

County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) Agency (HHS) Agency (HHS)
CalWORKs Program Guide

Refugee Cash Assistance

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Revision Date:

October 1, 2022

Background:

The Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) program is cash assistance provided to refugees who have been determined to be ineligible for CalWORKs or Social Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP) and who have resided in the United States (U.S.) for no longer than the eligibility time period outlined by federal regulations, which is currently 12 months.

Purpose:

The purpose of this revision is to advise staff that the eligibility time period for RCA has been extended from 8 months to 12 months for customers with an eligibility time period start date of October 1, 2021 or later. This section has also been updated to clarify exceptions to the student eligibility rule, Semi-Annual Reporting requirements, and voluntary quit policies. In addition, this section was updated to the current format standards and processes were transferred to the new CalWORKs Processing Guide 69-205.A1.

Policy:

RCA Eligibility Requirements

Factors that must be considered when determining eligibility for RCA are:

- Eligibility Time Period
- Refugee Status
- Income and Resources
- Attendance in an institution of higher education/training requirements
- Employment Requirements (see CalWORKs Program Guide [CPG] 10-200.A Refugee Employment Services [RES])
- If applicable, RCA customers must provide the name of their sponsor or responsible Resettlement Agency (RA)
- Customers who qualify for assistance under the CalWORKs program will be aided under the CalWORKs program. Those who do not qualify for CalWORKs will have their eligibility determined for RCA

Note: RCA applicants are not subject to CalWORKs program requirements of deprivation, minor children in the home, or less than 100 hours worked in the application month.

RCA Eligibility Determination Timeframe

The eligibility of each RCA applicant will be determined as promptly as possible within no more than 30 days from the date of application. The date of application is the beginning date of RCA. Customers receiving RCA also receive full scope cash linked Medi-Cal benefits.

RCA Noncitizen Status and Eligibility Time Period

To be eligible to RCA, a customer must provide documentation issued by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) or the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) indicating a Refugee Eligible Population (REP) status. Regardless of the date an applicant applies for RCA benefits, the month of arrival/date of entry (DOE) as indicated on the USCIS document is the first month in determining eligibility.

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The eligibility time period for RCA customers is currently 12 months from the DOE/eligibility start date. For example, if a refugee customer’s DOE is January 2022 and they apply for RCA benefits in May 2022 their eligibility time period would begin in January 2022 and end on December 31, 2022. They would be eligible for RCA from the application date to the end of the 12-month period. REPs who have surpassed their eligibility time period are referred to as RCA time expired.

Note: The extension of RCA eligibility from 8 to 12 months is limited to eligible RCA customers whose eligibility time period start date is on or after October 1, 2021. RCA customers whose DOE is before October 1, 2021 are subject to the 8-month eligibility period.

REP Status	Eligibility Time Period Start Date
Paroled as a Refugee or asylee under the section 212 (d)(5) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)	DOE as indicated on USCIS documentation
Admitted as a refugee under section 207 of the INA	DOE as indicated on USCIS documentation
Granted Asylum under Section 208 of the INA	The date they are granted asylum
Victims certified by the ORR of severe forms of trafficking	Date they are certified by the ORR Eligible family members of certified trafficking victims are eligible for RCA from the date of entry into the U.S. or the date the Derivative T Visa is issued, if already present in the U.S.
Afghan Humanitarian Parolees (AHPs)	October 1, 2021 or: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If they traveled to a Safe Haven – the date they entered the community, whichever is later • If they did not travel to a Safe Haven – the DOE on USCIS documentation, whichever is later

Children born in the U.S. of refugee parents are considered time-expired based on the most recently arrived parent’s expiration date or 12 months from the child’s birth date, whichever occurs sooner. The month of arrival, as indicated on the USCIS Form I-94, or the month of birth is counted as the first month in determining time-eligibility. RCA time-expired refugees will be aided under other federal, state and/or county-funded programs, if otherwise eligible. Refugee children who have been legally adopted by U.S citizens are not eligible for RCA assistance.

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 including recurring special needs payments and Pregnancy Special Needs (PSN) payments. RCA customers are not eligible to Immediate Need payments. However, if a customer reports an emergency need for benefits, staff will speed up the process by issuing the initial grant to the customer on an immediate need basis when apparently eligible.

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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 they have 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 after the granting of aid to the refugee, the RA 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 will be terminated. Only if the subsequent sponsor fails to meet the full needs of the refugee will the refugee again be potentially eligible to cash assistance.

RCA Income

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

- The sponsorship deeming provisions in the CalWORKs program do not apply to RCA cases
- Any Reception and Placement (R&P) cash received by a refugee after their arrival into the U.S. is exempt for the RCA program

RCA Resource Limits

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

- The sponsorship deeming provisions in the CalWORKs program are not applied to RCA cases
- Any resources remaining in the customers' country of origin are not considered in determining resource eligibility
- Any R&P income treated as resources for the CalWORKs program received by a refugee after their arrival into the U.S. will be exempted from consideration when determining resource eligibility

Assistance Units (AUs) for RCA

The following individuals will be in the same AU:

- Refugee parents and their children under 18 years of age
- Married refugee couples without children

The following individuals will be in their own AU:

- Single adult refugees and minor refugees emancipated pursuant to state law (unemancipated minor refugees will 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 the Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP)/RCA benefits if the household unit includes the U.S. citizen parent. In these cases, the refugee parent may be eligible for RCA and the U.S. citizen parent and the children, if eligible, may be aided under the CalWORKs program.

Mandatory Social Security Agency (SSA) Referrals

All aged, blind, or disabled refugee applicants will be referred to the appropriate Social Security

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Administration District Office to apply for SSI/SSP. This program is a primary resource for refugees who meet the eligibility requirements. Application for and receipt of SSI/SSP is mandatory, if determined eligible.

Refugee Employment Services (RES)

All RCA recipients will be referred to the RES program within 30 days of the RCA application being approved unless exempt. Refer to CPG 10-020 *Exemptions and Good Cause* for applicable exemption and good cause criteria. Also, as a condition of continued receipt of RCA, a nonexempt customer who is employed 32 hours a week or less is required to accept part-time employment-directed services, provided that such services do not interfere with the customer's job.

Full Time Students and RCA

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

A student is considered to be full time when attending:

- 12 semester hours or 12 quarter hours for institutions using standard semester, trimester, or quarter hour systems
- 24 semester hours or 36 quarter hours per academic year 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
- A program that 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
- 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

An "Institution of Higher Education" is defined as a:

- Public or private nonprofit educational institution which provides:
 - An educational program which awards an associate, baccalaureate, graduate, or professional degree
 - At least a two-year program which is acceptable for full credit toward a baccalaureate, graduate, or professional 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
- For profit 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
- Post-secondary vocational institution which is a public or private nonprofit educational institution and provides at least a six-month program of training to prepare students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation

There are a few exceptions to the student eligibility rule. The following students would be considered eligible to RCA benefits:

- Refugees enrolled and participating in training programs offered at an institution of higher education

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on a full-time basis as part of an employability plan developed by Employment Services (ES)

- RCA customers enrolled and participating in training programs offered at an institution of higher education on less than a full-time basis as part of an employability plan developed by ES
- An employed RCA customer who was a licensed professional in their home country and in need of professional refresher training in the U.S., or other services, in order to qualify to practice their licensed profession in the U.S

Note: The training may consist of full-time attendance in a college or professional training program if the training:

- Is approved as part of the individual's employability plan as developed by ES
- Does not exceed one year (If there is no documentation available, a sworn statement will be accepted as verification)
- Is specifically intended to assist the individual in becoming relicensed in their profession and if completion can realistically be expected to result in relicensing

Voluntary Quit

As a condition of eligibility for RCA benefits, customers must have not voluntarily quit employment, or refused an offer of suitable employment, without good cause, within 30 days prior to the application date. As a condition of continued receipt of RCA, a nonexempt customer will not, without good cause, voluntarily quit employment.

Reporting Requirements

RCA customers are subject to Semi-Annual Reporting (SAR) requirements and reporting. Refer to CPG 44-270.A Semi-Annual Reporting.

Termination of Aid

RCA benefits will be discontinued under the following circumstances:

- A sponsor is meeting the full needs of the refugee or refugee family
- The customer marries a U.S. citizen or other non-refugee, including a time-expired refugee, who is able to meet the refugee's needs
- The customer becomes time expired
- The customer fails to register for RES and meet educational/training requirements without good cause
- 100% of federal funding for cash assistance ceases
- A refugee becomes a full-time student in a college program in an institution of higher education and does not meet an exception to full-time student ineligibility

Procedure:

Refer to CalWORKs Processing Guide 69-205.A1 Refugee Cash Assistance Processing Guide

References:

Eligibility and Assistance Standards 69-205 – 69-217

All County Letter No. 02-37, 12-25

All County Information Notice No. I-88-04

All County Welfare Directors Letter from May 27, 2022

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Sunset Date:

This policy will be reviewed for continuance by October 31, 2025.

Approval for Release:

Handwritten signature and date: RW, 10-10-22

Rick Wanne, Director
Self-Sufficiency Services