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| Refugee minor program |
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# This case study shows

The importance of engaging in a way that gives young people control (understanding that loss of control is central to the experience of trauma).

# About this case study

Orphaned refugee children who have recently arrived in Victoria as unaccompanied humanitarian minors can get help through the [Refugee Minor Program](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/refugee-minor-program) < https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/refugee-minor-program>.

The Refugee Minor program has a commitment to incorporating the voices of children and young people in all elements of its service. For example, children and young people:

* Must be present at their annual case planning meeting
* Must sign off their plan before it can progress through the CRIS system
* Can include their thoughts in the ‘My views’ section of the case plan – this must be completed before the case plan can be signed off
* Complete an exit interview when they leave the program.

As part of a rigorous approach to evaluation and quality, the Refugee Minor program made a commitment that any improvements suggested by children and young people would be implemented.

The New York University School of Public Policy was asked to assess the program’s evaluation criteria and quality improvement materials to see if the voices of children and young people were being heard in the best way. The feedback was positive but identified two key actions that could improve the way program evaluations incorporated their voices and perspectives:

* Start by asking children and young people, ‘What do you want to tell us?’
* Run shorter exit interviews with clients – the standard time of 30 minutes was considered too long.

# Benefits

Participation is a human right and this is regularly discussed with the children and young people in the Refugee Minor Program.

Children and young people are helped to regain control of their lives by being allowed to choose:

* who is involved in their case planning
* when they are ready to take key steps, such as applying for citizenship
* where case planning occurs
* when they feel ready to leave the program.

Asking ‘What do you want to tell us?’ in exit interviews helps reframe the conversations with children and young people exiting the program, ensuring the feedback that is heard is what children and young people really want to share.

Less than 5 per cent of children and young people in the program have a breakdown in the care arrangement they are placed in.

Every young person in Year 12 in 2020 passed their Victorian Certificate of Education, with some going on to university.

# Success factors

* If children and young people cannot make a scheduled meeting that is about them, the meeting should not go ahead
* To encourage participation, it is important to have staff from similar backgrounds to the children and young people involved in a program (for example, from Aboriginal, refugee or culturally diverse backgrounds)
* Given that loss of control is a significant element in trauma for children and young people, practitioners need to work with children and young people to help restore their sense of control. Giving children and young people a genuine voice in decisions being made with them is key
* Participation is acknowledged as a human right, not an optional add-on. Information regarding decision-making processes, the ability to complain and provide feedback during and after a service is encouraged
* Entirely external and impartial review of service parameters and planning.

# Learn more

The department’s [Services website’s Refugee Minor Program](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/refugee-minor-program) <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/refugee-minor-program>

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