Repatriation FY 2026 Spend Plan

Authorizing Legislation

The Repatriation Program is authorized by Section 1113 of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. 1313. It is funded from the Child Support Enforcement and Family Services Program appropriation.

Section 1113(a) authorizes the provision of temporary services to destitute U.S. citizens returning from abroad. Section 1113(c) specifically defines the types of activities that may be provided as "temporary assistance" as "money payments, medical care, temporary billeting, transportation, and other goods and services necessary for the health or welfare of individuals (including guidance, counseling, and other welfare services)".

Section 1113(b) authorizes the Secretary to develop plans and make arrangements for the provision of temporary assistance.

Section 1113(d) limits the funding level for the temporary financial assistance received by individuals under that section at $1 million each fiscal year.

The Act of July 5, 1960 (24 U.S.C. Chapter 9) provides for the hospitalization of mentally ill nationals returned from foreign countries and authorizes Health and Human Services to receive any eligible person at any port of entry, temporarily care for and treat at suitable facilities and otherwise render assistance to such person.

Program Background

The Repatriation Program provides temporary assistance to citizens of the United States and to dependents of citizens who are without available resources and have been identified by the Department of State as having returned from a foreign country to the United States because of destitution or illness or because of war, threat of war, invasion, or similar crisis. As of August 2025, ACF has provided temporary assistance to 845 individuals for FY 2025.

Since the 1980s, the Repatriation Program has entered into agreements with states, territories, and other service providers to support the routine arrivals of individual, family/small group repatriates and of mass evacuations/emergency repatriations, such as in the case of natural disasters. The program reimburses the provision of direct services and related planning and administrative costs. Since 2021, the program support administration has occurred through a cooperative agreement with a national private organization to assist the federal government with certain administrative and financial management activities. All individuals receiving assistance are expected to repay the cost of such assistance.

The Repatriation Program also serves mentally ill nationals returned from foreign countries under 24 U.S.C. Chapter 9, Hospitalization of Mentally Ill Nationals Returned from Foreign Countries. These costs are not subject to the limit in Section 1113(d). In FY 2025, the program provided repatriation assistance for reasons of mental illness to approximately 34 individuals.

Repatriation Program Funding

ACF funds the Repatriation Program's costs from two sources. Program administration and overhead costs have been paid from ACF's Federal Administration funds, which is part of ACF's Children and Families Services account. Temporary assistance costs are paid from ACF's Child Support Services and Family Support Programs account. While the Child Support account is an open-ended entitlement, Repatriation temporary assistance costs are subject to a $1 million statutory limit. The program is subject to sequestration.

Congress has historically increased this limit temporarily in response to emergencies. This was done in FY 2017 and FY 2018 in response to hurricane emergencies in the Caribbean, in FY 2020 to $10 million in response to COVID-19, and $10 million each year FY 2021 and FY 2022 at the conclusion of military operations in Afghanistan as part of Operation Allies Refugee and Operation Allies Welcome.

In FY 2018 and FY 2019, ACF worked with HHS's OGC to confirm a new legal interpretation that the statutory limit in Section 1113(d) only applies to "temporary assistance," as defined in the statute. This interpretation means that planning activities related to repatriation under Section 1113(b) supporting program development, management, and administration are not subject to the statutory $1 million cap on temporary assistance. The funds from this account are not available to fund federal program personnel. The account is subject to sequestration.

Prior to FY 2021, planning activities were unfunded and overall coordination of the program with the state and federal partners was inconsistent, incomplete, and insufficiently responsive to the requirements for proper program management and execution. Using planning funds, OHSEPR has made great strides in the performance and responsiveness of the program to routine and emergency repatriation incidents. OHSEPR has monitored program expenses, ensuring improved service delivery and program accountability and enabling repatriates to achieve self-sufficiency within the 90 day direct service period.

Since receiving funding in FY 2021 for repatriation planning, OHSEPR has focused on ensuring that funds are expended appropriately and used to address program improvement areas identified by the GAO and OIG following their reviews of the repatriation program and response activities in CY 2020. To address these items, OHSEPR has remained committed to addressing recommendations issued by performing the following actions:

- conducting a comprehensive program review of emergency and routine repatriation programs;
- working collaboratively with states and enhancing their overall readiness for emergency repatriation incidents, to include training and exercising; and
- developing federal plans and procedures to be used to ensure planning coordination and incident organization in response to an emergency repatriation incident.

Since January 2025, OHSEPR has conducted close evaluations of the Executive Orders and aligned with ACF's political leadership's direction. Looking forward, OHSEPR's approach is informed by the guidance and provided by the Administration and direction of new leadership initiatives specifically focusing on: 1) fiscal responsibility and cost reduction; 2) transparency and accountability; 3) efficiency in government operations; 4) data-driven decision-making; 5) reduction of fraud and abuse; 6) reducing burden on direct service providers to enhance service delivery; 7) supporting local leadership functions during an emergency.

FY 2025 Accomplishments

ACF continued to make progress in the overall program development in FY 2025, with priority areas focused on improving repatriate service delivery times and preparing jurisdictions to respond to an emergency repatriation mission. ACF's specific focus during FY 2025 was on aligning with the administration's priorities with executive orders and presidential memorandums. ACF also continued to focus on improving the efficiency of the program workflows and services with the goal of continuing to build a program that enables repatriates to attain self-sufficiency, while appropriately utilizing federal funds. Below are specific FY 2025 accomplishments that align to Administration priorities:

1. Protecting Americans Returned from Abroad

ACF continued to develop a close partnership with the Department of State Consular Affairs (DOS CA) and the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs (SPEHA) to coordinate the return of wrongful detainees and hostages and ensure their immediate needs are met upon domestic arrival for the 90-day eligibility period, if needed. A priority for the Administration, ACF provided temporary assistance to 6 of the 72 Americans returned by SPEHA and DOS CA and mobilized assets to be on-site at the arrival location on short notice – leveraging tactical skills and distributive resource networks developed through the emergency repatriation portfolio. ACF also coordinated with the FBI on the return of 16 minor children who were victims of abuse, neglect, and trafficking – ensuring they received the appropriate behavioral health and supportive services upon their return to the United States. ACF expects to continue this support and work to improve coordination of information and services going into FY 2026 in collaboration with DOS CA, SPEHA, and FBI colleagues.

2. Strengthening States in Repatriation Services

Aligning with EO 14239: Achieving Efficiency Through State and Local Preparedness, ACF implemented the Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan (MYTEP) in FY 2025, establishing the strategic vision and tactical direction for enhancing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the Repatriation Program. The MYTEP establishes a robust training and exercise calendar itemizing key activities annually to ensure ongoing testing, review, and evaluation of skills and capabilities for program implementation. To support the overarching goal of the MYTEP of building capacity for executing repatriation operations, OHSEPR conducted a series of capacity-building events with partners. These engagements with state grant recipients and service providers were designed to enhance both routine and emergency repatriation program workflows and processes. Given the depth and breadth of both program functions, this first year focused on the emergency repatriation program activities outlined below.

<u>Emergency Repatriation</u>

Five states with emergency repatriation grants entered the final year of their cooperative agreements and have begun executing their capstone activities, which include testing their revised emergency repatriation plans through the conduct of exercises and drills. All planning, training, and testing activities are planned for completion by January 2026, with two major exercises scheduled for November 2025.

In April, OHSEPR successfully executed a multi-day design lab in concert with colleagues from the Department of State and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, focused on collaborative planning to provide mutual aid during an emergency repatriation mission. The intent was to leverage the skills developed by jurisdictions over the preceding two grant years and foster collaboration with and across each other as a leadership peer support network. Throughout the sessions, they shared plans to enhance their understanding of how social services and emergency services work together across different jurisdictions while identifying opportunities to share data to ensure seamless provision of temporary assistance to returning Americans. This proved to be especially important as data sharing on the client between the port of entry state and the final destination the repatriate was flagged as an area for workflow improvement.

OHSEPR also hosted two repatriation workshops with federal partners to improve operational understanding of their roles and responsibilities in supporting American citizens during repatriation incidents, established new relationships with key repatriation partners, and identified actionable strategies to enhance support for state and local partners. Combined, these two workshops brought together 67 federal, state, local, and non-governmental partners. This also presented an opportunity to highlight the intersection of the routine and emergency repatriation programs and journey-map the repatriate experience. The collaborative environment and practical activities empowered stakeholders to return to their organizations better prepared to share information, coordinate actions, and respond effectively during future repatriation incidents.

<u>Routine Repatriation</u>

Finally, continued guidance on key program topics for the routine repatriation were provided to jurisdictional program managers during this fiscal year. Information memoranda, webinars, and quarterly case reviews surfaced the importance of developing and promulgating information to state repatriation coordinators on key topics (e.g., unaccompanied minors, wrongful detainees, child welfare, human trafficking). Participants have indicated that all were helpful in advancing their understanding of how to manage these cases while also providing a platform for coordination with DOS colleagues to directly dialogue with and build understanding of state laws – in terms of opportunities and constraints – in coordinating temporary assistance. All documents were updated to ensure alignment with any relevant executive orders.

3. Improving efficiency

In alignment with EO 14243: Stopping Waste, Fraud, and Abuse by Eliminating Information Silos in FY 2025, OHSEPR developed and launched the first-ever federal repatriation case management database. This strategic investment to build a new information collection system for case management services during FY 2025 leverages a platform from a service provider with a presence across ACF, achieving economies of scale in development, operations, and maintenance. This platform has been designed to enable case management coordinators to have specialized views to streamline the case management process and ensure more efficient processing of charges, invoices, and payments for the service costs incurred through repatriate loans and service receipt. The further development of this system in FY26 will include a portal for the coordination with state systems, further integrating the accounting and coordination of services. Pending available funds in future years, OHSEPR plans to develop a module that will enable the repatriate to know and see directly their expenses accrued through the program and direct file for waivers within this portal. Ultimately, this system will be integrated in such a manner that it supports any adjustments in workflows and provides transparency in the process, resulting in improved service coordination and delivery.

FY 2026 Use of Funds

To ensured continued implementation of the Administration's priorities while seeking to improve the services provided by the Repatriation program, ACF has identified key areas of improvement using funds for FY 2026. This year will be the fifth year of the program performance improvement and implementation of significant advances and program adjustments are planned. Following a comprehensive business process analysis of the routine repatriation program administration in FY 2025, specific focus for FY 2026 will be on improving workflows for the routine repatriation program. Specifically, OHSEPR will begin the process of transferring program support from an existing grantee to a vendor contracted to support OHSEPR's administration of the routine repatriation program. This will enable more timely program oversight for all aspects of program administration – particularly in having more timely responses to waivers from repatriates and state routine repatriation coordinators. The current grantee will continue to provide the primary support until a proper transition is achieved. This activity is a multi-step process with the goal of increasing program efficiency and oversight and aligns with best practices in program improvement.

OHSEPR continued engagement with the HHS payment servicer to reconcile timelines associated with the payment, waiver, and deferral workflow. Through this analysis, OHSEPR identified potential opportunities to pursue in FY 2026 that would streamline reimbursement processes for temporary assistance to states through direct obligation of funds, based upon invoices reflecting actuals received quarterly. This action is expected to improve repayment timeliness to states and the DOS for temporary assistance services rendered.

ACF also recognizes that repatriates might not have bank accounts or other mechanisms for wireless funds transfer and would need to collaborate closely with the Department's loan servicer and appropriate POCs to ensure this is not a barrier to service receipt or repayment – especially in an emergency. This developmental area will be engaged in FY 2026, as HHS is pending the identification of the appropriate parties within the Department to liaise with Treasury on this activity.

Consistent with EO 14222, OHSEPR is also looking to reduce expenses by taking strategic steps in analyzing activities and annually evaluating their suitability for mission execution. To that end, OHSEPR has made the following budget decreases in FY 2026:

- Reduce the planning line item by consolidating four separate contracts into two, eliminating excess contract fees and services. Through this consolidation effort, OHSEPR was able to leverage economies of scale through a single vendor with a deeper roster of personnel able to support some of the administrative program elements during steady-state and for a large incident while also ensuring availability for specialized crisis response resources.

- Elimination of the start-up funding for emergency repatriation missions in the planning line item. OHSEPR would need to request additional funding from OMB to initiate procurement actions or fund any state human service operational expenses associated with an emergency repatriation activation. Mission operations would require timely receipt of funds from OMB to proceed.
- Reduction in the jurisdictional planning line item by eliminating five cooperative agreements with states participating in the original cycle of three-year pilots for emergency repatriation planning activities and shifting to only two, one-year cooperative agreements.
- Reduction in the OHSEPR travel line item by reducing federal staff travel. Funded travel will support the evaluation of final cooperative agreement exercises for key personnel and more strategic, mission-critical travel for routine operations. As indicated above, OHSEPR would require additional funding to travel in the event of an emergency repatriation operation.
- Reduction in the Direct Training & QA program monitoring line item through the conclusion of the program evaluation contract. OHSEPR will continue to monitor and implement program performance using new technology and other, new surveys with customers to identify continued opportunity for improvements.
- Reduction in the training & technical assistance center line item by bringing services in-house, eliminating the need for a large-scale external Repatriation T/TA Center and shift the focus to more targeted, direct support, and delivery. OHSEPR plans to utilize the documents, tools, and resources developed to identify strategic opportunities to maintain national capability for emergency repatriation response.

Category	FY 2026 Total	Category Description
Temporary Assistance (Sections 1113(a) and (c))	$1,000,000	Temporary assistance to repatriates subject to $1,000,000 statutory limit. In late FY 2025, OHSEPR will begin a new process for reimbursing to states consistent with their actuals for costs incurred on a quarterly basis. Will fund temporary assistance provided directly by OHSEPR.
Temporary Assistance to Mentally Ill Nationals (24 U.S.C. 9)	$167,897	Temporary assistance to mentally ill nationals for state reimbursement and OHSEPR direct service costs.
Planning (Section 1113(b))		
Program Administration: Routine Repatriation	$3,000,000	Funding for federal program to conduct case management and coordination activities for repatriates; costs cover management and administrative overhead for contract support and associated fees. (New vendor = TBD in FY25)
State Direct Costs for Administration of Temporary Assistance Services	$1,000,000	Estimated costs for administrative program personnel within states providing temporary assistance to repatriates on cost reimbursable basis.
Federal Emergency Repatriation Planning Support	$4,000,000	Direct spending by OHSEPR for emergency repatriation planning, training, and exercising. Associated fees for contract acquisitions and management. (Current vendor = Peers & Partners; AECOM)
Jurisdictional Planning	$750,000	Grant to fund two jurisdictions at the state level for emergency repatriation planning activities for one year during FY26.
OHSEPR Travel and Virtual Alternatives	$45,000	Funds for federal travel and site visits for program management & administration.

Repatriation Equipment and Information Technology	$4,000,000	Database for repatriation coordination and IT systems operations & management, governance, and technical support. (Current vendor = Koniag Data Systems, LLC)
Direct Training & QA program monitoring	$4,000,000	Execution of direct jurisdictional training activities for case management coordination activities with state service providers. This applies to both routine and emergency activities. Specific focus on the development and dissemination of guidance documents for service coordination and education on new case management systems and workflows.
Planning, Subtotal	*$16,795,000*	
Repatriation Total	**$17,962,897**	
Sequestration*	**$(1,116,800)**	
Post-Sequestration Total	**$16,846,097**	

***Sequestration calculated December 2024 for FY26 baseline.**