

---

**STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL**  
**REFUGEE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

---

**CHAPTER II – REFUGEE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

**CHANGE #1-2022**

**January 1, 2022**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Refugees who resettle in the United States have often been living in poor conditions, many in refugee camps, with inadequate or no health care. Since restoration of good health is a key factor in becoming self-sufficient, refugees may apply for medical assistance at the local Departments of Social Services (DSS).

**Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA)** is health care coverage established for refugees who do not meet qualifications for any other health care program. Refugees must first be evaluated for all Medicaid program categories including Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) and determined ineligible prior to being evaluated for RMA. RMA provides health care to refugees who are adults without minor children. RMA is a short-term transitional program available for the first eight months a refugee resides in the United States. In determining eligibility for RMA, the county DSS must comply with the policies and procedures described in this chapter of the North Carolina Refugee Assistance Manual. In providing RMA to refugees, the agency must provide at least the same services in the same manner and to the same extent as provided under the North Carolina Medicaid program.

**NOTE:** References will be made, throughout this chapter, to the appropriate section of the NC Medicaid Manual for the Aged, Blind, and Disabled (Adult) whenever the RMA program has policies and procedures in common. Exceptions or special rules for RMA will be noted.

**NOTE:** Throughout this Chapter, the term “refugee” will refer to all groups below, who are Qualified status and potentially eligible for RMA. See Chapter I., Section III. for definitions.

- Refugees
- Asylees
- Cuban and Haitian Entrants
- Certain Amerasians (from Vietnam)
- Victims of Human Trafficking
- Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Holders from Iraq and Afghanistan. SIV's transition to Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR) who hold one of the above statuses prior to adjusting to LPR status e.g. Typically, SIV Holders transition to LPR status within the first ninety (90) days, after date of arrival into the United States.
- **Afghan Special Immigrant Parole (SQ/SI)**
- **Afghan Humanitarian Parolees**

---

**STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL**  
**REFUGEE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

---

**II. ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES**

Refugees can apply for the same benefits and service programs that are available to U.S. citizens. The refugee individual must meet the eligibility criteria below to receive RMA assistance. After the caseworker determines that a refugee individual is not eligible for **any** North Carolina Medicaid program category, including MAGI, the caseworker can then determine eligibility for RMA.

**NOTE:** See Chapter I. Section III. to determine refugees who are categorically not eligible for RMA.

**A. Immigration Status Verification**

Individuals must have the proper immigration documentation reflecting refugee status. Qualified groups, potentially eligible for RMA are Refugees, Asylees, Cuban and Haitian Entrants, Certain Amerasians (from Vietnam), Victims of Human Trafficking, Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Holders from Iraq and Afghanistan, and Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR). See Chapter I. Section III. for definitions.

**B. Eligibility Timeframe of Coverage**

1. Benefits are available for eight (8) months or less from the refugee's date of arrival in the United States.
2. Benefits are available for eight (8) months or less for Asylees from the date asylum is granted in the United States.

RMA Eligible Period of Coverage

RMA is available to eligible refugees for the first eight (8) months of arrival. The date of arrival, not the application date, is used to determine the period of coverage.	
<b>Arrival Month</b>	<b>Eighth Month</b>
January	August
February	September
March	October
April	November
May	December
June	January
July	February
August	March
September	April
October	May
November	June
December	July

---

**STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL**  
**REFUGEE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

---

**C. Household Composition**

The local DSS must evaluate each member of the family, individually. If the refugee is an adult who is pregnant, has minor children, is between the ages of 19 and 20, or is age 65 years or older, then the applicant is categorically not eligible for RMA. The individual could be eligible for a Medicaid program. Refer to the North Carolina Family and Children's Medicaid Manual and the Adult Medicaid Manual for more information regarding eligibility for Medicaid programs. A MAGI application must be processed first.

IF	THEN
Single individual (21 – 64)	Eligible for RMA
Married couple without minor children	Eligible for RMA
Single individual with minor/child/children	Ineligible for RMA
Married couple with minor child/children	Ineligible for RMA

**1. Refugee Individual**

A single refugee individual household must consist of one adult, 21 years of age or older, with no minor children.

**NOTE:** An individual, 18 years of age is considered an adult in the RMA program. However, individuals, ages 18, 19, and 20, are eligible for any NC Medicaid program category including MAGI. Parent's income and resources are not considered in the determination of eligibility.

**2. Refugee Couple**

A refugee couple household must consist of a married couple (ages 21 through 64) with no minor children. Couples without minor children and who do not meet qualifications for Medicaid programs are categorically eligible for RMA.

**3. Refugee Family**

A refugee family household with minor children, must first apply for, and if eligible, participate in any NC Medicaid program category including MAGI.

**NOTE:** Children or individuals and couples with dependent minor children should never be enrolled in RMA.

**4. Refugee 65 Years of Age or Older**

A refugee 65 years of age or older is consider for all Medicaid program categories and must be evaluated for Medical Assistance to the Aged, Blind and Disabled (MAABD).

**NOTE:** Refugee individuals 65 years of age or older with refugee immigration status should never be enrolled in RMA, during the traditional medical assistance application process. MAABD is the program of best benefit in comparison to RMA.

**5. Refugee Pregnant Woman Single**

Refugee Pregnant women (single) found eligible for Medicaid programs for pregnant women under the NC Medicaid State Plan are ineligible for RMA.

---

**STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL**  
**REFUGEE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

---

**D. Institution of Higher Education**

Refugees who are full-time students in an institution of higher education are not eligible for RMA.

**E. Residency Status**

Proof of residency is not a condition of eligibility; accept applicant's statement of intent to reside in a county in North Carolina. Do not request other verification such as post-marked mail, rental/utility records, etc., as newly arrived refugees are not likely to have these documents.

**F. Income Requirements**

The income standard is 200% of the federal poverty level. See Appendix D for additional guidelines on policy income.

Base eligibility for RMA on the applicant's income on the date of application. Request verification based on most recent pay statement at the time of application **ONLY**.

- Count only income from earnings, savings in US bank accounts, and other financial resources acquired while in the United States.
- Do not consider a sponsor's income to be accessible to a refugee.
- Do not consider any cash grant received by the applicant under the Department of State or Department of Justice Reception and Placement Program (R&P).
- Do not average income prospectively over the application processing period in determining income eligibility for RMA.
- Do not count Match Grant payments as income.

**G. Resources Requirements**

Base eligibility for RMA on the applicant's resources on the date of application. Request verification based on most recent pay statement at the time of application **ONLY**. Do not consider any resources remaining in the applicant's country of origin in determining eligibility.

- Do not consider a sponsor's resources to be accessible to a refugee.
- Do not consider in-kind services and shelter provided to an applicant by a sponsor or local resettlement agency in determining eligibility for RMA.

---

**STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL**  
**REFUGEE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

---

**III. APPLICATION PROCESS**

**A. Interview**

After determining applicant's eligibility, proceed using these interview guidelines.

1. Apply cultural sensitivity in all communications.
2. Apply the same confidentiality rules that pertain to the NC Medicaid program in the administration of the RMA program.
3. Applicants can have any person(s) of their choice participate in the interview.
4. Information must be presented in a language the applicant understands.
5. Explain RMA in understandable terms, ensuring that refugees understand their rights and responsibilities.
6. Offer the refugee an opportunity to apply for Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) benefits on the same day.
7. Applicant does not have to be present for interview. However, the application must be signed by the applicant or an authorized representative.

**Additional Responsibilities for Refugee Households**

All refugee applicants **who resettle through a Refugee Resettlement Agency (Appendix B)** should present a DSS-6247, Notification of Refugee Arrival and Intent to Apply for Benefits form when applying for public benefits. In addition, applicants are responsible for providing their address, telephone number, and the name of the resettlement agency that assisted in their resettlement to the U.S.

**DSS-6247, Notification of Refugee Arrival and Intent to Apply for Benefits, is not a required form for all other populations. Asylees, victims of trafficking, and Cuban Haitian Entrants are in the U.S. before their status is granted and they often will not have an established relationship with a resettlement agency.**

The refugee household is also responsible for reporting changes in situation. These include obtaining employment, change in household e.g. pregnancy, and/or disability. However, the refugee may still be eligible for RMA.

**Notification and Communication between DSS and Refugee Resettlement Agency (RRA)**

The local DSS is responsible for notifying the agency that provided for the initial resettlement of a refugee whenever the refugee applies for cash or medical benefits and before any change in or termination of benefits. Since asylees are in the U.S. before their status is granted, they usually will not have an established relationship with a resettlement agency. See Appendix A for list of agencies.

The RRA is responsible for reporting changes in situation to the local DSS. These include change in household e.g. pregnancy, and/or disability.

---

**STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL**  
**REFUGEE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

---

Maintain and retain operational records in accordance with the standards established by the NC Department of Health and Human Services.

**B. Application Procedures**

1. **Electronic (NC FAST) vs. Paper Application** - To apply for RMA the Refugee applicant may complete an electronic NC FAST “New Application” or paper application DSS-6242, Refugee Medical Assistance Application.

**Note:** Apply online for Medical Assistance can be done via e-Pass.

2. **Refugee Assistance Independent Programs** - A refugee is not required to apply for or receive RCA as a condition of eligibility for RMA. However, all recipients of RCA are automatically eligible for RMA. Denial, reduction or termination of RCA has no effect on a refugee’s RMA.
3. **Processing Time Standard** – Caseworker has thirty (30) calendar days to process the application. The thirty (30) calendar days begin the day after the date of application. The date of application is the date the applicant, authorized representative, or someone acting on applicant’s behalf, signs the application.
4. **Social Security Number** – Do not require RMA applicants to provide Social Security Numbers (SSN) or proof of application for an SSN.
5. **Qualified Status** - An applicant for RMA must submit evidence of documentation issued by USCIS, which indicates alien eligibility status. A child/ren who arrives with a parent(s) carries the same alien status as the parent(s). Secondary verification is not required. A list of acceptable USCIS documentation most often presented by refugees is in Chapter I.
  - a. Ask the applicant for **acceptable immigration documentation**.
  - b. Review the immigration status of the documentation.
  - c. If status is verified by documents, the applicant has a qualified status, and the caseworker shall continue determining eligibility based on other requirements. **Do not use Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE). Refer to Fact Sheets Verification as a secondary form of verification.**
  - d. If unable to confirm status from documentation supplied by applicant, **approve RMA** if other eligibility requirements are met.
6. If the refugee individual/family is determined to be eligible for a Medicaid program in the NCFast System, authorize Medicaid coverage according to Medicaid program guidelines for that refugee individual/family.

---

**STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL**  
**REFUGEE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

---

7. If the refugee individual/couple is determined to be ineligible in the new MAGI application for a Medicaid program in the NC FAST System, then complete a Medical Assistance application.

EXCEPTION - Family Planning Medicaid

The Family Planning Program (FPP) is provided to individuals who are not eligible for North Carolina Health Choice (NCHC) or any other Medicaid category. Refugees who are not eligible for NCHC or any other Medicaid program may be eligible for RMA. If NC FAST authorizes the potential applicant for Family and Children's Medicaid: FPP; then the county staff must evaluate each potential refugee applicant for RMA.

#### **IV. FINALIZED APPLICATION**

##### **A. Disposition of Application**

Eligible applicants are entitled to receive RMA coverage for up to eight (8) full months from the date of arrival in the United States.

1. **Eligibility Process**

Apart from the exceptions noted in III, C., above, the process for determining eligibility for RMA is the same process used for Aged, Blind, and Disabled Medicaid programs. The forms used to initiate the application process for RMA are the same as those used to initiate other medical assistance programs. Unless otherwise noted in this chapter, agency workers should reference the Aged, Blind, and Disabled (Adult) Medicaid Manual (MA) for instructions.

2. **Retroactive Coverage**

Depending on the date of arrival, eligibility for RMA may be authorized for the 1, 2, or 3 months preceding the month of application. The client must have met all eligibility requirements in the retroactive period.

3. **Coverage of Refugees Who Do Not Meet State's Financial Eligibility Standards (Medicaid Deductible)**

An RMA applicant whose net countable income exceeds 200% of Federal Poverty Level Income Limit must meet a deductible before being authorized for Medicaid. The deductible is met by incurring medical expenses equal to the amount of the deductible. Compute the deductible for the appropriate period, up to 8 months, using the Medically Needy income limit according to the instructions provided under MA Section 2360.

4. **Documentation** - Workers must document case's actions in client's case note.

---

**STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL**  
**REFUGEE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

---

**B. Determine Eligibility Period**

Eligible applicants are entitled to receive RMA coverage for up to eight (8) full months from the date of arrival in the United States. For an Asylee, the date of arrival is the date asylum was granted. To calculate the eligibility period:

1. **Determine start date** – Eligibility begins on the first day of the month application is made.
2. **Determine end date** – Eligibility ends eight full months after the refugee's date of arrival, on the last day of that month.

**C. Notices (See MA Section 2420)**

Once eligibility is established, notify the applicant of the results. If the applicant was referred by a local resettlement affiliate, also notify that agency of the outcome.

NC FAST generates the DSS-8108, Notice of Benefits, to the RMA applicant regarding the disposition of the application. Eligibility workers must select RMA and specify the eligibility for the RMA recipient. An approval notice must be sent to the RMA recipient and to the RRA. Follow instructions in DSS-8108 to establish the following:

- a. refugee has applied for assistance,
- b. the status and disposition of the application, and
- c. the reason if assistance has been refused, denied or terminated.

**NOTE:** If a refugee applies for other mainstream assistance programs and is determined ineligible, but eligible for RMA, the notice must specify both dispositions.

**V. CHANGES IN SITUATION**

- A. A change in situation is any change an individual refugee experiences that may affect the individual's eligibility for RMA.
- B. The refugee and the resettlement agency are responsible for reporting changes. A change in situation must be reported within ten (10) calendar days of when the change is known.
- C. An agency must react to a change in situation the following month after the change but no later than the second month. Changes are effective the month after the month in which the 10-day notice expires unless the recipient waives the 10-day notice. Follow instructions in MA Section 2340.

**NOTE:** RMA applicants/recipients must receive timely notice of a reduction or termination of benefits.



---

**STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL**  
**REFUGEE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

---

- D. Verify the change according to the verification procedures in the MA Section 2340. Always document the change and verification.
- E. Manually send a timely DSS-8110, Notice of Stopping or Changing Public Assistance, to notify the household how the change affects their benefits.
- F. Due to the short-term of benefits, if a refugee household reports a change of address and it is in another county, **do not transfer the case**. Instead, continue to maintain the RMA in the county of application.

**NOTE: DO NOT** terminate RMA if new or additional income is reported and causes the recipient to exceed the income limit. **Eligibility for RMA is based on the applicant's income and resources at the time of application ONLY** i.e. if a refugee has no income at the time of application, count no income. Do not project income for the duration of the RMA certification. Do not count income/resources prior to date of application. A recipient shall continue to receive RMA until the end of the 8-month eligibility period unless there is a change in eligibility (age or pregnancy).

**VI. REVIEW**

At the end of the refugee's eighth month in the U.S., terminate RMA assistance. Evaluate to determine if the refugee is eligible for any other assistance and take the necessary applications or refer to the appropriate agency. In addition to notifying the refugee of the termination, the notice must indicate the determination of eligibility for other programs. Manually send a written DSS-8110, Notice of Stopping or Changing Public Assistance. Unlike Medicaid, RMA policy does not allow for extension of benefits due to county failure to provide timely notice. See MA Section 2352 for additional instructions.

**NOTE:** Refugee Medical and Cash Assistance Programs are available to refugees for the first eight months after their date of arrival, or attaining eligible status, in the United States, and only if they are not eligible for other mainstream social services assistance programs.

**VII. NOTICE AND HEARINGS PROCESS**

- A. All applicants for and recipients of RMA must be provided an opportunity for hearing to contest adverse determinations. See MA Section 2420.

**ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:**

- The refugee may have a representative as well as a translator/interpreter attend the hearing.
- The hearing decision must be provided in a language the refugee can understand or have translated/interpreted into such a language.

---

**STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL**  
**REFUGEE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

---

- B.** A hearing need not be granted when RMA is terminated because the eligibility time period (8 months) imposed by law has been reached.

**VIII. RECIPIENT FRAUD AND ABUSE**

Local DSS must comply with Federal requirements regarding potential fraud and misrepresentation that results in medical assistance overpayments. Because Refugee Assistance is not considered a program of public assistance under N. C. G. S. 108A-24, fraud cases must be prosecuted under N. C. G. S. 14-100, "False Pretense and Cheats." See MA Section 2900 for additional information.

---

**STATE REFUGEE OFFICE MANUAL**  
**REFUGEE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

---

INDEX

Amerasians.....	1, 2
Asylees.....	1, 2
Cuban and Haitian Entrants.....	1, 2
Date of Arrival.....	1, 2, 7, 8, 9
Departments of Social Services (DSS).....	1
Determination of Eligibility.....	3, 9
DSS-6242, Refugee Medical Assistance Application.....	6
DSS-8108, Notice of Benefits.....	8
DSS-8110, Notice of Stopping or Changing Public Assistance.....	9
Food and Nutrition Services (FNS).....	5
Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR).....	1, 2
MAGI.....	1, 2, 3, 7
Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI).....	1
RCA.....	1, 6
Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA).....	6
Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA).....	1
Refugee Resettlement Agencies (RRA).....	5
Refugees.....	1, 2, 7
Residency Status.....	4
RMA.....	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
RRA.....	5, 8
Special Immigrant Visa (SIV).....	1, 2
Victims of Human Trafficking.....	1, 2