



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

JOSH STEIN • Governor

DEVPUTTA SANGVAI • Secretary

CARLA WEST • Division Director, Human Services

July 21, 2026

Dear County Directors of Social Services

Attention: Work First Managers and Supervisors, Medicaid Managers and Supervisors

Subject: Expansion of the Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) Eligibility Period from Four (4) Months to Eight (8) Months

Priority: Information and Action Required

I. General Information

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), has expanded the eligibility period for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) from **four (4) months to eight (8) months** for ORR-eligible individuals whose date of eligibility for benefits is **on or after January 1, 2026**.

This policy change is intended to strengthen refugee resettlement efforts by providing eligible refugees and other ORR-qualified populations with additional time and support to achieve economic self-sufficiency and successfully integrate into their communities.

II. Policy

North Carolina counties shall administer Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) in accordance with federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) requirements, including the expanded eight (8)-month eligibility period for eligible refugees and other ORR-qualified populations whose date of eligibility is on or after January 1, 2026.

The expanded eligibility period applies to individuals who are not eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Medicaid and who meet all applicable ORR eligibility requirements.

III. Procedures

County staff shall implement the expanded Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) eligibility period as follows:

1. **Effective July 27, 2026**, the North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST) system will be updated to support the expanded eight (8)-month

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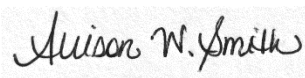
eligibility period. Following the system update, county case managers shall review all active RCA and RMA cases and complete a reassessment to determine continued eligibility under the expanded eligibility period. This review applies only to active cases.

2. Determine eligibility for RCA and RMA in accordance with applicable federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) requirements and North Carolina policy.
3. Apply the eight (8)-month eligibility period to all ORR-eligible individuals whose date of eligibility for benefits is on or after **January 1, 2026**.
4. Authorize or extend Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) for the applicable eligibility period, provided all program eligibility requirements continue to be met.
5. Inform applicants and recipients of the expanded eligibility period and their ongoing rights, responsibilities, and reporting requirements.
6. Individuals whose RCA or RMA cases have closed or terminated are not eligible for an automatic extension. These individuals must submit a new application and meet all applicable eligibility requirements to be considered for assistance under the expanded eligibility period.
7. Document all eligibility determinations, reassessments, benefit authorizations, case actions, and supporting documentation in accordance with federal, state, and county policy.

The expanded eligibility period recognizes that, while many RCA recipients obtain employment shortly after arrival, limited cash assistance and increasing housing and living costs may create barriers to achieving self-sufficiency within a four (4)-month timeframe. Extending RCA and RMA eligibility to eight (8) months provides eligible individuals with additional financial and medical support to address employment, medical, and behavioral health needs while working toward long-term economic independence.

If you have programmatic questions, contact your specific program Operational Support Specialist (OSS) and/or Continuous Quality Improvement Specialist (CQIS). For specific Refugee Cash and Refugee Medical Assistance questions please email the Refugee Assistance policy box at RefugeeAssistance.Policy.Questions@dhhs.nc.gov

Sincerely,



Allison W. Smith, Deputy Director
Division of Social Services, Economic and Family Services

AWS/smj

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