

**OHIO REFUGEE ADVISORY COUNCIL  
(ORAC)**

**BYLAWS**

**SECTION 1 – PREAMBLE**

The Ohio Refugee Advisory Council (ORAC), originally created in 1981 as the Ohio Refugee and Immigration Council, serves at the invitation of the Director of the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services (ODJFS) to advise the State Coordinator of Refugee Services and ODJFS on a variety of matters relating to refugee resettlement and to advocate for refugee concerns. ORAC may also serve as a resource to other state agencies, the Ohio General Assembly, local government agencies and refugee resettlement agencies.

The position of State Coordinator was mandated by the Refugee Act of 1980 with the primary goals of effective resettlement of qualified refugees and promotion of their economic self sufficiency via the coordination and dissemination of federal monies for programs to assist them in their efforts to relocate in the State of Ohio. The State Coordinator serves as a liaison between local program administrators and federal agencies. The State Coordinator may serve as a resource to state and local government agencies, the Ohio General Assembly and refugee service providers.

**SECTION 2 – MISSION AND GOALS**

ORAC's mission is to advise the State Coordinator of the needs of refugees in Ohio and to recommend development of an effective program plan which will facilitate their transition and promote self-sufficiency, economic independence and success.

The mission and goals will be achieved by the following means:

1. Identify and prioritize refugee concerns and issues;
2. Recommend and advocate policies, plans, and procedures to meet service priorities and ensure effective delivery of services including:
  - a. Services that promote service access, acculturation, employment, self-sufficiency and citizenship;
  - b. Health assessment and health services; and
  - c. Services which meet the needs of specific populations as identified.
3. Identify issues as they relate to older refugees, children, special needs communities, and refugee agencies and assist in the resolution of these issues through activities and advocacy;
4. Review and comment on the ODJFS State Plan for Refugee Services prior to submission to the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR);
5. Share materials and information relating to refugee matters among council members;
6. Receive information from citizen and community representatives regarding refugee matters; and
7. Maintain an awareness of immigration and citizenship issues as they affect refugees.

**SECTION 3 – MEMBERSHIP**

ORAC shall consist of no more than thirty (30) members. The Council's composition shall meet the following requirements:

1. A representative from each county government qualifying to receive Refugee Social Services funds.

2. A representative from each affiliate of a national voluntary resettlement agency that serves refugees in Ohio
3. Representatives of State of Ohio and federal agencies interested in refugee resettlement issues. These may include, but not be limited to: Ohio Department of Aging, Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Department of Job & Family Services, including (Offices of Ohio Health Plans, Family Stability, and Workforce Development), Ohio Department of Health, Ohio Department of Development and the office of the Governor.
4. Two refugees eligible to benefit from services under the Refugee Resettlement Program by virtue of their refugee status, or former refugees who have benefited from the program without limitation to the date of arrival.
5. Representatives from Mutual Assistance agencies, other agencies and employers that provide services to and demonstrate a strong interest in refugees.

#### **ALTERNATES**

Representatives from categories 1 through 3 above may designate an alternate to attend and vote for them at each meeting. The representative may do so by notifying the State Coordinator prior to the meeting of the alternate's name.

#### **TERM OF MEMBERSHIP**

The term of membership for an organization identified in sections 1 through 3 above shall be on-going and the individual representing the agency or department will be named by that organization's Executive Director. The term of membership for individuals, organizations and agencies identified in sections 4 and 5 above shall be for a period of three (3) calendar years. Members are appointed to represent an agency or a group of refugees - not an individual. New members may be appointed each year. New members may also be appointed to fill vacancies at any time. Reappointment of an individual is not precluded. Appointments are made by the Director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

#### **SECTION 4 – OFFICERS, COMMITTEES AND MEETINGS**

The officers shall consist of a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings and shall appoint all committees as may be deemed necessary. The Vice-Chairperson shall have the power to perform all duties of the Chairperson in his/her absence.

All terms are for a one-year period with elections to take place at the first ORAC meeting of the calendar year. The term commences at the end of the state fiscal year. Terms of office shall not exceed two consecutive years.

All committees shall be appointed by the Chairperson. All actions and recommendations of the committees are subject to the approval of the full membership of ORAC. As needed, ad hoc committees shall be appointed with a specific purpose and termination date.

The Chairperson shall appoint a Nominating Committee consisting of at least three members to select candidates for office. The Committee shall report its recommendations to ORAC at least thirty (30) days prior to the first meeting of the calendar year. Nominations from the membership are welcomed.

The Nominating Committee shall receive nominations for Mutual Assistance Association and refugee members of ORAC from counties and resettlement agencies. The Nominating Committee shall make a recommendation for appointment by the Director of ODJFS based on the following criteria:

1. Mutual Assistance Associations:
  - a. Serve a population group currently being resettled in Ohio with preference given to groups representing larger numbers of refugees.
  - b. Have a Board of Directors that is representative of the membership of the organization.
  - c. Will identify with the nomination the person who would represent the group should it be selected.
2. Refugees:
  - a. Willing to participate in quarterly meetings in Columbus.

- b. Have English-speaking skills which enable participation.
- c. Be an example of a refugee who is self supporting and established in their Ohio community.

#### **SECTION 5 - MEETINGS AND QUORUM**

ORAC shall meet quarterly. Additional meetings may be called by the Chairperson as deemed appropriate. Written notification for regular meetings shall be sent at least ten (10) days in advance. Special meetings may be called with at least five (5) days notice.

Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order. A quorum shall be one third (1/3) of the membership.

The members are expected to be active and responsible in membership. Lack of interest or two consecutive absences will require the following action:

1. Individual/Agency will be contacted by the Chairperson to determine their intent insofar as future attendance and participation is concerned.
2. A restated commitment or agency replacement will be negotiated.
3. The Ohio Department of Job & Family Services will be informed.

#### **SECTION 6 – AMENDMENTS**

These Bylaws may be amended at any meeting, provided the text and a thirty day written notice have been sent in advance to all members. This requirement may be waived by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present and voting is subject to the quorum requirement of Section 5.

Amendments shall become effective immediately upon passage unless otherwise specified.

#### **SECTION 7 – REIMBURSEMENTS:**

The ORAC members shall serve without compensation or reimbursement of any kind.