

**DATE: August 24, 2022**

# OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM #22-08-01

**SUBJECT:** Extended Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) Eligibility Period

**TO:**  Executive Directors

**FROM:** Robert Patrick

Acting Director

Bureau of Operations

# PURPOSE

To inform County Assistance Offices (CAO) that the Department of Human Services (DHS) is extending the eligibility period for RCA and RMA benefits, and to provide instructions on how to process RCA and RMA benefits for qualifying refugee and asylee clients.

# BACKGROUND

On March 28, 2022, the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement, released *Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) 22-12, Expansion of the Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medical Assistance Eligibility Period* (Attachment A)*.* This policy letter announced the extension of the eligibility period for RCA and RMA, from eight months to 12 months.

**DISCUSSION**

Effective immediately, qualifying individuals with a date of eligibility on or after October 1, 2021, are eligible for RCA and RMA for up to 12 months.

The extension of the eligibility period will positively impact refugees who are not otherwise eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or Medicaid by allowing individuals to receive assistance for a longer period of time. This expansion remains in effect indefinitely.

**NOTE:** As a reminder, the date of eligibility for qualifying individuals is:

* For refugees, Special Immigrant Visa holders, and Cuban/Haitian Entrants, the date of eligibility is the date of entry into the United States.
* For Humanitarian or SQ/SI Parolees who entered the country through an Operation Allies Refuge/Operation Allies Welcome Safe Haven on or after November 1, 2021, the date of eligibility is the date of entry into the community.

* For asylees, the date of eligibility is the date asylum was granted.
* For victims of trafficking or torture, the date of eligibility is the date on the letter certifying victim of trafficking or victim of torture status.

**PROCEDURE**

Changes to the Electronic Client Information System to extend eligibility to 12 months are planned to be completed in September 2022. CAO staff will be notified when updates are complete.

1. A temporary process consisting of a monthly data fix will be completed to extend existing RCA/RMA budgets eligible October 1, 2021 or thereafter from eight months to 12 months. The Bureau of Policy (BOP) will provide the Bureau of Operations (BOO) with a list of RCA/RMA budgets that were extended for the CAO staff to issue a manual four-month extension notice provided in [Attachment B – RCA/RMA Extension Manual Notice Text](https://pagov.sharepoint.com/sites/DHS-OIM/Attachments/Attachment%20B%20-%20Refugee%20Cash%20Assistance%20(RCA)%20and%20Refugee%20Medical%20Assistance%20(RMA)%20Extension%20Manual%20Notice%20Text.docx) to notify households of the additional four months of eligibility.
2. Any case action that requires running eligibility on RCA budgets that have been extended for the additional four months will cause the data fix to cancel and may result in budget closure. Guidance for next steps is provided below if a budget closure is displayed on the “Eligibility Results Summary” screen.
3. Once case action that requires running eligibility has been initiated the following will apply:

* If the “Eligibility Results Summary” screen displays the case will remain open with a future closure date, the case may be committed and no further action or Service Now ticket is required. The case will be picked up in the monthly data fix to systematically apply the 12-month closure date.
* If the “Eligibility Results Summary” screen displays the case will close by the next payment date with Reason Code 976, Opt. 3, the CAO will commit the case and follow the procedural guidance outlined in [Attachment C – Procedure to Process RCA Extension](https://pagov.sharepoint.com/sites/DHS-OIM/Attachments/Attachment%20C%20-%20Procedure%20to%20Process%20Refugee%20Cash%20Assistance%20(RCA)%20Extension.docx) to reopen any closed RCA budgets as D 05 for the additional four months. The procedural guidelines provided in Attachment C will be used when:
  + budget closure date displayed is the next payment date after taking case action that required running eligibility,
  + new applications are processed for individuals whose date of entry was on or after October 1, 2022 and eight months have passed, or
  + specific guidance from BOO is received requesting reopening of a closed budget.

**NOTE:** BOP will provide BOO a list of identified cases to distribute to CAOs; these cases were closed prior to the release of this Operations Memorandum (Ops Memo) and will need to be re-opened using the procedural guidance outlined in Attachment C.

1. Any case action that requires running eligibility on RMA budgets that have been extended for the additional four months will cause the data fix to cancel, but due to the COVID-19 indicator, MA budgets will not close. MG 91 budgets will automatically open for these individuals, with no lapse in coverage. No additional steps are needed.
2. When processing new RCA/RMA openings before system changes are implemented and the eight months of eligibility has not passed, CAO staff will continue with the current process to review and authorize benefits. Any system generated notices must be suppressed and a manual notice with 12-month language must be issued. Please see [Attachment B – RCA/RMA Extension Manual Notice Text](https://pagov.sharepoint.com/sites/DHS-OIM/Attachments/Attachment%20B%20-%20Refugee%20Cash%20Assistance%20(RCA)%20and%20Refugee%20Medical%20Assistance%20(RMA)%20Extension%20Manual%20Notice%20Text.docx).
3. When processing new RCA openings for an individual that is past the eight months but less than 12 months of eligibility the CAO will need to follow the procedural guidance outlined in Attachment C to open D 05 for any remaining months up to but not to exceed 12 months. A control must be set to ensure timely closure of the D 05 budgets.
4. Following the implementation of the system changes, a conversion will be completed changing D 05 budgets that were opened during the interim process extending RCA budgets to D 02 budgets.

At this time there are no plans to enroll RCA or RMA recipients into the Semi-Annual Renewal, however, this policy is still being reviewed. If it is determined that a change is needed, additional information will be provided.

# NEXT STEPS

1. Share this Ops Memo and Attachments with appropriate staff.

1. Questions about this Memorandum can be directed to the Refugee Resettlement Program at [RA-PWREFUGEEPROGRAM@pa.gov](mailto:RA-PWREFUGEEPROGRAM@pa.gov).
2. This Ops Memo becomes obsolete once system changes have been made.

# ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: [Dear Colleague Letter 22-12, Expansion of the Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medical Assistance Eligibility Period](https://pagov.sharepoint.com/sites/DHS-OIM/Attachments/Attachment%20A%20-%20Dear%20Colleague%20Letter%2022-12%20Expansion%20of%20the%20Refugee%20Cash%20Assistance%20and%20Refugee%20MA%20Eligibility%20Period.pdf)

Attachment B: [RCA/RMA Extension Manual Notice Text](https://pagov.sharepoint.com/sites/DHS-OIM/Attachments/Attachment%20B%20-%20Refugee%20Cash%20Assistance%20(RCA)%20and%20Refugee%20Medical%20Assistance%20(RMA)%20Extension%20Manual%20Notice%20Text.docx)

Attachment C: [Procedure to Process RCA Extension](https://pagov.sharepoint.com/sites/DHS-OIM/Attachments/Attachment%20C%20-%20Procedure%20to%20Process%20Refugee%20Cash%20Assistance%20(RCA)%20Extension.docx)