

69-205 A. Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) Program

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Background

Family Resource Centers (FRCs) shall determine the eligibility of refugees in the Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP) for CalWORKs or Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA). RCA is cash assistance provided to refugees who have been determined to be ineligible for CalWORKs or SSI/SSP and who have resided in the United States for no longer than the time eligibility period outlined by federal regulations, which is currently 8 months.

In San Diego County, single refugees and couples without children are served by the Wilson/Fish Alternative Project operated by Catholic Charities under direct contract with the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). As the Wilson/Fish Alternative Project does not

serve refugee families FRCs should not refer refugee families to them for services.

**RCA
Eligibility
Determination
Timeframe**

The eligibility of each RCA applicant shall be determined as promptly as possible within no more than 30 days from the date of application.

The date of application is the date to use for the beginning date of RCA. Persons receiving RCA also receive full scope Medi-Cal benefits.

Refugees who qualify for assistance under the CalWORKs program shall be aided under the CalWORKs program. Those who do not qualify for CalWORKs shall have their eligibility determined for RCA.

Note:

If the refugee refuses to provide information regarding his/her sponsor or VOLAG, FRC staff shall deny or discontinue aid.

**RCA
Eligibility
Factors**

Factors which must be evaluated when determining RCA eligibility include:

- Time Eligibility.
- Refugee Status (see [CPG 42-400 E., Eligible Non-Citizen Status](#)).
- Income and resources.
- Attendance in an institution of higher education (see [Full Time Students and RCA](#), below).
- Employment Requirements (see [CPG 10-200 A., Refugee Employment Services](#)).
- Provision of information regarding sponsor or responsible Volunteer Agency (VOLAG).

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**Persons
Ineligible for
RCA**

The following persons are not eligible for RCA:

- Families eligible for CalWORKs.
- Individuals/families whose Date of Entry is over 8 months (see [RCA Time Eligibility](#), below).
- Full-time college students (see [Full Time Students and RCA](#),

below).

- Individuals without INS Refugee Status (see [CPG 42-400 E. Eligible Non-Citizen Status](#)).
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RCA Time Eligibility

Regardless of the date an applicant applies for RCA benefits, the month of arrival (date of entry), as indicated on the USCIS Form I-94, is counted as the first month in determining time eligibility. Time eligibility for RCA recipients is currently 8 months.

RCA Income Eligibility and Aid Payments

Unless specifically superseded by RCA regulations, cash aid payments under RCA follow CalWORKs program regulations relating to financial eligibility and payments.

RCA Income Limits

Income for the RCA Program shall be determined based on CalWORKs program regulations (see CPG Section 44-100 Income) for determining need and computing the assistance payment, with the following exceptions:

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- The sponsored alien provisions in the CalWORKs program shall not be applied to RCA cases, and
 - Any reception and placement (R&P) cash received by a refugee after their arrival into the U.S. shall be exempted from consideration when determining income eligibility.
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RCA Resource Limits

RCA follows the real and personal property resource limits for CalWORKs Program (see [CPG Section 42-200 B. Property Resource Limit](#).), with the following exceptions:

- The sponsored alien provisions in the CalWORKs program shall not be applied to RCA cases, and
- Any resources remaining in the applicant's country of origin shall not be considered in determining resource eligibility.
- Any reception and placement (R&P) cash received by a refugee after their arrival into the U.S. shall be exempted from consideration when determining resource eligibility.

**Required
FRC Contact
with VOLAGs**

National voluntary agencies (VOLAGs) work with the Federal Government to assist in resettling refugees. As part of the application process for RCA, FRC staff shall:

- Notify the responsible VOLAG;
- Obtain details regarding the assistance, if any, the Sponsor or VOLAG is providing for the refugee; and
- Inquire whether the refugee has refused an offer of employment or has voluntarily quit a job.

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Contact Requirements:

- A telephone call in the absence of an in-person contact is sufficient to fulfill these requirements.
- Whenever possible, a written statement from the sponsor or VOLAG shall be obtained.
- All information received by means of an in-person contact, telephone call, or written statement shall:
 - Be made part of the case record,
 - Include the name of the VOLAG; and
 - Be documented in CalWIN Case Comments.
- When a VOLAG or sponsor requests the address and telephone number for a time-eligible refugee, FRC staff shall provide this information to the VOLAG or sponsor.

Where there is an emergency need for financial assistance, or the VOLAG fails to respond in a timely manner, these requirements shall be temporarily waived in order to meet the emergency or case approval needs.

**RCA
Sponsors**

Some applications for cash assistance may be made when the sponsor is unable or unwilling to meet the total needs of the refugee(s) for whom he/she has accepted responsibility. When this occurs, aid is to be granted in an amount sufficient to meet the unmet needs as determined by the CalWORKs standard.

If, following the loss of contact with a sponsor and subsequent to the granting of aid to the refugee, the resettlement agency secures a new sponsor for the refugee who accepts the responsibilities of sponsorship

and meets the needs of the refugee(s) in full, in accordance with the CalWORKs standard of assistance, cash assistance shall be terminated. Only if the subsequent sponsor fails to meet the full needs of the refugee will the county again grant cash assistance to the refugee.

**Provision of
SSN Info for
RCA
Applicants**

RCA applicants must apply for a social security number (SSN); however, FRC staff cannot deny an RCA applicant for failure to disclose his/her SSN. FRC staff shall follow these steps when requesting the applicant to provide a SSN:

- Inform the applicant the disclosure is voluntary;
- Advise the applicant how the SSN will be used i.e., explain IEVS process ; and
- Document the request and required explanation in CalWIN case comments.

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Note:

If the refugee household is also applying for CalFresh benefits, please refer to [CalFresh Program Guide section 63-161, Social Security Number Requirement](#), for CalFresh regulations pertaining to Social Security Number requirements for the CalFresh Program.

**Assistance
Units (AU) for
RCA**

Assistance Units (AUs) shall be established as follows:

- Refugee parents and their children under 18 years of age shall be in the same AU.
- Single adult refugees and minor refugees emancipated pursuant to state law shall each be established in their own AU.
- Married refugee couples without children shall be in the same AU.
- Unemancipated minor refugees shall not be established in their own AU.

Note:

U.S. citizen children born of a refugee and a U.S. citizen are not eligible for assistance or services funded by RRP if the household unit includes the U.S. citizen parent. In these cases, the refugee parent may be eligible for RRP funded RCA and the U.S. citizen parent and the children if eligible may be aided under the regular (non-RRP funded) CalWORKs program.

**Mandatory
SSA
Referrals**

All aged, blind or disabled refugee applicants shall be referred to the appropriate Social Security Administration District Office to apply for SS/SSP. This program is a primary resource for refugees who meet the eligibility requirements. Application for and receipt of SS/SSP is mandatory, if determined eligible.

**RCA Case File
Documentation**

RCA case files shall include the following information, in addition to that required by CalWORKs program regulations:

- The Passport or Alien Registration Number which appears on the appropriate USCIS form. This number shall be entered in the *Non-Citizen #* field of the Demographics Detail tab in the Collect Individual Demographics Detail window in CalWIN.
- The name and address of the local sponsor or voluntary resettlement agency which resettled the refugee.
- Documentation obtained from the sponsor or voluntary resettlement agency as part of the eligibility determination process.
- For each refugee in the AU, a copy of the I-94 (both front and back) and any other USCIS documentation that identifies:
 - Refugee status; and
 - Date of entry. Entry date shall also be entered in the *ORR Letter/Entry Date* field of the Collect Non-Citizen Detail window in CalWIN.

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**Full Time
Students and
RCA**

Refugees are ineligible for RCA if they are full-time students in a college program attending an institution of higher education.

A **full-time student** is a student attending an institution of higher education at least:

- 12 semester hours or 12 quarter hours for institutions using standard semester, trimester or quarter hour systems;
- 24 semester hours or 36 quarter hours for institutions using credit hours to measure progress and not using semester, trimester or quarter hour systems;
- 24 clock hours per week for institutions using clock hours;
- The program includes both credit and clock hours and the number of

credit hours per term divided by 12 plus the number of clock hours per week divided by 24 is equal to or greater than one;

- A series of courses or seminars which equal 12 semester hours or 12 quarter hours in a maximum of 18 weeks; or
- The work portion of a cooperative education program in which the amount of work performed is equivalent to the academic workload of a full-time student.

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An “**Institution of Higher Education**” is a public or private nonprofit educational institution which provides:

- An educational program which awards an associate baccalaureate degree;
- At least a two-way program which is acceptable for full credit toward a baccalaureate degree;
- At least a one-year training program which leads to a certificate or degree and prepares students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation; or
- Proprietary institution (privately owned) of higher education which provides at least a six-month program of training to prepare students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation.

**RCA for
Previous
TCVAP
Recipients**

When a **Trafficking and Crime Victims Assistance Program (TCVAP)** recipient obtains ORR certification, a determination shall be made of RCA eligibility. If all eligibility factors for RCA are met, the TCVAP case shall be discontinued and a new eligibility period for RCA shall be granted for the maximum period allowable (currently 8 months from the date of USCIS adjusted entry date).

**RCA
Notification
Requirements**

In cases of proposed action to reduce, suspend, or terminate RCA, FRC staff shall provide timely and adequate notice. FRC staff shall send or provide a written notice in English and a written translated notice, or a verbal translation of the notice to RCA recipients at least 10 days before the date the action is to become effective.

If verbal translation is needed, FRC staff shall follow procedures outlined in the Civil Rights Section [No. 3. Services to Non-English Speaking and Limited English Proficient \(LEP\) Applicants/Recipients and Individuals with Disabilities-Reasonable](#)

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[Accommodations/Modifications.](#)

**Access to
RCA
Program
Policies**

To ensure that refugees understand what they are eligible for, what is expected of them, and what protections are available to them, FRC staff shall make available to RCA applicants the written policies of the RCA program, including:

- Agency policies regarding eligibility standards;
- Duration and amount of cash assistance payments;
- Requirements for participation in services;
- Penalties for non-cooperation; and
- Client rights and responsibilities.

Clients can be referred to [CPG 19-000 D. Client Request for Information.](#)

Civil Rights

FRC staff shall follow current HHS Civil Rights policies to ensure that program information and requirements are communicated effectively for non-English speaking and limited English proficient clients. Refer to Civil Rights Section [No. 3. Services to Non-English Speaking and Limited English Proficient \(LEP\) Applicants/Recipients and Individuals with Disabilities-Reasonable Accommodations/Modifications.](#)

**Refugee
Employment
Services**

Eligibility Staff play a major role in ensuring that RCA recipients are referred timely and appropriately to the CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work (WTW)/Refugee Employment Services (RES) Program. All, non-exempt RCA recipients shall be referred to WTW/RES in accordance with [CPG 10-005 B. Overview of Eligibility Staff Responsibilities.](#)

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It is both the responsibility of eligibility and employment staff to ensure that RCA cases are assigned to the correct region/caseload number. Once referred, employment staff shall provide case management services in accordance to the policy outlined in the [CalWORKs Program Guide.](#)

Recipients participating in the RES Program are eligible to Stage 1 Child Care according to [CPG 10-010 D. Eligibility Requirements for](#)

[CalWORKs Stage 1 Child Care.](#)
