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**AB-548 Enhanced Services for Asylees and Vulnerable Noncitizens program.** (2025-2026)

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AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 24, 2025

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**NO. 548**

Introduced by Assembly Member Solache

February 11, 2025

An act to amend ~~Section 13650~~ *Sections 13650 and 13651* of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public social services.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 548, as amended, Solache. Enhanced Services for Asylees and Vulnerable Noncitizens program.

Existing law, subject to an appropriation in the annual Budget Act, establishes the Enhanced Services for Asylees and Vulnerable Noncitizens program to provide resettlement services for persons granted asylum by the United States Attorney General or the Secretary of Homeland Security or who are *vulnerable noncitizens*. *For purposes of the program, vulnerable noncitizens are persons who are* eligible to receive refugee cash assistance and services as victims of crime. Existing law requires the program, under the administration of the State Department of Social Services, to provide specified services for up to 90 days within the first year following a person's grant of asylum or eligibility for services as a victim of a crime, respectively. *Existing law requires grants or contracts awarded under the program to be executed only with nonprofit organizations, as specified, with at least 3 years of experience with providing case management services and providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services. Existing law requires the department, in collaboration with service providers, to determine outcome metrics to define program success.*

~~This bill would make technical, nonsubstantive changes to those provisions.~~

*This bill would change the eligibility criteria to receive services under the program from asylees or vulnerable noncitizens, as described above, to persons who, among other things, are screened by the United States Department of Homeland Security during January 1, 2024, to January 1, 2026, inclusive. The bill would require the program to provide services to an eligible person for up to 90 days within the first year following that screening. The bill would require grants or contracts awarded under the program to be executed only with nonprofit organizations with at least one year of experience with providing the above-described services. The bill would require the department to collect data from grantees related to the outcome metrics described above and post the findings on its internet website.*

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: ~~no~~yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

**SECTION 1.** Section 13650 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

**13650.** (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

- (1) Vulnerable noncitizens, asylees, and refugees are important to the fabric of our society.
- (2) Regardless of their legal distinctions, noncitizens face many of the same challenges integrating into the state and are often living in the same communities.
- (3) Refugees, asylees, and other noncitizens are granted different services due to the legal distinction of when they were identified, with refugees often being identified in the country of origin and asylees in the country of arrival.

~~(4) Between 2017 and 2019, the number of applicants granted asylum increased from 26,199 applicants to 46,508 applicants, representing a 56 percent increase. In 2019 alone, California was the settlement state for 34 percent of all new asylees, which was the highest rate of all states.~~

*(4) In 2022, California was the settlement state for 24 percent of all individuals granted asylum, the highest percentage of all states. Between 2020 and 2022, the number of individuals granted asylum who live in California ranged from 5,585 to 2,684, with 3,442 asylees living in California in 2022.*

(5) Research indicates that while individuals granted asylum in this state are given eligibility to a wide range of benefits, most asylees do not get these benefits due to the lack of case management services and assistance in navigating the social safety net and health care systems.

(6) The state-funded Trafficking and Crime Victim Assistance Program (TCVAP) provides critical benefits and services to noncitizen victims of human trafficking, domestic violence, and other serious crimes. TCVAP benefits and services mirror those that are available to refugees after initial resettlement. These vulnerable noncitizens would benefit from initial case management services.

(7) Studies show that with proper case management support, noncitizens are better able to secure the benefits for which they are eligible, and find employment and bring immense contributions to the economy.

(b) *(1)* The Enhanced Services for Asylees and Vulnerable Noncitizens (ESAVN) *program* is hereby established to provide resettlement services for persons who are currently residing in California and ~~who are granted asylum by the United States Attorney General or the United States Secretary of Homeland Security pursuant to Section 1158 of Title 8 of the United States Code or who are eligible for assistance and services under Section 13283:~~ *who meet both of the following conditions:*

*(A) Entered the United States.*

*(B) Are screened by the United States Department of Homeland Security during January 1, 2024, to January 1, 2026, inclusive.*

*(2) For purposes of this subdivision, a person may show that they are currently residing in California with any of the following:*

*(A) California driver's license or California identification card.*

*(B) Utility bill.*

*(C) Rental history.*

(c) For purposes of this chapter, ~~"vulnerable noncitizen" means any individual who would be eligible for services under Section 13283:~~ *"eligible person" means an individual who meets the criteria described in subdivision (b).*

(d) Grants or contracts awarded pursuant to this section shall be executed only with nonprofit organizations that meet the requirements set forth in paragraph (3) or (5) of subsection (c) of Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code and have at least ~~three years~~ *one year* of experience with both of the following:

- (1) Providing case management services, as defined in subdivision (b) of Section 13651.
- (2) Providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services.

(e) The department shall require qualified nonprofit organizations awarded contracts or grants pursuant to this section to report, monitor, or audit the services provided, as determined by the department.

(f) Funds allocated for these services may also be used to conduct a formal evaluation of the services provided by a qualified entity, as determined by the department.

**SEC. 2.** *Section 13651 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:*

**13651.** (a) The program shall provide culturally appropriate and responsive case management services for ~~asylees and vulnerable noncitizens~~ *eligible persons* for up to 90 days within the first year following the ~~grant of asylum or after having been deemed eligible for services under Section 13283~~ *eligible person being screened by the United States Department of Homeland Security*.

(b) Case management services under the program shall include assistance in identifying and applying for all benefits to which the *eligible* person is legally entitled, including cultural orientation and integration programs, support in accessing and navigating the public benefits and health care systems, community connection and relationship building, English language instruction, and employment training, job placement assistance, and professional recredentialing and licensing application assistance.

(c) (1) The department shall, in collaboration with service providers, determine outcome metrics to define program success.

*(2) The department shall collect data from grantees related to the outcome metrics determined pursuant to paragraph (1). The department shall post the findings on its internet website.*