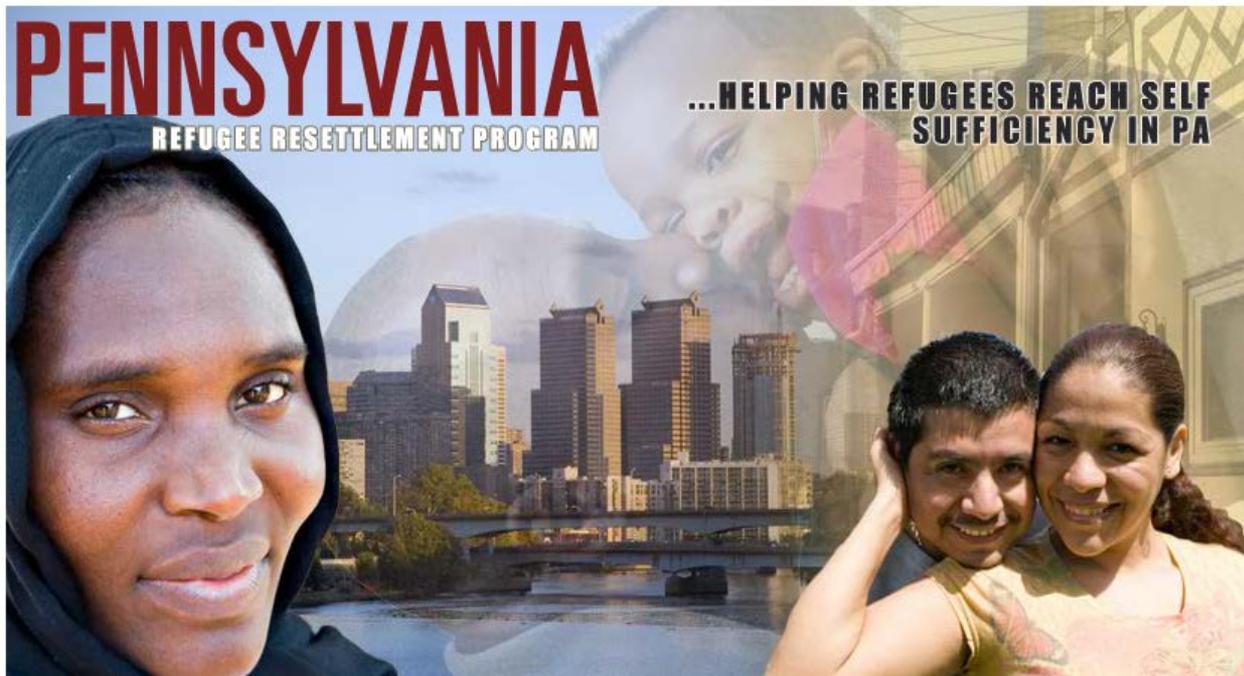


# Refugee Assistance Programs



## Policies and Process

## **Expected Outcome:**

This workshop serves to explain the public benefits available to refugee and qualifying immigrant populations in Pennsylvania.



Upon completion you will:

- Know what benefits are available
- Understand program time limits and process time tables
- How to best advocate for clients
- What role PA's Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP) plays in benefit administration
- Identify other resources to assist refugee clients

This workshop focuses on the administration of the Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) programs, including time-limits and criteria for determining refugee status. We will also touch on other benefits available via the Department Human Services (DHS) and provide information on how to best assist refugee families.

Refugees are individuals that are forced to flee their homeland and are unable or unwilling to return due to a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

There are approximately 15 million refugees in the world. In most cases, it is hoped that the refugee can eventually return to his/her homeland or integrate into the country to which he/she fled, but this is not always possible. Countries such as the U.S. allow certain refugees the opportunity to resettle within their borders.

# What would you do?



According to the Welcome to America Project website ([www.wtap.org](http://www.wtap.org)) “Refugee families usually have only a few moments to flee their homes in a time of conflict. What would you take if you only had 10 minutes left in your home?”

# Identifying Refugee Status



Refugee status is a form of protection that may be granted to people who meet the definition of a refugee.



To qualify for RCA and RMA, individuals must provide proof of qualifying immigrant status in the form of documentation issued by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

- Paroled as a refugee or asylee under Section 212(d)(5) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)
- Admitted as a refugee under Section 207 of the INA
- Granted asylum under Section 208 of the INA
- Cuban and Haitian Entrants

- Certain Amerasians
- Foreign-born victims of human trafficking
- Iraqis and Afghans with “Special Immigration Visas” (SIV)
- Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) who previously held one of the above forms of immigrant status

Immigration Category	Verification Document
<p>Refugees</p> <p>SAVE COA codes: RE1, RE2, RE3, RE4, RE5, RE6, RE7, RE8, or RE9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record or passport stamped “...admitted under section 207 of the INA...” or any of the following admission codes: RE1, RE2, RE3, RE4, RE5, Visa 93 or V93;</li> <li>• Form I-688B or I-766 Employment Authorization Document (EAD) coded 274a.12(a)(3) or A03;</li> <li>• Refugee Travel Document (USCIS Form I-571);</li> <li>• Form I-551 with category codes RE6, RE7, RE8 or RE9;</li> <li>• Foreign passport stamped to show unexpired, temporary evidence of Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) or “I-551” status and codes RE6, RE7, RE8 or RE9</li> </ul>

Immigration Category	Verification Document
<p>Asylees</p> <p>SAVE COA codes: AS1, AS2, AS3, AS6, AS7, AS8, GA6, GA7, or GA8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form I-94 or passport referencing “...section 208 of the INA...” or coded AS1, AS2, AS3, Visa 92 or V92;</li> <li>• Order granting asylum under section 208 of the INA issued by the USCIS Asylum Office, an Immigration Judge, the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA), or a Federal court;</li> <li>• Form I-688B or I-766 EAD coded 274a.12(a)(5) or A05;</li> <li>• Refugee Travel Document (USCIS Form I-571);</li> <li>• I-730 Approval Letter from USCIS Asylum Office;</li> <li>• Form I-551 with category codes AS6, AS7, AS8, GA6, GA7, or GA8;</li> <li>• Foreign passport stamped to show unexpired, temporary evidence of Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) or “I-551” status and codes AS6, AS7, or AS8</li> </ul>

Immigration Category	Verification Document
<p><b>Amerasians</b></p> <p>Certain Amerasians from Vietnam who are admitted to the U.S. as immigrants pursuant to section 584 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1988 (as contained in section 101(e) of Public Law 100-202 and amended by the 9th proviso under Migration and Refugee Assistance in title II of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Acts, 1989 (Public Law 100-461 as amended))</p> <p>SAVE COA codes: AM1, AM2, AM3, AM6, AM7, or AM8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form I-94 with any of the following admission codes: AM1, AM2, or AM3;</li> <li>• Form I-551 (Permanent Resident Card) with adjustment code: AM6, AM7, or AM8;</li> <li>• Vietnamese Exit Visa with codes AM1, AM2, or AM3 and/or “temporary I-551” stamp;</li> <li>• Vietnamese Exit Visa with codes AM1, AM2, or AM3 and/or “temporary I-551” stamp;</li> <li>• Vietnamese passport with codes AM1, AM2, or AM3 and/or “temporary I-551” stamp;</li> <li>• U.S. passport with codes AM1, AM2, or AM3</li> </ul>

Immigration Category	Verification Document
<p>Iraqi and Afghani Special Immigrant Visa Holders (SIV)</p> <p>SAVE COA codes: SI1, SI2, SI3, SI6, SI7, SI9, SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, SQ6, SQ7, or SQ9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iraq or Afghanistan national with I-94 marked SI1, SI2, SI3, SQ1, SQ2, or SQ3;</li> <li>• Iraq or Afghanistan national with Iraqi or Afghan passport with an immigrant visa stamp and code SI1, SI2, SI3, SI6, SI7, SI9, SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, SQ6, SQ7, or SQ9;</li> <li>• Iraq or Afghanistan national with form I-551 with a category code of SI6, SI7, SI9, SQ6, SQ7, or SQ9</li> </ul>

Immigration Category	Verification Document
<p><b>Cuban/Haitian Entrants</b></p> <p>In accordance with requirements in 45 CFR part 401.</p> <p>Some common SAVE COA codes (must be Cuban or Haitian): A04, A10, C08, C10, C11, CH6, HA6, or HB6</p> <p>Contact <a href="mailto:RA-HSRefugeeProgram@pa.gov">RA-HSRefugeeProgram@pa.gov</a> for assistance determining if a person meets one of the categories if you are unsure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form I-94 with a stamp indicating “parole as Cuban/Haitian entrant (Status Pending)”, “EWI”, or any other notation indicating “parole” and referring to section 212(d)(5) of the INA after April 21, 1980;</li> <li>• A Cuban or Haitian passport with a Section 212(d)(5) stamp dated after October 10, 1980;</li> <li>• USCIS (or receipt of filing) Form I-122, I-220A, I-221, I-221S, I-485 (date stamped by the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR)), I-589 (receipt from USCIS or form date stamped by EOIR), or I-862;</li> <li>• Form I-688B or I-766 EAD coded 274a.12(a)(4), 274a.12(a)(10), 274a.12(c)(8), 274a.12(c)(10), 274a.12(c)(11), A04, A10, C08, C10, or C11;</li> <li>• Form EOIR-26 or other applications for relief that have been date stamped by the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR)</li> <li>• Form I-551 with category codes CH6, HA6, or HB6</li> </ul> <p>*For Federal reporting purposes, please e-mail copies of documentation presented by anyone from Cuba or Haiti to <a href="mailto:RA-HSRefugeeProgram@pa.gov">RA-HSRefugeeProgram@pa.gov</a></p>

Immigration Category	Verification Document
<p>Paroled as Refugee</p> <p><b>Must</b> be paroled as a refugee or asylee under section 212(d)(5) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Form I-94 indicating paroled as a refugee under section 212(d)(5) of the INA</li></ul>

Immigration Category	Verification Document
<p data-bbox="123 368 625 408">Victims of Human Trafficking</p> <p data-bbox="123 544 795 615">No SAVE COA codes Available for Victims of Human Trafficking.</p> <p data-bbox="123 654 834 758">Contact <a href="mailto:RA-HSRefugeeProgram@pa.gov">RA-HSRefugeeProgram@pa.gov</a> for assistance determining if a person meets the criteria if you are unsure.</p>	<ul data-bbox="865 429 1773 758" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="865 429 1773 501">• Notarized letter from ACF/Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP) certifying victim of severe form of trafficking status;</li><li data-bbox="865 558 1773 672">• If the victim is a child, a letter from ACF/Division of Anti-trafficking in Persons (ATIP) stating that the child is a victim of a severe form of trafficking; or</li><li data-bbox="865 729 1528 758">• Derivative T Visa marked T-2, T-3, T-4, or T-5.</li></ul>

Immigration Category	Verification Document
<p><b>Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR)</b></p> <p>Who previously held one of the above kinds of immigration statuses with the appropriate codes.</p> <p>Note: For T Visa individuals who adjust status to LPR SAVE COA codes are:</p> <p>ST6    Victim of a Severe Form of Trafficking            ST7    Spouse of a ST6            ST8    Child of a Victim of a ST6            ST0    Parent of a Victim of a ST6            ST9    Sibling of a Victim of a ST6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="865 592 1168 621">• I-551/Green Card</li> </ul>

A SAVE request must be completed for every refugee applicant, however a SAVE return in lieu of an I-94 for RCA/RMA benefits is not sufficient. Collateral contact from the resettlement agency assuring status is also not sufficient as per the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).

If the applicant is missing their I-94 they should contact the Department of Homeland Security for assistance in obtaining a copy of the I-94.

CAOs must not authorize RCA/RMA without proper verification.

# SAVE Initial Verification Results

**U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services**  
**WEB-3 Case Details**

Case Verification Number: 2010123456789HGV

**Initial Verification**

<b>Alien Number:</b>	123456789	<b>Benefits:</b>	Food Stamps Medicaid
<b>I-94 Number:</b>		<b>Citizenship Cert. Number:</b>	
<b>Card Number:</b>		<b>SEVIS ID:</b>	
<b>Naturalization Number:</b>		<b>Document Exp. Date:</b>	07/10/2022
<b>Visa Number:</b>		<b>Other Document Desc:</b>	I-94
<b>Passport Number:</b>		<b>First Name:</b>	JOHN
<b>Country of Issuance:</b>	Other	<b>Date of Birth:</b>	01/01/1928
<b>Document Type:</b>	Other	<b>Initiated On:</b>	06/07/2013
<b>Last Name:</b>	JONES		
<b>Middle Name:</b>			
<b>Initiated By:</b>			

**Initial Verification Results**

<b>Last Name:</b>	JONES	<b>First Name:</b>	JOHN
<b>Middle Name:</b>		<b>COA Code:</b>	RE6
<b>Country:</b>	BHUTA - Bhutan	<b>Date of Birth:</b>	01/01/1928
<b>Date of Entry:</b>	04/06/2011	<b>Date Admitted To:</b>	INDEFINITE
<b>EAD Expiration Date:</b>		<b>Grant Date:</b>	
<b>System Response:</b>	LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENT-EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZED		

[Print Case Details](#) | [Request Additional Verification](#) | [Complete and Close Case](#)

\* = required entry

**The COA Code is used to determine the U.S. entry status**



When attempting to verify Cuban Entrant or Cuban Parolee status, SAVE requests return the Initial Verification Results with the following: “System Response: NON-IMMIGRANT”

Eligibility workers should request a secondary verification of the case through SAVE, using the Form G-845.

USCIS web site has the most updated form and instructions available as well: <https://www.uscis.gov/g-845>

# General Benefits



Refugee Cash and Medical Assistance

In addition to refugee specific assistance programs, refugees and other qualifying immigrants may be eligible for the following programs administered by DHS:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)  
Medicaid/Medical Assistance (MA)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Cash
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)
- Family Planning Services
- Long Term Care (nursing home care)
- Home and Community Based Services (waiver services)
- Special Allowances for approved Employment and Training programs

SNAP, the new name for the **Food Stamp program**, offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) works with state agencies, nutrition educators, and neighborhood and faith-based organizations to ensure that those eligible for nutrition assistance can make informed decisions about

applying for the program and can access benefits. FNS also works with state partners and the retail community to improve program administration and ensure program integrity.



Medicaid is a health and long-term care coverage program that was enacted in 1965. Pennsylvania has expanded coverage to low-income adults.

There are many different types of Medical Assistance programs in Pennsylvania that have a variety of eligibility requirements.

- Affordable Care Act / Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI)
- Health Care Services/Benefits for Pregnant Women, Families and Children
- Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities (MAWD)
- Medicare Buy-In Assistance
- Medical Assistance for Children with Special Needs

The **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** program is designed to help needy families achieve self-sufficiency. States receive block grants to design and operate programs that accomplish one of the purposes of the TANF program.

The four purposes of the TANF program are to:

- Provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes
- Reduce the dependency of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work and marriage
- Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families



Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program

This is a seasonal program and is subject to yearly changes in amounts, income limits, and date changes.

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, also known as LIHEAP, helps low-income families pay their heating bills. LIHEAP is a grant that offers assistance in the form of a cash grant, sent directly to the utility company, or a crisis grant for households in immediate danger of being without heat.

Previously SelectPlan for Women, PA offers Family Planning Services for both men and women. This coverage is available to those who are not eligible for any other Medical Assistance programs and be at or below 215% FPL using MAGI eligibility rules. This program is not for pregnant women. It offers free and confidential family planning services for men and women that are co-pay exempt.

- Medical history and physical exam
- Family planning counseling and coordination of care
- Limited pharmacy services, including birth control supplies and medication, vaccines and supplies to prevent and treat sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and infections
- Limited laboratory services including testing for STDs, HIV, anemia and sickle cell disease
- Cervical and testicular cancer prevention and screening



Long Term Care (LTC) services include both Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) and LTC Facility Services. A person who has a medical need for LTC services may choose which program to participate in. If a person applies for medical assistance and payment of LTC services, they must also meet the non-financial and financial medical assistance eligibility requirements.



Qualifying TANF Refugees are eligible to receive all Special Allowances for supportive services (SPALs) that other TANF clients are eligible to receive to remove barriers to employment and to participate in employment and training activities. They are funded from TANF funds and follow TANF guidelines.

Qualifying RCA recipients are eligible to receive the same types of SPALs from the CAO that TANF clients are eligible to receive to remove barriers to employment and to participate in employment and training activities with an ORR-funded refugee employment provider.

# Defining Refugee Assistance



Refugee Cash and Medical Assistance

RCA is a cash benefit, entirely federally-funded and administered by states or other designated entities. In Pennsylvania, RCA is modeled after TANF and administered by CAOs with guidance from the PA Refugee Resettlement Program (PA RRP) under the Department of Human Services (DHS), Bureau of Policy, Division of Employment and Training.



RCA provides cash assistance to qualifying refugees who do not meet TANF criteria. RCA cash payment amounts mirrors that of the TANF program and requires non-exempt refugees to take part in employment and training activities via refugee employment providers.

RCA benefits are available for *8 months* beginning with the individual's date of entry\* into the United States as a refugee.

RMA is an entirely federally-funded program.

In Pennsylvania, RMA provides the same level of benefit as Medicaid and is considered part of the Pennsylvania Medicaid program, though it is funded differently.

RMA provides basic health care to those recently-arrived who do not qualify for other federally-funded Medicaid programs in order to encourage their rapid move toward economic self-sufficiency.

RMA benefits are available for *8 months* beginning with the individual's date of entry\* into the United States as a refugee.

For refugees, the eight month clock begins the date the refugee is admitted to the U.S. in refugee status.

For principal applicant asylees, the eight month clock begins on the date of grant of asylum.

For trafficking victims, the eight month clock begins on the date of the Trafficking Certification or Eligibility Letter issued by HHS/ACF.

How do *you* track RCA/RMA time limits?



The RCA application process officially begins on the date of application; the date the application (PA 600) is identifiable, signed in at least one location, and received by the CAO.

In most areas of the state, the refugee's Voluntary Resettlement Agency (VOLAG) assists in the completion of the application for benefits (PA 600) and faxes, emails, or submits via COMPASS.

**IMPORTANT:** The CAO cannot deny an application because it is not complete, does not have a Social Security Number, or does not have all verification with it on date of application.

A voluntary resettlement agency (VOLAG/RA) provides social services, financial, and in-kind assistance to help the refugee adjust to life in the US and become self-supporting. The VOLAG/RA may use a sponsoring agency to assist with resettlement. The sponsoring agency may be an individual, church, or civic organization, or other local group or organization.

These agencies provide basic support for the first 90 days of resettlement: find housing, get basic clothing and supplies, assess employability, and assist with securing employment.



RCA/RMA applicants will need to provide verification of required non-financial and financial eligibility.

- Proof of refugee or other qualifying immigration status;
- Date of entry to the US (for asylees - date asylum was granted; for victims of trafficking - certification date); and
- Name of his/her voluntary resettlement agency (VOLAG/RA).

The VOLAG/RA may provide cash and in-kind assistance to certain selected employable refugees for up to 120 days following refugee's date of entry. These individuals are chosen by the VOLAG and are referred to as Match Grant refugees. The VOLAG or designated employment service provider may provide employment and other social services for up to 24 months.

Participants in Match Grant agree not to access cash assistance outside of Match Grant, including TANF or RCA.

# Refugee Cash Assistance



Determining Eligibility

To meet the nonfinancial eligibility requirements for RCA, a refugee must:

- Possess a qualifying immigration status;
- Have been a refugee in the U.S. less than eight months;
  - For principal applicant asylees less than eight months from date asylum is granted.
  - For trafficking victims less than eight months from the date of the Trafficking Certification or Eligibility Letter issued by HHS/ACF.
- Be a resident of Pennsylvania;



- Be ineligible for TANF benefits;
- Not be receiving SSI;
- Not have quit a job or refused a job offer within 30 days prior to application without good cause;
- Comply with employment and training requirements (enroll in employment and training activities, and participate in such activities after referral is made to refugee employment provider)

- Not be enrolled as a full-time student in higher education as an undergraduate or post-graduate (Exception: If they are a professional in need of professional refresher training or other recertification services to qualify to practice their profession in the U.S. The training must be part of their employment development plan (EDP)/AMR, under one year in duration, and specifically intended to assist the refugee becoming relicensed in their profession and if completed can realistically expect to result in relicensing.)
- Not be enrolled in the Match Grant program.

In determining RCA financial eligibility, there are special considerations to keep in mind. Reception and Placement (R & P) assistance payments are a one-time payment to refugees during the first 30 days after their arrival to the United States. These payments are made by the VOLAG on the refugee's behalf to pay expenses or issued directly to the refugee. The R&P amount is at the discretion of the VOLAG and the payments should NOT be counted when determining RCA financial eligibility.

The CAO will apply the TANF requirements and procedures contained in the [Cash Assistance Handbook 140, Resources](#) to determine the refugee's resource eligibility.

The CAO will only consider resources actually available at the time assistance is needed. The CAO will not consider resources owned by the refugee's legally responsible relative if the resource remains in the country of origin.

The CAO will consider resources actually made available from the VOLAG/RA, sponsor, or other community group.

The CAO will apply the TANF requirements and exclusions of the [Cash Assistance Handbook, Chapter 150, Income](#) to determine the refugee's income eligibility.

The CAO will NOT apply the TANF earned income incentive deduction when determining the refugee's net income. Total net monthly income, without the earned income incentive deduction, must be less than or equal to the appropriate Family Size Allowance (FSA) for the refugee to receive RCA benefits.

The CAO will not deem income from the VOLAG or sponsor to determine the refugee's eligibility for RCA.

The CAO will consider only income actually made available to the refugee.

Income of a spouse is deemed to the other spouse to determine eligibility, even if they have different entry dates.

# RCA Limits



Income and resource limits for RCA are the same as TANF limits as shown below (refer to county of residence, as well as family size for the appropriate FSA).

Group 1 (Bucks, Chester, Lancaster, Montgomery, Pike Counties)						Resource Limit: \$1000 for all households
1	2	3	4	5	6	
\$215	\$330	\$421	\$514	\$607	\$687	add \$83 for each additional person
Group 2 (Adams, Allegheny, Berks, Blair, Bradford, Butler, Centre, Columbia, Crawford, Cumberland, Dauphin, Delaware, Erie, Lackawanna, Lebanon, Lehigh, Luzerne, Lycoming, Monroe, Montour, Northampton, Philadelphia, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Union, Warren, Wayne, Westmoreland, Wyoming, York Counties)						Resource Limit: \$1000 for all households
1	2	3	4	5	6	
\$205	\$316	\$403	\$497	\$589	\$670	add \$83 for each additional person
Group 3 (Beaver, Cameron, Carbon, Clinton, Elk, Franklin, Indiana, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Mifflin, Perry, Potter, Snyder, Tioga, Venango, Washington Counties)						Resource Limit: \$1000 for all households
1	2	3	4	5	6	
\$195	\$305	\$393	\$479	\$569	\$647	add \$83 for each additional person
Group 4 (Armstrong, Bedford, Cambria, Clarion, Clearfield, Fayette, Forest, Fulton, Greene, Huntingdon, Jefferson, Juniata, Northumberland, Schuylkill, Somerset Counties)						Resource Limit: \$1000 for all households
1	2	3	4	5	6	
\$174	\$279	\$365	\$454	\$543	\$614	add \$83 for each additional person

For more detailed information on excluded income and resources refer to [Cash Assistance Handbook Chapter 150: Income](#) and [Cash Assistance Handbook Chapter 140: Resources](#).

An RCA household can consist of:

An unmarried refugee 18 years (not enrolled in high school) or older;

A married refugee whose spouse has not yet been resettled in the US;

A married refugee and his or her spouse.

The households listed above are independent of each other even if they live in the same household and would form their own grant group.

A refugee is not eligible to receive RCA if they have been in the U.S. more than eight months (or date of asylum/certificate of trafficking victim exceeds eight months).

A refugee is not eligible to receive RCA if:

- they are eligible for TANF benefits;
- they are eligible for SSI;
- they are a full-time student enrolled in an institution of higher education.

Once a cash application is received by the CAO, the CAO must screen each application before the application interview. The screening interview may be done face-to-face, by telephone, or by mail. It is utilized to gather incomplete information and make the client aware of pending verification to facilitate timely processing.

The CAO will determine expedited SNAP eligibility within five days from the date the application is received, as well as whether it is a potential RCA or TANF application and route the application appropriately.

**NOTE: A face-to-face interview for RCA applicants must be scheduled within 13 calendar days from the date of application.**

Pending verification should be made due the same day as the face-to-face application interview, but can be received prior to the close of business on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of a pending application.

An AMR must be completed during the face-to-face application interview and a referral made to a refugee employment provider if the refugee is non-exempt. A copy of the AMR should be given to the client, as well as faxed or emailed to the refugee employment provider.



**NOTE: If a refugee is exempted from employment requirements (65 or older (elderly), blind, or is an individual with a disability) the CAO MUST refer them to the disability advocacy program process and Social Security Administration to apply for SSI benefits.**



What process does your office use to ensure payments are accurate and reimbursed properly?

How does your agency meet these timeframes?

What are some best practices?

During the RCA application interview, the CAO must:

- Review the information on the paper or online (COMPASS) application and update/clarify any unclear/incomplete information.
- Refer any person who does not have a Social Security Number (SSN) to the Social Security Administration (SSA) if they have not already been to the Social Security Office.

- Explain basic program requirements and procedures based on household composition and situation.
- Determine who is a part of the RCA budget group.
- Review rights and responsibilities making sure they are understood and a copy is given, highlighting agency conference requests and the right to appeal decisions made by the CAO.

- Review reporting requirements making sure they are understood and a copy is given.
- If applicable, explain support cooperation and requirements; this would pertain to spousal support/alimony only or ~~back~~ child support.
- Explain good cause.

- Explain special allowances (SPALs): types, eligibility requirements, and limits
- Explain and complete the AMR (PA 1661) with the client
- Clearly explain time-limit for RCA benefits
- Review agreement penalties with client and sanctioning process for RCA.

By the conclusion of the RCA Application Interview, the client should know:

- What the next steps are after leaving the CAO
- What verification and forms are necessary to authorized cash benefits (RCA or TANF)
- When the cash assistance will start once verification is received

- How much the monthly benefit (cash and/or SNAP) will be ongoing, and an estimate of benefit proration for initial authorization
- How to use the EBT card to access benefits
- Where/when/how/who to report to if mandatory to participate with a refugee employment provider
- Where community agencies are located, how to contact the CAO caseworker if needed

The CAO will authorize RCA benefits as it would any other client receiving TANF cash assistance.

The category designation for RCA is “D”.

The CAO will assign program status code 02 to a budget which contains only refugees.

All refugees included in the budget must meet the requirements for the refugee code and have the same date of entry into the US. If refugees living together and otherwise eligible for RCA benefits together entered the U.S. on different dates, the CAO must establish separate budgets based on the date of entry.

The CAO will authorize category D and create an alert to review continued eligibility before the RCA time period ends. The refugee is assigned to cash qualification code 13 (*RRP – Refugee in first 8 months from date of entry*) during the period they receive RCA. The CAO will apply the TANF requirements to compute monthly assistance payment.

The CAO will use the date of application as the date refugee cash assistance begins, **but not to exceed eight months from:**

- The date of entry for refugees; or
- The date of grant status for asylees; or
- The date of certification/eligibility letter for trafficking victims

Individuals or households receiving RCA will receive the maximum FSA depending on household size. Spouse households share an FSA unless they have different dates of entry.

When the CAO authorizes RCA, an alert is automatically set from the date of entry for exactly eight months.

If RCA is to close due to time-limited benefit expiring, CAO must take action on the alert at 15 days remaining on the alert to close RCA timely and send advance notice.

If RCA is to close due to income, the income should be verified via initial pay stub, collateral contact with employer/refugee employment provider or via Equifax.

The CAO will provide the same notices to the refugee as it provides to any other client. See Chapter 177 of the Cash Assistance and Chapter 377 of the Medical Assistance Eligibility Handbooks for more information on notices.

When RCA benefits are denied, authorized, changed, or discontinued, the CAO will clearly state on the notice that the decision applies to the eligibility for Refugee Assistance.

If the CAO determines that a refugee is ineligible for TANF benefits but is eligible for RCA, the notice must explain both decisions.

Refugees coming to the United States leave behind familiar lives and their normal cultural understanding. Upon arrival, they experience an entirely new culture, political system, and language. In order to have a successful relationship with refugee clients, caseworkers should keep the following things in mind...



- Refugees may need access to interpretation and translation services. Ensure that you know where and how to access these resources.
- Refugees may have very different cultural values and religious beliefs. Caseworkers should recognize this and demonstrate culturally-appropriate behavior and case management skills if required.

# Refugee Medical Assistance



Determining Eligibility

To meet the non-financial eligibility requirements for RMA, a refugee must:

- Possess a qualifying immigration status;
- Have been a refugee in the US less than eight months;
  - for principal applicant asylees less than eight months after the asylum grant date
  - for trafficking victims less than eight months after the date on the Trafficking Certification or Eligibility Letter issued by HHS/ACF
- Be a resident of Pennsylvania;

- Be ineligible for regular Medicaid programs;
- Not be enrolled as a full-time student in higher education as an undergraduate or post-graduate (Exception: If they are a professional in need of professional refresher training or other recertification services to qualify to practice their profession in the US. The training must be part of their EDP, under one year in duration, and specifically intended to assist the refugee becoming relicensed in their profession and if completed can realistically expect to result in relicensing.)
- Provide the name of his/her voluntary resettlement agency (VOLAG/RA).

RMA applicants not receiving RCA need to be financially tested. To be financially eligible for RMA, they need to meet both resource and income tests.

The CAO will apply the requirements and procedures contained in the Medical Assistance Eligibility Handbook.

In determining RMA financial eligibility, there are special considerations to keep in mind. Reception and Placement (R & P) assistance payments are a one-time payment to refugees during the first 30 days after their arrival to the United States. These payments are made by the VOLAG on the refugee's behalf to pay expenses or issued directly to the refugee. The R&P amount is at the discretion of the VOLAG and the payments should NOT be counted when determining RMA financial eligibility. Additionally, any other cash assistance payments should not be counted when determining RMA financial eligibility.

The CAO will apply the TANF-related requirements and exclusions of the [Medical Assistance Eligibility Handbook, Chapter 340, Resources](#), to determine the refugee's resource eligibility.

The CAO will not deem the resources of the VOLAG or sponsor to determine the refugee's eligibility for RMA. The CAO will consider only those resources actually made available to the refugee.

The CAO will consider resources as follows:

- Those available on the date of application. The CAO will not consider resources owned by the refugee or the refugee's legally responsible relative if the resource remains in the country of origin.
- Those actually made available from the VOLAG, sponsor, or other community group. The CAO will not consider in-kind services and shelter provided by the VOLAG or sponsor.

The CAO will apply the TANF related requirements and exclusions of the [Medical Assistance Eligibility Handbook, Chapter 350, Income](#), to determine the refugee's income eligibility.

The CAO will not deem income of the VOLAG or sponsor to determine the refugee's eligibility for RMA. The CAO will consider only the income actually made available to the refugee.

With Medicaid expansion, most refugees should qualify for regular Medicaid programs immediately after their arrival to Pennsylvania. Eligibility should be reviewed for all other Medical Assistance categories before RMA.

## Individuals may qualify for RMA:

- If they do not initially qualify for Medicaid and meet RMA eligibility criteria.
- If they lose their Medicaid coverage due to increases in earned income and have been in the U.S. for eight months or less.

Once a Medical Assistance application is received by the CAO, the CAO must screen each application. The screening interview may be done face-to-face, by telephone, or by mail. It is utilized to gather incomplete information and make the client aware of pending verification to facilitate timely processing.

The CAO will determine expedited SNAP eligibility within five days from the date the application is received, as well as whether it is a potential RCA or TANF application and route the application appropriately.

The CAO will determine the refugee's eligibility for all other Medicaid programs (e.g. Affordable Care Act, Health Care for Pregnant Women, Families and Children, Healthy Horizons, MAWD)

If the refugee does not meet any other MA categories, the CAO will determine eligibility for RMA.

If eligible for RMA, the CAO will authorize category “PC” and create an alert to receive continued eligibility before the RMA time period ends.

The program status code is 02 is assigned to a budget which continues only refugees.

The RMA time limit is determined based on the date of entry for each refugee.

When the CAO authorizes RMA, an alert is automatically set from the date of entry for exactly eight months.

If RMA is to close due to time-limited benefit expiring, CAO must take action on the alert at 15 days remaining to close RMA timely and send advance notice.

**IMPORTANT:** If a refugee on RMA receives earned income, the earnings do not affect financial eligibility for RMA.

The CAO will provide the same notices to the refugee as it provides to any other client. See Chapter 177 of the Cash Assistance and Chapter 377 of the Medical Assistance Eligibility Handbooks for more information on notices.

When RMA benefits are denied, authorized, changed, or discontinued, the CAO will clearly state on the notice that the decision applies to the eligibility for Refugee Assistance.

If the CAO determines that a refugee is ineligible for Medicaid benefits, but is eligible for RMA, the notice must explain both decision.

# Refugee ABAWD Policy



Direction on Aabled-Bodied Adults Without Dependents

On April 20, 2016, an Information Memorandum was released to provide CAOs with direction on Abled-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) refugee cases.



**INFORMATION MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** April 20, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Refugee ABAWDs

**TO:** County Assistance Offices  
Executive Directors

**FROM:** Inez Titus  
Director  
Bureau of Operations

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Information Memorandum is to provide the County Assistance Offices (CAOs) with direction on Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) refugee cases.

**BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Refugee status alone is not an ABAWD exemption. ABAWD requirements, including the ABAWD time limit, apply to refugees. However, refugees who are engaged at least halftime in refugee employability services with refugee providers are exempt from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) work requirements and time limits as 'eligible students'.

ABAWD refugees who are exempt as eligible students are not SNAP Employment and Training participants and therefore are not eligible for special allowances (SPALs) to support their halftime engagement. See Attachment 1, the [ABAWD Refugee Process](#), for detailed information on engaging ABAWD refugees with a refugee provider.

**NEXT STEPS**

1. Share and review this information with appropriate staff members.
2. Retain this Memorandum until the information is incorporated into the SNAP and Supplemental Handbooks.
3. Questions about this Memorandum can be directed to the Bureau of Policy, Division of Employment and Training Programs, at (717) 787-1302.



## ABAWD Refugee Process

### Are refugees (Citizenship Code 04) exempt from ABAWD requirements?

Refugee status alone is not an ABAWD exemption. ABAWD requirements, including the ABAWD time limit, apply to refugees. Refugees who do not meet an exemption or the work requirement have the following options to stop the ABAWD time clock:

1. **Meet** the ABAWD work requirement by:
  - **Working** 20 hours a week; 80 hours averaged monthly (SNAP Qual Code 05).
  - **Participating** in a work program (e.g. SNAP E&T) 20 hours a week; 80 hours averaged monthly. Monthly participation verification required. May be eligible for special allowances (SPALs) to support participation). (SNAP Qual Code 06)
  - **Volunteering** in community service through SNAP E&T. Community service hours are based on the household's monthly SNAP grant divided by minimum wage. May be eligible for SPALs to support participation. Ongoing participation may be verified up to six months with the Community Service Volunteer Verification form. See community service section for more details (SNAP Qual Code 07).
2. Become **exempt** from ABAWD requirements by:
  - **Becoming an 'eligible student'** through at least halftime engagement in employability services through a refugee provider (ETP Code 20, SNAP Qual Code 03). Eligibility for the ABAWD exemption is verified using the Refugee Employability Services Verification Plan form. A new form is required every six months. Monthly verification is not required; individual is not a SNAP E&T participant and, therefore, are not eligible for SPALs to support this activity.

### What is the process for refugees to engage at least halftime with a refugee provider?

The CAO should discuss this ABAWD exemption option for ABAWD refugees subject to the time limit. It should also be explained that SPALs cannot be issued to support their engagement.

If the ABAWD refugee expresses interest in engaging with a refugee provider, the CAO will:

1. Explain SPAL ineligibility
2. Provide the individual with a [Refugee Employability Services Verification Plan](#) form (attached).
3. Make a plan for the form to be completed by the refugee provider and returned within 10 days.

If verification of halftime engagement is received, the CAO will:

1. Update ETP status code to 20 and SNAP qual code to 03. This will identify the refugee as an 'eligible student' and stop the ABAWD time clock.
2. Set an alert based on the engagement end-date on the form. A new form is required at least every six months.

If the ABAWD is not interested in engaging with a refugee provider, or if verification is not received and no exemptions or work requirements are met, than the ABAWD refugee is subject to the time limit.

NOTE: There is no change in the Refugee Cash Assistance / TANF refugee process.





### **Refugee Employability Services Verification Form Instructions**

A refugee who is participating at least half-time in refugee employability services provided by a refugee resettlement agency approved or funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which is an office of the Administration for Children & Families (ACF) will be exempt from the SNAP work requirement and time limits. Half-time participation is defined as participating in ORR-funded or approved programs at least 50 percent of the total hours required per week by the SNAP program. There is no need to obtain "recognized training program" status for refugee-specific employability services through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.

This form is used to document refugee employability services enrollment for up to six months of participation at a time.

If there are any changes in enrollment status, e.g., the individual stops attending or engagement is less than half-time; the agency must report this change to the Department of Human Services within 10 days from the date the change occurred.

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Who may complete the form:</b>     | The form may be completed only by an organization or agency that is providing a refugee employability services to an applicant or recipient of SNAP. |
| <b>Who signs the form:</b>            | Only the Program Manager or equivalent, who can attest to the refugee employability services agreement, may sign this form.                          |
| <b>Form completion requirements:</b>  | The information on the form must be complete and legible. A signature by a Program Manager or equivalent is required.                                |
| <b>Reporting changes:</b>             | Complete Section IV and fax or mail to the County Assistance Office.   |
| <b>Questions regarding this form:</b> | Questions should be directed to the State Refugee Coordinator at 717-787-8608 or by email at RA-HSRefugeeProgram@pa.gov                              |

Please be aware that while non-cash refugees may be referred to refugee employment providers to fulfill the ABAWD requirement, the employment provider is not obligated to take “voluntary” recipients who are not mandatory to participate or clients who refuse job search or employment.

# Special Allowances



Removing barriers through Special Allowances

TANF Refugees are eligible to receive all SPALs from the CAO that other TANF clients are eligible to receive. They are funded from TANF funds and follow TANF guidelines.

Qualifying RCA recipients are eligible to receive the same types of SPALs from the CAO that TANF clients are eligible to receive to remove barriers to employment and to participate in employment and training activities with an ORR-funded refugee employment provider.

Medical transportation special allowances are available to any refugee receiving any type of Medicaid or RMA.

Special Allowance requests can be received by the refugee employment providers or the refugees themselves.

**NOTE: Refugees who do not receive RCA or TANF benefits are not eligible for Employment and Training SPALs while enrolled with refugee employment providers.**

The CAO will:

- Scan the *Special Allowance, SPAL, Verification Form* (PA-1883) and verification upon receipt.
- Enter complete case notes including special allowance requested, the date an oral or written request for a special allowance was made by the client or refugee employment provider to the CAO, and what activity (employment or training) it is to support or what barrier to employment it is to address.

- Authorize an allowance or deny the request with the standard timeline guidance (10 business days) that is used for all RESET SPALs.
- Provide the 162 Notice to Applicant for authorizing or denying the request and include amount that the client has used and the amount that is still available for the client to access if eligible.
- All SPAL requests must have a 162 notice completed and cannot be verbally denied if the documentation has been submitted according to procedure with a case comment completed.



Never tell a client or refugee provider the client is not eligible for a SPAL without providing a 162A, as well as narrating the action taken.

RCA Special Allowances must be issued under the RCA budget (D category); **they are NOT to be issued under the SNAP category.**

Once supervisory approval of the SPAL is secured issue the requested SPAL under a D02 budget.



# PA RRP Support



Support, Oversight, and Training

The PA Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP) offers program support to every county in Pennsylvania serving refugee populations, in addition to specific targeted counties which have specialized refugee staff.

In addition to administering the refugee assistance programs and providing funding, PA RRP reviews monthly benefit reports and contacts CAOs based on issues that may come to light regarding case processing, benefit administration, policy and procedure clarifications.

PA RRP has been busy developing RCA and RMA training that will be made available to every CAO in the state to assist with training of staff, whether they are new or just need a refresher.

In addition, PA RRP is collaborating with other Bureau of Policy staff to update the current Supplemental Handbook 730 for clarity and current federal guidelines.

PA RRP has been developing relationships and positive communication with CAOs in the commonwealth who do not have refugee specific staff on site. Our aim is to educate, inform, and build bridges to partnership so all refugee clients are best served in Pennsylvania.

PA RRP has also developed CIS and Special Allowance training for providers to facilitate access to information and advocacy. Contact our office for training opportunities.

# Resources



Contact Information and Refugee Resources

If you have questions, you may contact the Pennsylvania Refugee Resettlement Program at any time.

Charlotte Fry  
State Refugee Coordinator  
[charfry@pa.gov](mailto:charfry@pa.gov)

Frank Butcher  
Program Advisor  
[fbutcher@pa.gov](mailto:fbutcher@pa.gov)  
Pittsburgh and Erie  
(Areas 1 and 5)

Jolene Reid  
Program Advisor  
[joreid@pa.gov](mailto:joreid@pa.gov)  
Central and Northeast  
(Areas 2 and 4)

Scott Rhodes  
Program Advisor  
[srhodes@pa.gov](mailto:srhodes@pa.gov)  
Philadelphia  
(Area 3)

Pennsylvania Refugee Resettlement Resource Account:  
[RA-HSRefugeeProgram@pa.gov](mailto:RA-HSRefugeeProgram@pa.gov)

Pennsylvania Refugee Resettlement Website:  
[www.refugeesinpa.org](http://www.refugeesinpa.org)

The federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) provides new populations with the opportunity to maximize their potential in the United States.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr>

The *Welcoming Refugees* project of *Welcoming America* offers tools and support to enhance and sustain refugee resettlement in local communities. They sometimes host educational webinars such as “Refugee Economic Contributions: Making the Case and Expanding Opportunities.”

<http://www.welcomingamerica.org>

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is a government agency that oversees lawful immigration to the United States. This website provides definitions of refugees and similar populations, an overview of the refugee application process, information on refugees' work authorization and official US immigration forms.

<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>

# Test Your Knowledge



The following questions are to gauge your current understanding of refugee benefits. The information will be discussed throughout the training.

# 1. What is a VOLAG?



## 1. What is a VOLAG?



A VOLAG (also known as a Resettlement Agency or “RA”) is a Voluntary Resettlement Agency. They provide social services, financial, and in-kind assistance to help the refugee adjust to life in the U.S. and become self-supporting. The VOLAG may use a sponsoring agency to assist with resettlement. The sponsoring agency may be an individual, a church, a civil organization, or other local group or organization.

**NOTE: The CAO will consider only the income and resources actually made available to the refugee. The CAO will *not* deem income and resources from a VOLAG or sponsor to a refugee.**

## 2. When does the RCA application process begin?



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



## 2. When does the RCA application process begin?



The RCA application process begins on the date an application PA 600 is received by the County Assistance Office (CAO) via fax/email, COMPASS, or a paper form.

**NOTE: A face-to-face appointment is necessary to determine eligibility for RCA and an Agreement of Mutual Responsibility (AMR) (PA 1661) must be completed.**

**If eligible, the RCA benefit starts the date of application.**

### 3. Are RCA clients mandatory for Employment and Training Programs?



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



### 3. Are RCA clients mandatory for Employment and Training Programs?

A refugee who is not exempt from employment requirements must cooperate with the employment service provider designated to provide services to the refugee.





The CAO must:

- Enroll all non-exempt (or exempt but volunteers) refugees in Employment and Training services.
- Complete an AMR (PA 1661).

- Send an electronic referral and AMR to the designated employment service provider.
- Explain the refugees rights and responsibilities. Explain that the refugee must cooperate with the employment service provider and explain the sanctioning process which may be applied if they fail to comply without good cause.

## 4. Do some refugees qualify for TANF?



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



## 4. Do some refugees qualify for TANF?



Some refugee households may be eligible for TANF benefits. The CAO will determine if a child is present in the refugee household and if they meet the following TANF eligibility conditions:

- Age
- Living with a specified relative
- Deprived of support or care

## 5. How is the eight-month time limit determined?



## 5. How is the eight-month time limit determined?



The eight-month time limit for RCA and RMA applies to each person, not each case. The time-limit is determined by the initial date of entry with a qualifying status, not the date of application.

**NOTE:** Spouses share a Family Size Allowance (FSA) just like TANF *unless* they have a different date of entry; that is the only time spouses should have multiple RCA budgets.

**NOTE:** An individual cannot enter the U.S., leave, and return with a new I-94 and receive refugee assistance benefits from the new date of entry; only the initial date of entry with a qualifying status.

