



Pennsylvania
Department of Human Services

DATE: July 21, 2026

OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM #26-07-02

SUBJECT: Valid Alien Number (A Number) or Alternative Identifier Now Required at Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) Application

TO: Executive Directors

FROM: Robert Hixson
Director
Bureau of Operations

PURPOSE

To inform County Assistance Offices (CAOs) of updated RCA and RMA eligibility requirements at application.

SUMMARY AND CHANGE

Old Policy	New Policy
Noncitizen applicants are required to provide documentation from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) verifying a refugee or qualifying Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) eligible status.	Noncitizen applicants are required to provide documentation from the USCIS verifying a refugee or qualifying ORR eligible status. Noncitizen applicants must now also provide their A Number or Alternative Identifier to be eligible for RCA and RMA.

BACKGROUND

Eligibility requires acceptable documentation of an ORR-eligible status, identity, date of entry, and for certain parolee or entrant categories, nationality.

DISCUSSION

Under [ORR 16-01 – Status and Documentation Requirements for the ORR Refugee Resettlement Program](#) guidance, applicants must now provide an A Number or Alternative Identifier to receive RCA and RMA. These benefits cannot be authorized without one.

This requirement does *not* apply to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or Medical Assistance (MA) eligibility.

NOTE: The CAO must determine eligibility for TANF and/or federally funded MA prior to determining eligibility for RCA and/or RMA.

PROCEDURES

Effective April 2, 2026, Income Maintenance Caseworkers must request the applicant's A Number at application when determining RCA or RMA eligibility. Review the provided documentation of immigration status and retain a copy.

NOTE: See [Attachment 1: A Numbers and How to Identify Them](#) for guidance on locating the A Number on immigration documents.

If the documentation provided supports the claimed status and includes an A Number, continue to seek other required eligibility verifications and process eligibility.

If the A Number is missing, send a request for verification to obtain one and pend the case. Retain the documentation once provided.

If the applicant states that they cannot obtain an A Number or presents a 15-digit Alternative Identifier, contact the [Bureau of Employment \(BEP\) Refugee Unit's Resource Account](#) (RA-HSRefugeeProgram@pa.gov) to submit a request to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to assign a 12-digit Alternative Identifier.

NOTE: ACF no longer assigns 15-digit Alternative Identifiers. ACF now only assigns 12-digit Alternative Identifiers.

When submitting a request to the BEP Refugee Unit, include the following applicant information:

- Subject Line: Alien Number Help
- Email Body to include:
 - Name of Applicant
 - Date of Birth
 - Date of Entry
 - Non-citizenship status (e.g. refugee, asylee, Special Immigrant Visa Holder, Cuban Haitian Entrant, etc.)
 - Case Record Number

Pend the case until an Alternative Identifier is provided by ACF that can be used in lieu of an A Number on the noncitizen screen or until the original pending period ends. When an A Number cannot be provided by the applicant and an Alternative Identifier is not provided by ACF, the application must be rejected.

If an Alternative Identifier is provided by ACF and other eligibility criteria are met, open the case and inform the recipient that after 30 days of using a 12-digit Alternative Identifier, they must update it with an A Number. If an A Number is not provided within 30 days, ACF may grant an extension of the Alternative Identifier to the RCA/RMA recipient. If, prior to the end of the 30-day period the A Number is not received or verification of an extension of the Alternative Identifier is not received from the BEP Refugee Unit, the CAO must provide advance notice and close the case.

Once the RCA/RMA recipient transitions from an Alternative Identifier to an A Number and the A Number is updated in the case, you must notify the BEP Refugee Unit by emailing RA-HSRefugeeProgram@pa.gov.

If the A Number documentation is available but status cannot be fully confirmed by the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) system, as indicated by a request for documents by the US Department of Homeland Security SAVE reviewer, the CAO should determine eligibility for benefits while following all steps for verification through SAVE.

NEXT STEPS

1. Share and review this Operations Memorandum (Ops Memo) with appropriate staff.
2. Direct questions on this Ops Memo to your Area Manager.
3. Any additional questions can be sent to RA-HSRefugeeProgram@pa.gov.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1: [A Numbers and How to Identify Them](#)