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Only Christians need apply

by Heidi Schlumpf

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I'll never forget the family from Uzbekistan with four girls who lived down the street from us. Or the young Somali couple with two toddler boys in the apartment building next door. My husband and I got to know both families as volunteers for World Relief's refugee resettlement program.

That's why I was particularly sad to learn that the program is in near shambles, thanks to a new hiring policy that requires employees to be Christian, as the *Chicago Tribune* recently reported. World Relief is affiliated with the National Association of Evangelicals.

A number of staff have already left, calling the new policy discriminatory. "It's legal, but it's ridiculously wrong and un-Christian," said Delia Seeberg, the former director of immigrant legal services who is now working at a private firm that does immigrant law.

A World Relief mental health program for refugees in Chicago has closed because the new policy conflicts with professional guidelines for social workers and psychologists. And the refugee resettlement program risks losing some grants as well as state and even federal funding.

The Obama administration is considering reversing the current policy that allows federal funding for organizations that hire based on faith--a move that obviously could affect a number of Catholic organizations, too.

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