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Refugees
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Apply for
Welfare

Sacramento

Nearly 100 Indochina refugees have applied for welfare in California, and state officials hope the federal government will pay all the bills, state officials said yesterday.

"We've just gotten assurances from the federal government that we will be reimbursed," Mario Obledo, state Health and Welfare Agency secretary, said in an interview.

"All we're doing is relying on assurance from the federal government that all costs will be covered. But I don't believe Congress has approved the expenditure," he added.

In Washington, Congress was still debating legislation to pay refugee costs.

Obledo said refugees become eligible for welfare benefits after they have departed Camp Pendleton with sponsors. That allows them to register with permanent addresses.

In a survey of county agencies, the state Department of Benefit Payments said 44 applications were filed in San Diego county; 20 in Santa Clara county and six in Los Angeles county.

"There were a few in other county reports, but all total it would not reach 100," said John Sullivan, a department spokesman.

Associated Press