



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

JOSH STEIN • Governor

DEVPUTTA SANGVAI • Secretary

CARLA WEST • Division Director, Human Services

October 12, 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 eight (8) Months to twelve (12) Months

Priority: Information and Action Required

I. General Information

As directed by the **Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)** in DCL-26-05, the eligibility period for **Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)** and **Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA)** has been extended from eight to twelve months for individuals whose ORR benefit eligibility begins on or after **January 1, 2026**. This expansion takes effect immediately **October 1, 2026**, and is based on ORR's authority under the Refugee and implementing regulations.

II. Mandatory Policy Implementation

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) has extended the RCA and RMA eligibility period from eight (8) to twelve (12) months for individuals whose ORR eligibility date is on or after **January 1, 2026**. This change is federally mandated under DCL-26-05 and 45 CFR § 400.211, and all North Carolina counties **must implement this policy in an expeditious manner**.

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.

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

The expanded RMA eligibility period applies to individuals who are not eligible for Medicaid and who meet all applicable ORR eligibility requirements for Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA).

III. Required County Actions

Effective immediately, county departments of social services **are required to:**

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

LOCATION: 1915 Health Service Way Raleigh, NC 27616

MAILING ADDRESS: 2420 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2401

www.ncdhhs.gov • TEL: 919-527-6335 • FAX: 919-334-1018

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

1. **Apply the 12-month eligibility period** to all ORR-eligible individuals with eligibility dates on or after January 1, 2026, and who still meet eligibility requirements for RCA and RMA.
2. **Ensure full compliance with ORR eligibility rules**, including verification that individuals remain ineligible for TANF or Medicaid and meet all immigration, income, resource, and employability requirements.
3. **Implement NC FAST changes:**
 - Beginning **October 07, 2026**, counties must use updated NC FAST functionality to assess.
4. **Reassess all active RCA and RMA cases**
Case managers **must review every active case** to determine whether additional months of assistance are required.
Counties must authorize additional or retroactive benefits **only** when all eligibility criteria were continuously met.
5. **Manage closed or terminated cases correctly**
 - No automatic reinstatement is permitted.
 - Individual's whose cases have been closed must **submit a new application** and meet all current eligibility criteria.
6. **Notify clients of updated rules**
Counties **must inform, in a linguistically appropriate manner**, applicants and recipients of the expanded eligibility period and their responsibility to comply with reporting, employment, and eligibility requirements.
7. **Document all determinations and actions**
Counties must maintain **complete documentation** of eligibility determinations, reassessments, approvals, extensions, and all supporting case materials, in full accordance with federal and state policy.

Examples: The following two examples illustrate how this process may function in practice. The SRO Policy Team acknowledges the complexity of this transition, particularly given its intersection with the Medicaid implementation of HR 1 policy changes. Counties are therefore strongly encouraged to maintain regular communication with the Refugee Policy Team to ensure that no eligible individuals are improperly denied, discouraged, or left uninformed.

Example # 1

Family of 5	Age	Arrival Date	Medicaid started	Effective 10/1/26	Remaining months
Parent 1	Adult	4/17/26	4/1/26-9/30/26	RMA	10/1/2026-3/31/2026
Parent 2	Adult	4/17/26	4/1/26-9/30/26	RMA	10/1/2026-3/31/2026
Child 1	19	4/17/26	4/1/26-9/30/26	RMA	10/1/2026-3/31/2026
Child 2	10	4/17/26	4/1/26-9/30/26	Medicaid	4/1/2026-3/31/2028
Child 3	5	4/17/26	4/1/26-9/30/26	Medicaid	4/1/2026-3/31/2028

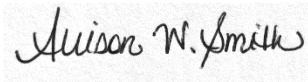
8. Example # 2

Family of 2 (married couple)	Age	Arrival Date	Medicaid started	Effective 10/1/26	Remaining months
Spouse 1	Adult	9/15/26	91/26-9/30/26	RMA	10/1/2026-8/31/2026
Spouse 2	Adult	9/15/26	91/26-9/30/26	RMA	10/1/2026-8/31/2026

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 an eight (8)-month timeframe. Extending RCA and RMA eligibility to twelve (12) 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
Economic and Family Services Section

AWS/smj

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