



**State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families**

**Charlie Crist**  
*Governor*

**George H. Sheldon**  
*Secretary*

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March 18, 2010

Mr. xxx xxxx  
Xxx xxx xxxxx  
Xxxxxxx, xx, xxxxx

Dear xxxxxx:

Thank you for contacting Senator xxxxx in reference to your concerns about public benefits to refugees. Senator xxxxx appreciates your sharing this information and asked that I respond on her behalf.

Your first concern references illegal immigrants receiving public benefits such as food stamps and cash assistance. Under federal and state law, only "qualified immigrants" are eligible for these benefits. Qualified immigrants must provide documentation of certain legal statuses, so individuals without legal status are not eligible. Some categories of immigrants who are legally in the U.S. are ineligible for assistance, including visitors, temporary workers and immigrants sponsored by relatives.

Your email specifically asks if it is true that a woman would receive \$1,500 per child in Florida. I can assure you this information is incorrect. While an illegal immigrant is not eligible for cash assistance, U.S. citizens and qualified aliens who are eligible receive assistance based on income, assets and family size. The payment amount for a family of three ranges from \$198 to \$303, depending on factors including whether or not the client has housing costs. Family size is included in the determination of benefits, but under Florida law, family size is increased by only 50% of a person for additional children born while a client is receiving assistance. In real terms, this means that the benefit for a family of three, for example, with a new child is determined at the rate for a family of 3.5 – or increases from a maximum amount of \$303 to \$334. The maximum benefit for a family with one mother and eight children would be \$671 a month.

Your letter also discussed benefits for refugees. Refugees are legal immigrants who are unable to return to their home country due to persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. You inquired if refugees receive a monthly allowance of \$2,470. Refugees are potentially eligible to receive cash assistance at the same amount as Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) for U.S. citizens - currently \$180 a month for a single individual. Refugees are also potentially eligible for food stamps under the same eligibility and benefit criteria as citizens.

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Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

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Thank you for your initiative to find the correct information about what benefits refugees are potentially eligible to receive. More information about refugees can be found on our Department's website at: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/refugee/>.

Sincerely,

Dr. Peter Digre  
Assist Secretary for Operations  
Florida Department of Children and Families