

June 11, 2020

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER**

The purpose of this letter is to provide County Welfare Departments guidance to implement the provisions of Policy Letter (PL) 20-03 released April 24, 2020, and PL 20-04 released April 22, 2020, by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) pertaining to the extension and conditions of the receipt of Refugee Cash Assistance and Entrant Cash Assistance, which also impacts the state Trafficking and Crime Victims Assistance Program.



KIM JOHNSON  
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**  
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GAVIN NEWSOM  
GOVERNOR

June 11, 2020

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: REFUGEE CASH ASSISTANCE (RCA), ENTRANT CASH ASSISTANCE (ECA) AND TRAFFICKING AND CRIME VICTIMS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TCVAP) CASH ASSISTANCE EXTENSION OF TIME ELIGIBILITY AND CONDITIONS OF RECEIPT

REFERENCE: TITLE 45, CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS (CFR) § [400.211](#), [400.146](#), and [400.155 \(h\)](#); OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT (ORR) POLICY LETTER (PLS) [PL 16-01](#), [20-03](#) AND [20-04](#); EXECUTIVE ORDERS (EOS) [N-29-20](#) AND [N-59-20](#); CDSS MANUAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES (MPP) § [69-200 – 300](#), [70-102 - 105](#); ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER (ACWDL) [MARCH 27, 2020](#), [MAY 4, 2020](#), AND [MAY 5, 2020](#)

The purpose of this letter is to provide County Welfare Departments (CWDs) with guidance on implementing the time extension of eligibility for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), Entrant Cash Assistance (ECA), and Trafficking and Crime Victims Assistance Program (TCVAP) Cash Assistance benefits beyond the 8-month time limit until September 30, 2020, to ensure Californian refugee and immigrant communities can continue to meet their basic needs during the COVID-19 emergency.

### **RCA, ECA and TCVAP Administration**

The RCA, ECA and TCVAP Cash Assistance programs provide cash benefits to refugee and immigrant populations for up to 8 months, unless otherwise provided. These programs follow the CalWORKs eligibility administrative rules with certain exceptions, such as a limited eligibility period without any breaks in time. In accordance with MPP § [69-201.4](#), the CalWORKs program regulations apply to the financial eligibility and payments for the RCA program unless specifically superseded by RCA

regulations. In addition, per MPP § [69-301](#) and [70-105](#), respectively, the financial eligibility and payments criteria for ECA and TCVAP benefits shall be the same as those for RCA.

**Note:** It is important to note that applicants for Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) funded benefits and programs are exempt from the provision of Social Security Numbers (SSNs) pursuant to MPP § [69-205.22](#). The same standard applies to TCVAP recipients. CWDs must inform RCA, ECA and TCVAP applicants that SSNs are not required to access benefits.

### **RCA/ECA Eligibility Requirements**

RCA/ECA benefits are available in all 58 counties and provide ORR-funded cash assistance to refugee and eligible immigrant adults or families without children who are not eligible for other cash assistance programs such as CalWORKs, Social Security Income/State Supplemental Payment, Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants, and others. CWDs are reminded that where there is an urgent need for assistance, it is within their authority to expedite the application process and issue RCA/ECA initial payments on an emergency basis if necessary pursuant to MPP § [69-211.2](#).

Pursuant to MPP §§ [69-202](#) and [69-302](#), refugees, asylees, Cuban or Haitian entrants, certain Amerasians from Vietnam, federally certified human trafficking victims, Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders from Afghanistan or Iraq, and other eligible populations are eligible for RCA/ECA benefits. For additional details regarding eligible populations and documents, refer to page two of the [County Refugee Program Guidelines](#), and for information regarding ORR documentation requirements, refer to ORR PL [16-01](#).

The CWDs must determine the eligibility of RCA/ECA applicants as promptly as possible within 30 days from the date of application. Per MPP § [69-207](#), RCA/ECA applicants must register for county-approved employment services within 30 days from date of application and prior to the issuance of cash aid. In order to continue receipt of cash assistance, RCA/ECA recipients must comply with employment requirements within 30 days from date of issuance of cash assistance and submit timely SAR-7 reports, unless otherwise provided.

### **RCA/ECA Extension Period**

To ensure refugee and immigrants served by the ORR can continue to meet their basic needs during the COVID-19 emergency and pursuant to ORR PL [20-03](#), *COVID-19 Extended Assistance for ORR Populations*, dated April 22, 2020, the California Department of Social Services (the Department) has obtained authority to temporarily suspend 45 Code of Federal Regulations § [400.211](#) and provide a time extension of

RCA/ECA cash benefits effective immediately per the date of this county letter, until September 30, 2020.

The RCA/ECA time extension is limited to eligible RCA/ECA recipients whose date of eligibility (i.e., not the date of application) for RCA/ECA benefits is between April 1, 2019, and January 31, 2020. RCA/ECA applicants whose date of eligibility is February 1, 2020, or later, are **not** eligible for the time extension of assistance and will receive the normal 8 months of RCA/ECA from the date of eligibility.

### **RCA/ECA Continuing Extension Cases**

For recipients who first became eligible for RCA/ECA on or after April 1, 2019 to January 31, 2020, and who received their eighth month of RCA/ECA cash payment in May 2020, or will reach the 8-month time limit after June 1, 2020, but before September 30, 2020, the CWDs should continue issuing extended cash assistance until September 30, 2020. For these recipients, the CWDs must provide uninterrupted issuance of cash payments until the end of the extension period. Pending the absence of automated processes in the Statewide Automation Welfare System, CWDs must manually rescind the discontinuances and not require these recipients to reapply for RCA/ECA benefits. The CWDs must notify these recipients that their RCA/ECA benefits have been extended by the ORR until September 30, 2020 due to the COVID-19 emergency. Recipients are required to comply with SAR-7 reporting requirements unless otherwise provided.

### **RCA/ECA Reapplication Extension Cases**

For recipients who first became eligible on or after April 1, 2019 to January 31, 2020, but reached their 8-month time limit on or before April 2020, have been discontinued due to non-report, or have been terminated from RCA/ECA due to non-compliance, the CWDs may grant extended RCA/ECA benefits until September 30, 2020, if the clients reapply and meet the eligibility requirements.

CWDs are encouraged to expeditiously use the resources at their disposal to directly notify these clients that they may be eligible for additional RCA/ECA benefits and can reapply immediately. This communication should be issued as soon as possible, indicating that eligibility is limited to RCA/ECA recipients who first became eligible on or after April 1, 2019 to January 31, 2020 and meet the program eligibility requirements. CWDs are encouraged to collaborate with their local [Resettlement Agencies](#), [Ethnic Community-Based Organizations](#), or [County Refugee Forums](#) to inform refugee and immigrant communities of this limited and time-sensitive opportunity.

### **TCVAP Cash Assistance**

TCVAP Cash Assistance is a state-funded program modeled after the federal RCA/ECA programs and provides benefits to non-citizen victims of crime who need immediate services, and who are obtaining a humanitarian immigration status while assisting in the prosecution of a crime. This includes victims of human trafficking who have not yet been certified by the [Office of Trafficking in Persons](#) (OTIP) and victims of domestic violence and other serious crimes who have applied for a U visa with the [United States Citizenship and Immigration Services](#). For additional information regarding TCVAP eligibility determination guidelines, please refer to [ACIN I-07-15](#).

The administration of the TCVAP Cash Assistance program follows that of the RCA/ECA programs. Therefore, the ORR extension of time eligibility for the RCA/ECA benefits also applies to the TCVAP Cash Assistance recipients. TCVAP Cash Assistance recipients who applied for benefits between April 1, 2019, and January 31, 2020, are eligible to receive a time extension of benefits until September 30, 2020.

CWDs are reminded that eligibility for TCVAP Cash Assistance differs from that of the RCA/ECA programs regarding documentation requirements. For TCVAP Cash Assistance, the date of eligibility is the same as the date of application. For TCVAP Cash Assistance continuing and reapplication extension requirements, please refer to the RCA/ECA rules above for guidelines and conditions. TCVAP Cash Assistance recipients who applied for benefits on or after February 1, 2020, are not eligible for the time extension, and extended cash benefits remain at 8 months with no time extensions.

### **Treatment of CARES Act Emergency Assistance**

On March 27, 2020, the U.S. Congress passed the [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#), which provided over \$2 trillion in economic relief aimed at protecting the American people from the public health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 emergency. The CARES Act provides emergency cash assistance in the form of stimulus payments and expanded unemployment benefits, which include one-time Economic Impact Payments to eligible citizens and immigrants, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), and the Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (PUC).

CWDs are reminded that RCA, ECA and TCVAP administrative rules follow those of the CalWORKs program and to refer to ACWDL dated [May 5, 2020](#) for guidance on how to treat the CARES Act emergency cash assistance for the income/asset calculations to determine eligibility.

### **Treatment of PUC for RCA, ECA AND TCVAP**

On May 1, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 emergency and to help ensure that RCA, ECA and TCVAP recipients continue to have access to benefits and services to help meet their basic needs, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order (EO) [N-59-20](#) providing authority for the Department to **exempt** PUC payments from consideration as income in determining recipients' continued eligibility or grant amount. For RCA, ECA and TCVAP ORR extension recipients who continue to receive benefits without reapplication and who were RCA, ECA and TCVAP recipients on May 1, 2020, the PUC payments are exempt from consideration.

The EO [N-59-20](#), however, did not give the Department authority to exempt the PUC payments for RCA, ECA and TCVAP applicants who applied after May 1, 2020. For RCA, ECA and TCVAP recipients who must reapply in order to receive the ORR eligibility extension for benefits until September 30, 2020, the PUC payments are to be considered as income in determining eligibility and must be treated in the same manner as regular state unemployment insurance benefits at application.

### **Notices for RCA Extension**

The CWDs must notify RCA, ECA and TCVAP Continuing Extension recipients regarding the continuance of their cash assistance prior to 10 days from the issuance of cash payment. Language regarding the notice should be as follows:

Your monthly (*insert RCA, ECA or TCVAP cash assistance*) has been extended due to the impact of the COVID-19 emergency. The extension of cash benefits will be discontinued for *Client Name* effective 09/30/2020.

### **Term of Waivers and Program Modifications**

The waivers and program modifications in this ACWDL shall expire automatically and without further notice from the Department on September 30, 2020, or earlier upon written notice from the Department. Once all flexibilities and guidance in this ACWDL have expired, all requirements modified herein shall be reinstated, unless further extended by the Department.

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If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, contact the Refugee Programs Bureau at (916) 654-4356 or [RPB@dss.ca.gov](mailto:RPB@dss.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

***Original Document Signed By:***

MARCELA RUIZ  
Director  
Office of Equity