

**DATE:** December 20, 2023

**OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM #23-12-02**

**SUBJECT:** Expanding Income Disregards for Refugee Cash Assistance

**TO:** Executive Directors

**FROM:** Robert Hixson  
Director  
Bureau of Operations

**PURPOSE**

To inform County Assistance Offices (CAOs) of expanded income disregards for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) published by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in [Policy Letter \(PL\) 23-04 Expanding Income Disregards for Refugee Cash Assistance](#).

**BACKGROUND**

ORR-eligible populations are provided cash assistance by Voluntary Agency/Resettlement Agencies (VOLAGs/RAs) during the first 90 days. This is referred to as Reception and Placement (R&P) money. Current policy in Supplemental Handbook (SHB) 730.4 states that the CAO will not deem income received from the VOLAG/RA to determine the refugee's eligibility for RCA.

Private refugee sponsorship organizations, such as [Welcome Corps](#), provide R&P-like cash grants to newly resettled individuals and families.

**DISCUSSION**

Per PL 23-04, ORR has determined that cash grants provided by private sponsorship organizations are equivalent to R&P money. For income eligibility determinations for RCA, the CAO must disregard the cash from a private sponsorship organization the same as they would disregard R&P cash grants from VOLAG/RAs.

ORR populations who will have R&P money, R&P-like cash grants, and federal initiatives disregarded are:

- Refugees
- Afghan Humanitarian Parolees welcomed through the Operation Allies Welcome Program

- Special Immigrant Visa holders from Iraq and Afghanistan
- Certain Amerasians

**NOTE:** ORR populations who are *not* eligible to have cash grants disregarded through this Ops Memo due to not arriving through a VOLAG/RA R&P or qualifying private sponsorship models include:

- Asylees
- Cuban/Haitian Entrants
- Victims of Human Trafficking
- Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees
- Other ORR populations who are not eligible for initial resettlement services

## **PROCEDURE**

When an eligible individual notifies the CAO that he/she has received R&P money from their VOLAG/RA or private sponsor organization the CAO staff will proceed as follows:

1. The CAO will transmit the PA 1987 (Refugee Cash Assistance Disregard Verification Form) via secure email, secure fax, or mail (include postage paid envelope) to the VOLAG/RA or private sponsor organization.
2. The CAO will inform the VOLAG/RA or private sponsor organization of the due date of the form. This due date is 15 days from the day the CAO transmits the form.
3. Upon return of the completed form, CAO staff must confirm that the resettlement organization qualifies by:
  - a. Ensuring that the VOLAG/RA is listed in [SHB 730 Appendix A](#). If listed, the cash grant will be disregarded for RCA.  
Emailing the Refugee Resource Account [RA-PWREFUGEEPROGRAM@pa.gov](mailto:RA-PWREFUGEEPROGRAM@pa.gov) to request verification that the private sponsor organization is eligible to assist individuals. If verified, the cash grant will be disregarded for RCA.
4. If the form is not returned, in 15 days or VOLAG/RA or private sponsor organization is not verified, the CAO must count the cash grant as income.
5. The CAO will narrate all actions taken.

**Example 1:** A single individual from Eritrea is resettled and applies for RCA benefits on 11/12/2023. Church World Service (CWS) is the resettlement agency responsible for their R&P. **note:** the organization is either listed in the supplemental handbook or verified via the resource account. The CAO sends the Refugee Cash Assistance Verification Disregard form to CWS on 11/15/2023 with a due date of 11/30/2023.

The CAO receives the completed form 11/28/2023 and it indicates the R&P amount of \$1000 for the first 3 months. The CAO disregards the total R&P money when determining RCA eligibility. The CAO authorizes RCA as of 11/12/2023.

**Example 2:** A single individual from Syria is resettled and applies for RCA benefits on 10/15/2023. A group from a local church is the private sponsorship organization responsible for their R&P. **note:** the organization is either listed in the supplemental handbook or verified via the resource account. The CAO sends the Refugee Cash Assistance Verification Disregard form to the church group's representative on 10/16/2023 with a due date of 10/31/2023. The CAO receives the completed form 10/28/2023 and it indicates the R&P amount of \$1000 for the first 3 months. The CAO disregards the total R&P money when determining RCA eligibility. The CAO authorizes RCA as of 10/15/2023.

## **NEXT STEPS**

1. Review this Operational Memorandum and Attachments with appropriate staff.
2. Direct questions regarding this Operations Memorandum to your Area Manager.
3. For responses to questions, email the Refugee Resettlement Program Resource Account at [RA-PWREFUGEEPROGRAM@pa.gov](mailto:RA-PWREFUGEEPROGRAM@pa.gov).

## **ATTACHMENT**

**[Refugee Cash Assistance Disregard Verification Form](#)**