Data Infrastructure Supporting Research on Refugee Medicaid Service Utilization and Outcomes

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This brief describes a joint project of the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the Administration for Children and Families to enhance the data infrastructure of agencies managing refugees and Medicaid services. This project is funded by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Trust Fund (PCORTF). PCORTF's goal is to advance data capacity for patient-centered outcomes research.[1]

VALUE OF LINKING DATA ON REFUGEES AND ASYLEES WITH MEDICAID CLAIMS

The United States refugee resettlement program is the largest in the world, welcoming over three million people since the 1970s. Refugees are eligible for health care coverage through Medicaid and other programs, but it is unknown how refugees' Medicaid utilization compares with other populations. Research has been limited by gaps in relevant data. Though over 60 percent of recently arrived refugees with health insurance have Medicaid health care coverage, little is known about their enrollment trends and utilization of Medicaid-funded services. Currently, data from Medicaid systems do not contain information on refugee status, and data on refugee resettlement do not contain information on Medicaid receipt. To address these limitations, this project will develop, implement, and evaluate methods for linking data from two HHS administrative data systems: the Refugee Arrivals Data System (RADS) and the [Transformed Medicaid Statistical Information System Analytic Files](TAF). RADS contains records on all refugees, asylees, and other populations served by ORR. TAF contains Medicaid claims from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The initiative will link RADS and TAF data, increasing researchers' data and analytic capacity to understand utilization of Medicaid among refugees, and how that service provision and subsequent outcomes relate to different refugee characteristics. The objectives are to:

1. Assess the feasibility of linking RADS and TAF data, including assessing data quality.
2. Create a research-use dataset, containing Medicaid claims linked to refugee and asylee records from TAF and RADS datasets. This dataset will be made available through a data archiving service to researchers, and it will contain a sample of Medicaid claims for the general U.S. population for comparative analysis.
3. Conduct initial analysis using the linked dataset to demonstrate the data's utility in addressing health-related research questions about refugees and asylees.
4. Document lessons learned on linking RADS and TAF to inform improvements in data infrastructure.

This project will produce several public-facing products, including a research-use dataset with documentation, aggregate data for certain subpopulations, and research reports.

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[1] More information on PCORTF can be found at https://aspe.hhs.gov/collaborations-committees-advisory-groups/os-pcortf