



Pennsylvania
Department of Human Services

DATE: October 1, 2026

OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM #26-10-01

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

TO: Executive Directors

FROM: Robert Hixson
Director
Bureau of Operations

PURPOSE

To inform County Assistance Offices (CAOs) that RCA and RMA time limits changed on July 14, 2026, for new refugee entrants to the United States.

SUMMARY AND CHANGE

Old Policy	New Policy
Eligible refugee entrants arriving from May 5, 2025 to December 31, 2025 were afforded four months of RCA and RMA in a lifetime.	Eligible refugee entrants whose date of eligibility for Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) benefits is on or after January 1, 2026, are to be afforded up to eight months of RCA and RMA in a lifetime.

BACKGROUND

On July 14, 2026, the Administration for Children and Families, ORR, released Federal Register Notice 2026-14095 Change in Eligibility Period for Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medical Assistance ([Attachment A](#)). This policy notice announced the extension of the eligibility period for RCA and RMA, from four months to eight months.

DISCUSSION

Effective July 14, 2026, qualifying ORR-eligible individuals with a date of entry on or after January 1, 2026, may be eligible for RCA and RMA for up to eight months. This extended eligibility period remains in effect until a future time as determined by the ORR Director.

ORR-eligible individuals that arrive on or after January 1, 2026, are under the new eight-month refugee eligibility period. They may receive refugee assistance during their first eight months of entry. Their RCA begins with their date of application and ends no later than eight months from their date of entry. Their RMA begins with their date of application or the date of retroactive-Medical Assistance and ends no later than eight months from their date of entry.

ORR-eligible individuals who are in an eligibility period granting fewer than eight months of RCA or RMA because the eligibility period was previously limited to four months, will have their eligibility period extended via a special project and no direct action is required.

ORR-eligible individuals whose RCA or RMA benefits were closed after the four-month eligibility period may submit a PA 600 to request additional months of assistance, up to the eight-month maximum from their date of entry.

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 Trafficking Certification or Eligibility letter certifying victim of trafficking or victim of torture status.

NEXT STEPS

1. Share this Ops Memo and Attachments with appropriate staff.
2. Questions about this Memorandum can be directed to the Refugee Resettlement Program at RA-PWREFUGEEPROGRAM@pa.gov.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: [Federal Register Notice: Change in Eligibility Period for Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medical Assistance](#)