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OFFICE OF FAMILY STABILITY LETTER #70

April 3, 2008

TO: Directors, County Departments of Job and Family Services

FROM: Jeanne Carroll, Deputy Director
Office of Family Stability

SUBJECT: Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrants – Eligibility for Food Stamps, Cash Assistance, and Refugee Social Services

We would like to bring to your attention information about two new populations of immigrants your counties may see in the coming months. Effective December 26, 2007, Iraqis and Afghans granted Special Immigrant status under section 101(a)(27) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) are eligible for resettlement assistance, entitlement programs, and other benefits to the same extent as refugees admitted under section 207 of the INA. Iraqis special immigrants are eligible for eight months of benefits, while Afghan special immigrants are eligible for six months of benefits. Eligibility for both Afghan and Iraqi special immigrants starts from the date of entry into the United States or the date Special Immigrant status was granted, whichever is later.

Who is an Iraqi or Afghan Special Immigrant?

These are Iraqi or Afghan individuals and their families who have been granted Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) status because they worked for or helped the U.S. Government.

How is an Iraqi or Afghan Special Immigrant different from a refugee?

Iraqi and Afghan special immigrants are lawful permanent residents from the date special immigrant status is granted. Special immigrants may apply to adjust to permanent resident status after they have been in the U.S. for one year.

What benefits is an Iraqi or Afghan Special Immigrants eligible for?

An Iraqi or Afghan special immigrant is potentially eligible for Ohio Works First (OWF), Food Stamps, Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), Medicaid, Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) and the Refugee Social Services Program (RSSP). Iraqi and Afghan special immigrants must meet the income, resource and other eligibility requirements to the same extent as refugees. The eligibility period starts at the date of entry, and ends at 6 months for Afghan special immigrants, and 8 months for Iraqi special immigrants. Once the 6 or 8 month exemption period ends, the special immigrant would no longer be exempt from the 5-year bar on receipt of a Federal means-tested public benefit. The special immigrant is a Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) and is subject to the same treatment as other LPRs.

Where can I find more information?

To implement this policy, we are issuing a joint Action Change Transmittal/Food Assistance Change Transmittal (ACT/FACT). The ACT/FACT is attached. The policy contained in the ACT/FACT will be included in a future CAMTL and FSTL.

The Office of Ohio Health Plans will be issuing a Medicaid Eligibility Procedure Letter (MEPL) in the near future to address the policy for Medicaid and Refugee Medical Assistance.

Where can questions be sent?

Please send any questions about the Iraqi or Afghan Special Immigrants to the REFUGEE or the TANF-FSTA mailbox.

c:

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