Partners

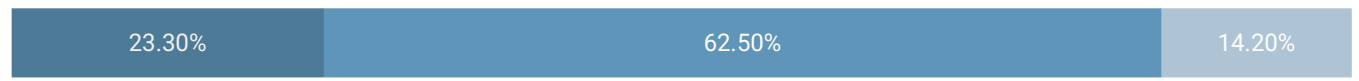
Shelter



TFC

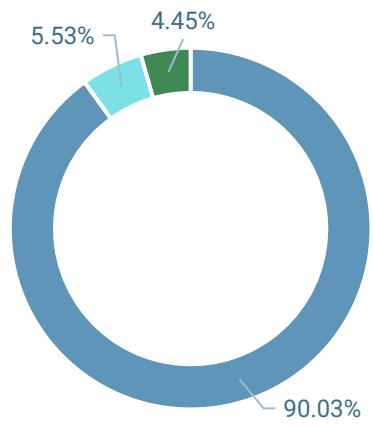


LTFC



- Other Types of Releases
- Released to URM Program
- Family Reunification

Release Type for LIRS Foster Care Partners



- Family Reunificaiton
- Other
- URM Release



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Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) Program

Legal relief required, UC's must also meet certain eligibility requirements

About 13,000 children served since 1981. LIRS currently operates 16 locations across 8 states/DC.

Most minors enter the URM program between 15-17 years old and may continue accessing services up to age 23*:

- **Intensive case management**
- **Independent living skills**
- **English language support**
- **Mental health services**
- **Career and college training**

**Depending on state law*



Post-18 Planning for Youth

- Post-18 Planning is specific to youth aging-out of domestic or immigrant foster care programs.
- This planning is vital for youth who do not obtain legal relief by their 18th birthday. Should begin no later than one month from the youth's 18th birthday.
- Legal options:
 - Although no longer in an approved program, youth can still obtain legal relief
 - Immigrant youth may be detained by ICE following discharge from an approved program
- Staff working with youth on a Post-18 plan should consider resources youth will need access to including:
 - Mental Health, Education, Legal Services, Employment, etc.



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Permanency Planning for Unaccompanied Children Nearing Age-Out

WHO should be involved in the permanency planning for youth?

- Guardian
- Youth
- Sponsor/Caregiver
- Program Staff/Case Manager
- Service Providers (if applicable)
- ICE officer (if applicable)

WHEN should permanency planning begin for the youth?

- Permanency planning should begin immediately to allow care providers time to assess and observe the needs of the child. Permanency planning is a continuous process and the needs of the youth should be periodically reassessed

HOW do you develop a discharge or Post-18 plan for youth nearing age-out?

- Include the youth (and other parties youth has permitted)
- Assess current needs of youth in all domains
- Develop goals and objectives for the youth to accomplish upon age-out
- Create a plan identifying local services and resources to meet the needs of the youth

WHY is it important to be proactive in permanency planning for youth?

- There are times when the youth's permanency option may be altered depending on caregiver participation and/or concurrent planning options. Proactive planning allows the program and child to adjust and create an alternative plan for the youth
- Transition plans are vital to youth entering adulthood. Developing a long-term transition plan with youth that includes connections to people, skill-building, and resources is essential for their stability.



LIRS Post Discharge

Challenges Non-Citizen Youth May Face:

- English/cultural barriers
- School enrollment
- Challenges accessing educational services
- Fear of family separation and/or detention
- Accessing mental health services
- Transportation/getting a driver's license
- Jobs
- Attending college
- Discrimination
- Safe, affordable, stable housing



Resources for Youth:

Mental Health

- Local community service boards/health clinics
- Local Health Departments
 - Private providers
- Various national hotlines

Legal

- Legal Service Provider (LSP) if living within service area
- Pro Bono attorneys within community
- Local legal aid organizations
- American Bar Association

General Health/Insurance

- Local Health Departments
- URM Medicaid, CHIP, or State Insurance
- Local colleges and universities
 - Community Clinics

Education

- US Department of Education requirements for all educational institutions (McKinney Vento Act)
- Community organizations providing free or lost cost ESL, vocational, GED services

Independent Living & Housing

- Local Independent living program
 - Local DSS/DFS
- Large organizations such as Habitat for Humanity
- State or local community organizations

Connections & Support

- Natural supports
- Churches and other faith-based organizations
- Mentoring programs (therapeutic support)
- State or local area support groups for immigrants

1. American Academy of Pediatrics – Large group of resources to use <https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/healthy-foster-care-america/Pages/ResourceLibrary.aspx>

2. National Immigration Legal Services Directory – Directory of Attorneys <https://www.immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory/>

3. US Dept. of Education – Educational Resources for Immigrant Youth (McKinney Vento Act) : <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/immigration-resources.html>

4. HHS ORR Guide to Eligibility: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/policy-guidance/orr-guide-eligibility-placement-and-services-unaccompanied-refugee-minors-urm-2>



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How Can You Help?

Meet Ariana Castillo Cruz



Name: Ariana Castillo Cruz (Currently placed in a LTFC Program)

DOB: 10/06/2005

COO: Honduras

- **Mental Health Diagnosis:** Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD); Ariana currently takes medication for her diagnosis
- **Dental Concerns:** Asthma; Several cavities and tooth decay; Pending test results for Diabetes
- **Involved Family Members & Location:** Maternal Aunt and Brother (45 minutes from Ariana's current foster home)
- **Strengths:** Strong advocate for herself; Enjoys learning and recently graduated high school
- **Areas for Growth:** Emotional regulation; Knowledge of English language
- **Goals following discharge:** Obtain legal status; Obtain Employment
- **Legal Status:** Pending Asylum Interview and SIJS State order (COVID-19 has resulted in cancellations of previously scheduled interviews and court dates); Attorney is currently assigned to Ariana's case through her LTFC placement
- **Natural Supports:** Ariana has become close with her foster family. Their home is located 45 minutes from her aunt's home. Ariana enjoys going to church and the community center with the family and has made friends.



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Meet Ariana – Discussion Questions

1. **What supports/services might you recommend for this youth in preparation of discharge from your program?**
2. **Would you engage the youth's family/caregiver during the permanency planning process? If so, how would you include the family member(s)?**
3. **Do you have any concerns with the youth's anticipated discharge placement? If so, what additional supports could be explored to address your concerns?**

Name: Ariana Castillo Cruz (Currently placed in a LTFC Program)

DOB: 10/6/2005

COO: Guatemala

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URM Testimony

Sophia

Country of Origin: Guatemala

Entered the U.S.: 2018

Years Living with Current Foster Family: 5

“Living with my foster family makes me feel secure and loved, and we have a strong and positive family relationship...It has helped me feel safe, having a place to stay and people who take care of me, and helped me to achieve my goals.”

“[My foster family] supported me with making the right decisions and taught me about different things. Without their help I would not be where I am now and what I have.”

“My greatest success since living in the U.S, is obtaining my high school diploma and my driver's license.”

“Permanency is important because knowing, deep within, that you belong somewhere with someone no matter what, having a home where to stay and people to whom you belong with.”



URM Testimony

Juan

Country of Origin: Guatemala

Entered the U.S.: 2015

Years Living with Current Foster
Family: 5

“Living with this family has made me feel alive, because they have been helping me emotionally which is something that I needed since my mother passed away, and I am thankful that I was placed in foster care because of the help of the staff and the family that I live with...”

“[My foster family] have helped me accomplish my goals by getting me involved in programs, they have sat with me to look at different opportunities available to continue to study, I was able to get through high school and they have motivate me to take initiative to do things on my own so I have experience.”

“Permanency is important to youth in foster care because it helps to build trust, being able to have good communication, and feel safe, on the other hand if they are move from home often that would affect them emotionally because every family has their culture, their rules and they would have to starts from scratch every time they get moved.”



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Thank you!

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