



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Office of Inspector General  
Office of Audit Services

OCT 16 2007

REGION IV  
61 Forsyth Street, S.W., Suite 3T41  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Report Number: A-04-06-03510

Mr. Robert Butterworth, Secretary  
Department of Children and Families  
1317 Winewood Boulevard  
Building 1, Room 202  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700

Dear Mr. Butterworth:

Enclosed is the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of Inspector General (OIG), final report entitled "Review of Refugee Cash Assistance Payments in Florida for the Period July 1, 2002, Through June 30, 2005." We will forward a copy of this report to the HHS action official noted on the following page for review and any action deemed necessary.

The HHS action official will make final determination as to actions taken on all matters reported. We request that you respond to this official within 30 days from the date of this letter. Your response should present any comments or additional information that you believe may have a bearing on the final determination.

Pursuant to the principles of the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552, as amended by Public Law 104-231, OIG reports generally are made available to the public to the extent the information is not subject to exemptions in the Act (45 CFR part 5). Accordingly, within 10 business days after the final report is issued, it will be posted on the Internet at <http://oig.hhs.gov>.

If you have any questions or comments about this report, please do not hesitate to call me, or contact John Drake, Audit Manager, at (404) 562-7755 or through e-mail at [john.drake@oig.hhs.gov](mailto:john.drake@oig.hhs.gov). Please refer to report number A-04-06-03510 in all correspondence.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Barbera  
Regional Inspector General  
for Audit Services, Region IV

Enclosure

Page 2 – Robert Butterworth

**Direct Reply to HHS Action Official:**

Administration for Children and Families  
Director, Division of Financial Integrity  
Room 702 Aerospace Building  
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20447

Department of Health and Human Services

**OFFICE OF  
INSPECTOR GENERAL**

**REVIEW OF REFUGEE  
CASH ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS  
IN FLORIDA  
FOR THE PERIOD JULY 1, 2002,  
THROUGH JUNE 30, 2005**



Daniel R. Levinson  
Inspector General

October 2007  
A-04-06-03510

# ***Office of Inspector General***

<http://oig.hhs.gov>

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In accordance with the principles of the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552, as amended by Public Law 104-231), Office of Inspector General, Office of Audit Services reports are made available to members of the public to the extent the information is not subject to exemptions in the act. (See 45 CFR Part 5.)

## **OAS FINDINGS AND OPINIONS**

The designation of financial or management practices as questionable or a recommendation for the disallowance of costs incurred or claimed, as well as other conclusions and recommendations in this report, represent the findings and opinions of the HHS/OIG/OAS. Authorized officials of the HHS divisions will make final determination on these matters.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Refugee Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-212) created the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP) to provide for the effective resettlement of refugees and to assist them in achieving economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible after arrival in the United States. The Act authorizes Federal reimbursement to States for up to 100 percent of cash and medical assistance provided to refugees immediately following their date of entry into the United States. The RRP reimburses States the cost that they would normally incur to provide refugees cash assistance (RCA) under existing Federal and State assistance programs.

At the Federal level, the RRP is administered by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which is a part of the Administration for Children and Families. At the State level, the RRP is administered by the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF). RRP funding is subject to the availability of Federal appropriations. Effective October 1, 1991, and subsequently, the eligibility period for benefits is 8 months from a refugee's date of entry or of asylum.

### **OBJECTIVE**

Our objective was to determine whether DCF made RCA payments only to beneficiaries whose eligibility period had not expired.

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Based on our sample results, we estimate that from July 1, 2002, through June 30, 2005, DCF made payments totaling at least \$55,530 to beneficiaries whose eligibility period had expired. These overpayments occurred because DCF did not always follow its established procedures for closing RCA cases.

In addition, DCF's computerized eligibility system, the Florida Online Recipient Integrated Data Access (FLORIDA) system, contained missing or inaccurate dates of entry or of asylum for some beneficiaries, allowing erroneous payments to occur. As a result, DCF made \$9,561 in additional erroneous payments to 20 beneficiaries.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

We recommend that DCF:

- make a financial adjustment of \$55,530 for the RCA payments made for ineligible beneficiaries;
- ensure that all employees follow established procedures for timely closing of RCA cases;

- make a financial adjustment of \$9,561 for 20 beneficiaries whose dates of entry or of asylum were not documented in the case files; and
- enhance internal controls to prevent missing, overwritten, and inaccurate entry and asylum dates.

## **STATE COMMENTS AND OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL RESPONSE**

DCF concurred with our recommendation to make a financial adjustment of \$55,530 for the RCA payments made for ineligible beneficiaries and with our recommendation to ensure that all employees follow established procedures for timely closing RCA cases.

DCF did not concur with our draft report recommendation to review any additional payments made subsequent to our audit period and to make additional financial adjustments as warranted. Instead, DCF suggested that its resources could be better used in conducting compliance reviews on current cases. After reviewing DCF's procedures for conducting compliance reviews, which include reviews of eligibility periods, we agreed with DCF's alternative suggestion and deleted the draft report recommendation.

DCF officials said that, based on their review of the case files for all 39 beneficiaries cited in the draft report as having missing or inaccurate entry dates, 16 were eligible, 3 were ineligible, and the eligibility of 20 could not be determined because the case files did not contain United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) documents. DCF officials said they had taken steps to recover the \$359 in overpayments for the 3 ineligible beneficiaries.

We agreed with DCF that 16 of these beneficiaries were eligible and adjusted our recommended recovery accordingly. DCF did not address what steps it would take regarding the 20 beneficiaries whose files did not contain USCIS documents. Therefore, we continue to recommend that DCF recover the \$9,561 in overpayments for the 20 remaining beneficiaries whose dates of entry or of asylum were overwritten in the FLORIDA system.

DCF concurred with our recommendation to enhance internal controls to prevent missing, overwritten, or inaccurate entry and asylum dates.

The complete text of DCF's response to our draft report is at Appendix C of this report.

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## **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

DCF	Department of Children and Families
FLORIDA	Florida Online Recipient Integrated Data Access
ORR	Office of Refugee Resettlement
RCA	Refugee Cash Assistance
RRP	Refugee Resettlement Program
USCIS	United States Customs and Immigration Service

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Refugee Resettlement Program**

The Refugee Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-212) created the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP) to provide for the effective resettlement of refugees and to assist them in achieving economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible after arrival in the United States. The Act authorized Federal reimbursement to States for up to 100 percent of cash and medical assistance provided to refugees immediately following their date of entry into the United States. The RRP reimburses States the cost that they would normally incur to provide refugees cash and medical assistance under existing Federal and State assistance programs such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Medicaid, and Supplemental Security Income State supplement, and for a special program of refugee cash assistance (RCA) and refugee medical assistance.

For refugees eligible for Federal assistance programs, the RRP reimbursed States their share of program costs while the Federal assistance programs, such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and Medicaid contributed their usual Federal Financial participation. For refugees eligible for RCA and refugee medical assistance, the RRP reimbursed States the full cost of assistance.

#### **Administration of the Refugee Resettlement Program**

At the Federal level, RRP is administered by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which is a part of the Administration for Children and Families. In Florida, the RRP is administered by the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Funding for RRP is subject to the availability of funds appropriated. Effective October 1, 1991, ORR notified the States that the eligibility period for RCA for new arrivals was 8 months from the date of entry or of asylum. The 8-month eligibility period has remained in effect since that date.

### **OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **Objective**

Our objective was to determine whether DCF made RCA payments only to beneficiaries whose eligibility period had not expired.

#### **Scope**

Our audit period covered payments made to RCA beneficiaries from July 1, 2002, through June 30, 2005.

We performed fieldwork from May 2006 to December 2006 in Tallahassee and Miami, Florida.

## Methodology

To accomplish our objective:

- We reviewed Federal and State laws, regulations, and other requirements related to RCA eligibility.
- We held discussions with State officials to obtain an understanding of policies, procedures, and guidance for determining RCA eligibility.
- We obtained an extract from the Florida Online Recipient Integrated Data Access (FLORIDA system) of 151,969 payments made to 29,556 beneficiaries, totaling \$24,843,749.
- We identified a population of beneficiaries who, based on their dates of entry or of asylum in the FLORIDA system, had received RCA payments after their period of eligibility had expired. This population consisted of 743 payments made to 274 beneficiaries, totaling \$108,688.
- We selected for detailed review a simple random sample of 100 beneficiaries to whom DCF had made \$41,258 in RCA payments. (See Appendix A for details regarding sampling methodology.)
- We obtained and reviewed case files and related documentation for the selected 100 beneficiaries.
- We met with officials from the Florida Auditor General's Office. They gave us a schedule of all beneficiaries who had previously been identified as having received overpayments during our audit period, and we removed those beneficiaries from our audit population to prevent duplicate recovery.
- We identified 29 beneficiaries that had their dates of entry or of asylum missing in the FLORIDA system, and removed them from our sample population.
- We analyzed payments for 168 additional beneficiaries that had their dates of entry or of asylum overwritten in the FLORIDA system, and contacted the United States Customs and Immigration Service (USCIS) to obtain an original date of entry or of asylum.

We did not review the overall internal control structure of the FLORIDA system because we performed substantive audit tests to determine the allowability of RCA payments made to a random sample of 100 beneficiaries.

We used a variable appraisal program to estimate the dollar impact of the improper RCA payments.

We conducted our review in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on our sample results, we estimate that from July 1, 2002, through June 30, 2005, DCF made payments totaling at least \$55,530<sup>1</sup> to beneficiaries whose eligibility period had expired. These overpayments occurred because DCF did not always follow its established procedures for closing RCA cases.

In addition, DCF's computerized eligibility system, the FLORIDA system, contained missing or inaccurate dates of entry or of asylum for some beneficiaries, allowing erroneous payments to occur. As a result, DCF made \$9,561 in additional erroneous payments to 20 beneficiaries.

### **FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS**

Federal regulations (45 CFR § 400.203) make Federal funding available for cash assistance provided to eligible refugees. Regulations (45 CFR § 400.211) also describe the methodology ORR uses to determine time-eligibility of refugees and state in part that "the time-eligibility period for refugee cash assistance and refugee medical assistance will be determined by the Director each year, based on appropriated funds available for the fiscal year." In ORR letter SL00-12, to State refugee coordinators, the Director of the ORR said that the eligibility period for refugee cash and medical assistance continues for 8 months after the entry or asylum date.

In regard to documentation for medical assistance payments, Federal regulations (45 CFR § 400.28) require States to maintain records needed for Federal monitoring of a State's refugee resettlement program. This recordkeeping must include documentation of services and assistance provided, including the identification of beneficiaries that received services.

### **REFUGEE CASH ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS AFTER ELIGIBILITY PERIOD EXPIRED**

We identified \$25,762 of RCA payments DCF made to 67 beneficiaries whose eligibility periods had expired. Of the \$25,762 in unallowable payments, DCF recovered a total of \$1,171 from five beneficiaries<sup>2</sup> through the benefit recovery process. After considering the recovered payments, 63 beneficiaries received payments totaling \$24,591 after their eligibility period ended. Projecting these findings to our population of beneficiaries for our 3-year period ended June 30, 2005, we estimate that DCF made payments totaling at least \$55,530 to beneficiaries whose eligibility period had expired. (See Appendix B for the details of our sample results and projections.)

The overpayments occurred because DCF did not always follow its established procedures for timely closing of all RCA cases. Some cases were closed automatically within the FLORIDA system. However, in other cases, DCF relied on district offices to terminate cash assistance

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<sup>1</sup>This estimate represents the lower limit of ineligible RCA payments at the 90 percent confidence level. The point estimate of our sample was \$67,379. (See Appendix B.)

<sup>2</sup>DCF made complete recoveries from four beneficiaries in the sample and a partial recovery from one beneficiary.

when a recipient's period of eligibility expired, based on an ad hoc report. However, relying on district offices to terminate ineligible beneficiaries was not always effective.

### **MISSING OR INACCURATE DATA IN THE FLORIDA SYSTEM<sup>3</sup>**

From the original data extract of 29,556 beneficiaries, we identified 168 beneficiaries that had dates of entry or of asylum that were illogical compared to the dates of RCA payments. For example, according to the data in the FLORIDA system, some RCA payments were dated before the beneficiaries entered into the United States or before they were granted asylum. DCF made \$122,676 in payments to these 168 beneficiaries. The original dates of entry or of asylum for these 168 RCA beneficiaries had been overwritten in the FLORIDA system when those beneficiaries became participants in a program unrelated to RCA. For 163 of 168 beneficiaries, we were able to obtain an original date of entry or of asylum from USCIS. For an additional five of the beneficiaries, we were not able to obtain an original date of entry or of asylum from the USCIS and were therefore unable to confirm the validity of \$4,182 in payments. Based on information that we obtained from USCIS and DCF, 20 of the 168 beneficiaries received RCA payments totaling \$9,561 after their eligibility period had expired.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

We recommend that DCF:

- make a financial adjustment of \$55,530 for the RCA payments made for ineligible beneficiaries;
- ensure that all employees follow established procedures for timely closing for RCA cases;
- make a financial adjustment of \$9,561 for 20 beneficiaries whose dates of entry or of asylum were not documented in the case files; and
- enhance internal controls to prevent missing, overwritten, and inaccurate entry and asylum dates.

### **STATE COMMENTS AND OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL RESPONSE**

DCF concurred with our recommendation to make a financial adjustment of \$55,530 for the RCA payments made for ineligible beneficiaries and with our recommendation to ensure that all employees follow established procedures for timely closing RCA cases.

DCF did not concur with our draft report recommendation to review any additional payments made subsequent to our audit period and to make additional financial adjustments as warranted. Instead, DCF suggested that its resources could be better used in conducting compliance reviews on current cases. After reviewing DCF's procedures for conducting compliance reviews, which

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<sup>3</sup>The payments to beneficiaries in this section were not included in the population from which we selected the sample discussed in the previous section of this report. Thus, these potential overpayments are in addition to the errors cited previously.

include reviews of eligibility periods, we agreed with DCF's alternative suggestion and deleted the draft report recommendation.

DCF officials said that, based on their review of the case files for all 39<sup>4</sup> beneficiaries cited in the draft report as having missing or inaccurate entry dates, 16 were eligible, 3 were ineligible, and the eligibility of 20 could not be determined because the case files did not contain USCIS documents. DCF officials said they had taken steps to recover the \$359 in overpayments for the 3 ineligible beneficiaries.

We agreed with DCF that 16 of these beneficiaries were eligible and adjusted our recommended recovery accordingly. DCF did not address what steps it would take regarding the 20 beneficiaries whose files did not contain USCIS documents. Therefore, we continue to recommend that DCF recover the \$9,561 in overpayments for the 20 remaining beneficiaries whose dates of entry or of asylum were overwritten in the FLORIDA system.

DCF concurred with our recommendation to enhance internal controls to prevent missing, overwritten, or inaccurate entry and asylum dates.

The complete text of DCF's response to our draft report is at Appendix C of this report.

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<sup>4</sup>The draft report we issued to DCF recommended that DCF review the case files for 39 beneficiaries whose dates of entry or of asylum were overwritten in the FLORIDA system and recover any overpayments (estimated at \$17,280 to 34 beneficiaries and, potentially, \$4,182 to 5 beneficiaries). Based on additional information DCF provided, we reduced the number of ineligible individuals to 20 and the dollars recommended for adjustment to \$9,561.

# **APPENDIXES**

**SAMPLE DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY****AUDIT OBJECTIVE**

Our objective was to determine whether DCF made RCA payments only to beneficiaries whose eligibility period had not expired.

**POPULATION**

The population consisted of all beneficiaries for whom the eligibility period for benefits appeared to have expired based on FLORIDA system dates, and who received cash assistance payments during July 1, 2002, through June 30, 2005. DCF made \$108,688 in refugee cash assistance payments to 274 refugees in our population.

**SAMPLING FRAME**

The sampling frame was a computer listing that identified each recipient and the total number and the amount of payments made to that recipient past the period of eligibility. To obtain our audit population we started with an extract of cash assistance payments made to refugees from the FLORIDA system. This resulted in a population of 151,969 payments, made to 29,556 beneficiaries, totaling \$24,843,749.

We then refined our matched population to only those payments made to beneficiaries after their eligibility period had expired. Because the benefit eligibility period is based on a recipient's date of entry or date of asylum status in the country, these dates were analyzed in our matched population database. Through additional refinements, we reduced the population of potentially erroneous payments to 747 payments, made to 276 beneficiaries, totaling \$109,068.

We eliminated beneficiaries from our population who had been previously identified by the Florida Auditor General as being ineligible. The final population from which our sample will be drawn consists of 743 payments, made to 274 beneficiaries, totaling \$108,688.

**SAMPLE UNIT**

The sampling unit was a recipient. All payments made to beneficiaries after the period of eligibility are included as part of the sampling unit.

**SAMPLE DESIGN**

We used a simple random sample.

**SAMPLE SIZE**

We selected a sample of 100 beneficiaries.



## **SOURCE OF THE RANDOM NUMBERS**

The source of the random numbers was the Office of Inspector General, Office of Audit Services Statistical Sampling software. We used the Random Number Generator for our sample.

## **METHOD FOR SELECTING SAMPLE ITEMS**

We sequentially numbered each recipient identification in the population from 1 to 274. We selected 100 random numbers from 1 to 274 and correlated them to the appropriate recipient.

## **CHARACTERISTICS TO BE MEASURED**

We measured the amount of error that resulted from ineligible payments. If the entry date on the FLORIDA system file was correct and a recovery had not been made, the error amount was the amount originally identified on the computer file. If the entry date was not correct or a recovery had been made, we computed the amount of the remaining error.

## **ESTIMATION METHODOLOGY**

Using the RATS-STATS Variable Appraisal Program, we projected the amount of overpayments from the sample of the universe.

Using the RATS-STATS Attribute Appraisal Program, we projected the number of beneficiaries for which erroneous payments were made.

**SAMPLE RESULTS AND PROJECTIONS**

**SAMPLE RESULTS**

<u>Sample Size</u>	<u>Value of Sample</u>	<u>Number of Errors</u>	<u>Value of Errors</u>
100	\$41,258.00	63	\$24,591.00

**VARIABLE PROJECTIONS**

	<u>Projected Value of Erroneous Payments</u>
Point Estimate	\$67,379
90-Percent Confidence Interval	
Lower Limit	\$55,530
Upper Limit	\$79,229



State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families

Charlie Crist  
Governor

Robert Butterworth  
Secretary

August 28, 2007

Office of Audit Svcs.

SEP 04 2007

RECEIVED

Mr. Peter J. Barbera  
Regional Inspector General  
for Audit Services, Region IV  
Department of Health and Human Services  
61 Forsyth Street S.W., Suite 3T41  
Atlanta, GA 30303-8909

Dear Mr. Barbera:

Thank you for the July 26 letter providing the Office of Inspector General draft report entitled "Review of Refugee Cash Assistance Payments in the State of Florida," Report number A-04-06-03510.

Enclosed is our formal response to the findings and recommendations. Rebuttal documents as referenced in this response were provided to the members of your audit team. We thank you for your recommendations and the opportunity to respond.

Please contact Jennifer Lange, ACCESS Program Director, at (850) 921-0253 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Butterworth', written over a horizontal line.

Robert A. Butterworth  
Secretary

Enclosure

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES RESPONSE TO HHS-OIG  
REVIEW OF REFUGEE CASH ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS IN THE STATE OF  
FLORIDA (CIN A-04-06-03510)**

**HHS Recommendation #1**

We recommend that DCF make a financial adjustment of \$55,530 for the RCA payments made for ineligible beneficiaries.

**Department's Response:**

The ACCESS Program Office will coordinate with the Office of Revenue Management to make an adjustment of \$55,530 to the Refugee Cash Assistance Grant for the quarterly reporting period ending September 30, 2007. The Department will make evidence of the adjustment available to HHS by October 31, 2007.

Department Contact and phone: David Hines, 850-921-5564

**HHS Recommendation #2**

We recommend that DCF review any additional payments made subsequent to June 30, 2005, to the beneficiaries identified in our audit and make additional financial adjustments as warranted.

**Department's Response:**

Subsequent to June 30, 2005 the Department has enhanced internal controls including automation of reports, reviews completed on the Quality Management System (QMS) Online, and data and onsite reviews by Central Office Quality Assurance staff. Due to the time lapse, we believe that greater efficiency and use of our resources are better served through our current compliance reviews.

Department Contact and phone: Ellen Ransdell, 850-487-2969

**HHS Recommendation #3**

We recommend that DCF ensure that all employees follow established procedures for timely closing of RCA cases.

**Department's Response:**

The ACCESS Program Office will post reminders on the ACCESS Program Policy Home Page to remind staff of the procedures for timely closing RCA cases. The Department will post reminders by September 15, 2007.

Department Contact and phone: Eileen Schilling, 850-414-5643

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES RESPONSE TO HHS-OIG  
REVIEW OF REFUGEE CASH ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS IN THE STATE OF  
FLORIDA (CIN A-04-06-03510)**

**HHS Recommendation #4**

We recommend that DCF make a financial adjustment of \$17,280 for the RCA payments made due to missing or inaccurate dates of entry and asylum dates.

**Department's Response:**

ACCESS Program Office and Refugee Services staff reviewed some of the RCA cases determined ineligible by the auditors and found that 16 cases were in fact eligible. (The detailed support documents were provided to the auditors.) These cases should not be considered when making the financial adjustment for RCA payments made to ineligible beneficiaries. After HHS redetermines the financial adjustment and notifies the Department, the ACCESS Program Office will coordinate with the Office of Revenue Management to make the revised financial adjustment.

Department Contact and phone: David Hines, 850-921-5564

**HHS Recommendation #5**

We recommend that DCF review the case files for beneficiaries whose dates of entry or of asylum were overwritten in the FLORIDA system and recover any overpayments (estimated at \$17,280 to 33 beneficiaries and, potentially, \$4,182 to 5 beneficiaries).

**Department's Response:**

Subsequent review of case records resulted in location of entry documents on 19 of the 39 cases. Sixteen of these cases had entry documents supporting RCA eligibility. Three cases contained entry documents that supported the overpayment finding in the audit, and 20 cases did not contain United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) documents.

The Department will complete overpayment referrals on the three cases where entry documents were obtained supporting the audit finding. The Department will complete referrals by September 30, 2007.

Department Contact and phone: Gary Scott, 850-413-7427

**HHS Recommendation #6**

We recommend that DCF enhance internal controls to prevent missing, overwritten, and inaccurate entry and asylum dates.

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES RESPONSE TO HHS-OIG  
REVIEW OF REFUGEE CASH ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS IN THE STATE OF  
FLORIDA (CIN A-04-06-03510)**

**Department's Response:**

The ACCESS Program Office will coordinate with the ACCESS Florida Technology Unit to ensure edits are placed in the FLORIDA System to prevent the occurrence of missing, overwritten and inaccurate entry and asylum dates. The Department will coordinate edits by September 30, 2007.

Department Contact and phone: Debbie Owens, 850-921-5570