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State of Wisconsin  
Governor Tony Evers



TO: **W-2 Agencies**  
**RSS-funded Agencies**  
**RMS-administering Clinics**

FROM: Connie Chesnik, Interim Director  
Bureau of Refugee Programs  
Division of Family and Economic Security  
Department of Children and Families

<b>BRP OPERATIONS MEMO</b>		
No:	20-20	
DATE:	10/12/2020	
W-2	<input type="checkbox"/>	RCA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		RMA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
RSS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

**SUBJECT: COVID-19: Office of Refugee Resettlement Waiver Extensions**

**CROSS REFERENCE:** [Office of Refugee Resettlement \(ORR\) Policy Letter 20-06](#)  
[ORR Resettlement Policy Letter 20-04](#)  
[BWF Operations Memo 20-11](#)

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** October 1, 2020

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this memo is to communicate a summary of extensions to waivers that allow for various exceptions to ORR regulations. These waivers give the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and its refugee programs' contractors the necessary flexibility to continue to respond to the spread of COVID-19, and its impact on ORR-eligible populations.

**BACKGROUND:** [Policy Letter 20-04](#) initially introduced a series of waivers to help address the various impacts of COVID-19. Those waivers expired on September 30, 2020. In light of the continued impact of COVID-19, [Policy Letter 20-06](#) extends those waivers, each of which relax various conditions of eligibility and program requirements for Refugee Support Services (RSS), Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA), Refugee Medical Screenings (RMS), and ORR discretionary grant programs (Refugee School Impact, Refugee Youth Mentoring, and Services to Older Refugees).

The status of each waiver that expired on September 30, as well as any additional provisions introduced in the waiver's extension, are detailed below. All the terms of [Policy Letter 20-06](#) are in effect until January 31, 2021, unless otherwise specified.

**WAIVERS:****1. Eligibility Determinations for ORR Benefits and Services**

The terms of this waiver, described in [BWF Operations Memo 20-11](#), have been extended with no additional provisions.

**2. Refugee Cash Assistance and Conditions for Receipt of RCA**

The terms of this waiver, described in [BWF Operations Memo 20-11](#), have been extended. Furthermore, an additional provision has been introduced, due to stakeholder feedback regarding delays with social security applications. Effective September 30, 2020, ORR will allow states to issue interim RCA payments where an agency can document that a client has not been able to successfully apply for a social security card. If, however, the client is subsequently approved for W-2 and therefore ineligible for RCA, those interim RCA payments must be recouped to ensure there is no dual receipt of federal assistance. Therefore, agency staff are advised to manually verify with the greatest possible accuracy the client's ineligibility for W-2, to avoid later recoupment of RCA payments.

**3. Refugee Support Services Funding for Emergency and Other Assistance**

The terms of this waiver, described in [BWF Operations Memo 20-11](#), have been extended. Furthermore, an additional provision has been introduced, which authorizes the use of RSS funding for supplying and distributing personal protective equipment (PPE) and other supplies that mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

**4. Refugee Support Services Extended Eligibility Period**

The terms of this waiver, described in [BWF Operations Memo 20-11](#), have been extended, with two additional provisions. First, the waiver of the 60-month eligibility period applies only for the provision of support services for those in extreme circumstances, as reasonably determined by the service provider. Second, the extended waiver includes the RSS set-aside programs (Refugee School Impact, Youth Mentoring, Refugee Health Promotion, and Services for Older Refugee Programs).

**5. Provision of ORR Funded Services**

The terms of this waiver, described in [BWF Operations Memo 20-11](#), have been extended with no additional provisions.

**6. Refugee Medical Screenings**

The terms of this waiver, described in [BWF Operations Memo 20-11](#), have been extended. An additional provision authorizes the use of RMA funds to provide vaccinations for ORR eligible clients who became eligible for benefits, including medical screening services, after April 1, 2019, with the additional months after their one-year mark not extending beyond January 31, 2021. Within these parameters, RMA funds may be utilized for vaccinations regardless of when the clients received their refugee medical screening, as long as the vaccines are not covered by another federally funded program (e.g. Medicaid).

In addition, if vaccinations for COVID become available, this waiver authorizes the use of RMA funds to cover this cost if it is not covered by another federally funded program.

## **7. Refugee Support Services Set Asides**

This is a new waiver. It authorizes flexibility within each RSS set-aside program to address the impacts of the pandemic. This could include using funds for virtual case management, distance learning, access to technology, digital literacy, and any other service delivery modality that must be adapted.

This waiver also authorizes the use of RSS set-aside funds for equipment and supplies related to these efforts, as well as the supply and distribution of PPE and other supplies that mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

## ***CARES WORKER WEB (CWW)***

For any eligibility or program requirement exceptions granted by these extended waivers, agencies should continue to utilize case comments to document the reason for the exception.

## ***REPORTS***

For any eligibility or program requirement exceptions granted by these extended waivers, agencies should continue to utilize comments sections in reports submitted to DCF for federal reporting purposes in order to document the reason for the exception.

## ***TRAINING***

No additional training will be required; agencies are encouraged to reach out to their DCF contacts in the Bureau of Refugee Programs (BRP) for guidance.

## ***AGENCY ACTION***

Agencies should ensure that program applicants and participants are informed of extended eligibility periods and waived program requirements. When enrolling and serving participants, agencies should discuss the finite time period during which these waivers are in effect.

## ***CONTACTS***

Questions regarding these waivers should be directed to the BRP team:

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