

24 Southeast Asians Apply For Welfare Aid in Area

By Athelia Knight

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Twenty-four people in five families who fled Cambodia and Vietnam after Communist victories have applied for public assistance in the Washington metropolitan area, social services officials said yesterday.

Officials in Arlington and Montgomery said 19 persons have been placed on the public assistance rolls, and that applications for five persons are pending in Prince George's and Arlington counties.

Other area social services workers said their offices had received several inquiries about food stamps, medical assistance and welfare for Vietnamese refugees.

The refugees, they said, were seeking public assistance as a temporary means of support until they learn English and can find a job.

"Once they become employed we will close their case," said Mary Hall, intake eligibility supervisor for the Arlington County social services office. "They might

still be eligible for food stamps," she added.

Miss Hall said the applicants have come her office with friends or relatives who spoke English. "They don't speak English and I really think they're going to have trouble," she said. The social services office has been placing the applicants in English classes.

A spokesman for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare said national figures on the number of Vietnamese refugees who have applied for public assistance will not be available for at least a month because state compile the information, not the department.

Miss Hall said her office had approved applications for public assistance and food stamps from one family consisting of two parents, six children, a brother and a grandmother. The office has an application for medical assistance from a Vietnamese man waiting for approval, she said.

To qualify for public assistance, a family must be needy and each member ei-

ther a citizen or a legally admitted alien, Miss Hall said. All of the Arlington applicants, she said, meet both criteria.

Under the Arlington public assistance program, a family of 10 would receive \$635 a month.

Assistance payments to refugees in Arlington are presently coming from the regular county public assistance program, paid for with local, state and federal money.

Miss Hall said that if the President signs a bill providing aid to the refugees under a federal program, the national government will bear the entire cost of the public assistance program for refugees.

A \$405 million appropriations bill to aid the refugees was sent to the White House last week. About \$70 million of the appropriated money would go toward public assistance, an HEW spokesman said.

In Montgomery County, two applications for public assistance from two families

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have been approved, according to Edward Bloom of the county's social services office.

The applicants were dependents of American citizens and were placed in a category already within the public assistance program, Bloom said.

Although his office has processed only two applications for public assistance, Bloom said, it has received about five inquiries concerning public assistance for Vietnamese refugees. He said the inquiries have come from people who plan to sponsor families and want to check on the program.

In Prince George's County, where on application for public assistance for a family of four is expected to be approved, a county official said the office had also received several inquiries from sponsors.