



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

Office of Refugee Resettlement | 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20201  
[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr)

## **Increase in Public/Private Partnership (PPP) Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) Monthly Payment Ceilings**

Dear Colleague Letter 22-01

October 1, 2021

Dear Colleague:

This Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) announces an increase to the Public/Private Partnership (PPP) Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) monthly payment ceilings to adjust for inflation and the increased cost of living nationwide. The increase is effective October 1, 2021.

The current monthly payment ceilings have remained fixed since March 22, 2000, despite inflation. The new monthly payment ceilings accommodate for that inflation and will provide arriving ORR-eligible populations greater economic stability as they transition to self-sufficiency.

### **Background**

ORR-eligible populations may be eligible for up to eight months of RCA after their initial ORR eligibility date if they are deemed ineligible for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. When TANF was established in 1996, ORR gave states<sup>1</sup> the option to either establish a publicly administered RCA program modeled after their TANF program in terms of eligibility determinations and benefits levels, or the option to establish a PPP RCA program.

ORR established the PPP RCA monthly payment ceilings codified at 45 CFR § 400.60(a) using the poverty guidelines developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. These poverty guidelines, which are updated annually, are mainly used for administrative purposes such as determining an individual's eligibility for certain programs. When ORR established the current PPP RCA monthly payment ceilings, it used the 1998 HHS Poverty Guidelines.

### **Rationale for Increase**

The current PPP RCA monthly payment ceilings, fixed since March 22, 2000, are insufficient to meet ORR-eligible populations' initial expenses for housing, utilities, transportation, food, and other essentials, as ORR-eligible populations acclimate to their new communities and try to secure employment. ORR-eligible populations generally have no other means of assistance, such as savings or family resources, to assist in the early days of arrival. Additionally, many ORR-eligible populations do

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<sup>1</sup> "States" in this policy letter refers to states and replacement designees.

not benefit from assistance from the U.S. Department of State’s Reception and Placement Program, making RCA a critical source of support as they strive for economic self-sufficiency and integration.

As such, in accordance with ORR regulations at 45 CFR § 400.60(d), the ORR Director has determined that the PPP RCA monthly payment ceilings need to be adjusted for inflation.

### **New PPP RCA Monthly Payment Ceilings**

Using the 2021 HHS Poverty Guidelines, ORR has established the following new PPP RCA monthly payment ceilings:

<b>Public/Private RCA Payment Ceilings</b>	
<b>Size of Family Unit</b>	<b>Monthly Payment Ceiling</b>
1	\$537
2	\$726
3	\$915
4	\$1,104

Where family units are greater than four people, the monthly payment ceiling is increased by \$113 for each additional person.

These monthly payment ceilings only apply to RCA recipients within PPP-administered RCA programs. All states that do not administer a PPP RCA program must continue to administer their RCA programs according to their established TANF rate or other rate as described in their state plan.

### **Instructions for States**

To implement new RCA payment levels using the revised PPP RCA monthly payment ceilings outlined in this DCL, a state administering a PPP RCA program must submit a state plan amendment, which must be in accordance with 45 C.F.R. §§ 400.56 – 400.63, and an ORR-1 Cash and Medical Assistance (CMA) estimate with the proposed payment levels.

States that administer a PPP RCA program may include sliding scale payments or incentives for early employment aimed at refugee self-sufficiency, as long as those remain within the established payment ceilings, as addressed by 45 CFR § 400.60(c).

States that are interested in potentially transitioning to a PPP RCA program or want to change their current payments or incentives should reference 45 C.F.R. §§ 400.56 – 400.63; [ORR PL 21-04, Guidance for Public-Private Refugee Cash Assistance Programs](#); and instructions within the State Plan Template (housed on the ORR refugee programs [“Report Forms” web page](#)). They should also speak to their ORR Regional Representative or Analyst. ORR will review such requests in terms of operational effectiveness, benefit to clients, and the availability of funding.

As states seek to operationalize new payment ceilings, states should consider how the resultant payments meet the RCA program objective of economic self-sufficiency, whether the payments will disqualify ORR-eligible populations for other means-tested benefit programs (e.g., SNAP, Medicaid), and if the benefits of the payments outweigh the disadvantages of being disqualified or receiving reduced benefits from other means-tested benefit programs.

**Further Information**

ORR will conduct, minimally, a bi-annual review of the HHS Poverty Guidelines, the established PPP rates, and the availability of funding, with the goal of enacting responsive and equitable cash assistance rates in the PPP RCA program.

If you have questions about the new PPP RCA monthly payment ceilings, please email [draprograms@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:draprograms@acf.hhs.gov).

Sincerely,

Cindy Huang  
Director  
Office of Refugee Resettlement