

## **Refugee Eligibility Periods for OWF, and Food Assistance**

There is no time limit for food assistance and child care benefits related to citizenship for refugees, asylees, Cuban/Haitian entrants, Iraqi or Afghan Special Immigrants, Amerasians, and certified victims of trafficking (OAC rules 5101:4-3-07 and 5101:2-16-30).

Refugees, asylees, Cuban/Haitian entrants, Amerasians, and victims of trafficking are eligible for cash and medical assistance to the same extent as U.S. citizens for a limited time period:

- Cash assistance (OWF, DFA) is limited to a period of five years after the date a qualified alien status is granted (OAC rule 5101:1-2-30).
- Potential supplemental security income (SSI) exists for a period of seven years after the date a qualified alien status is granted (8 U.S.C. 1612).

After these time periods have passed, to continue to qualify for cash benefits, the person must:

- Have become a U.S. citizen,
- Have a qualifying military connection, or
- Adjusted to legal permanent resident status and have 40 qualifying work quarters of coverage.

Refugees who lawfully resided in the U.S. on or before August 22, 1996 are exempt from meeting citizenship requirements for all programs.

Eligibility for all other cash assistance programs (OWF, DFA, and SSI,) must be determined before pursuing eligibility for Refugee Cash.

## **Eligibility for Refugee Cash and the Refugee Social Services Program**

Refugee cash and medical assistance are available to refugees for the first eight months after they arrive in the U.S. if they meet certain income and resource requirements. Refugee social services are available to all refugees for the first five years after arrival to the U.S.

### **Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)**

Refugees who are not eligible for Ohio Works First/TANF (i.e., those without dependent children under 19 years of age who are attending secondary school full-time) may be eligible for RCA for their first eight months after arrival in the U.S (5101:1-2-40.1).

To qualify, a refugee must:

- Be a new arrival who has lived in the U.S. less than eight months;
- Not be participating in a Matching Grant program with a resettlement agency;
- Not be a full-time student in an institution of higher education except when enrollment is approved as part of the individual's employability plan;
- Participate in employment services, unless the refugee meets an exemption in OAC rule 5101:1-2-40(B) (2); and
- Meet income requirements as defined in OAC rule 5101:1-23-20.

### **Refugee Social Services Program (RSSP)**

- All refugee social services can be provided for up to five years from the date of arrival in the U.S. Citizenship, naturalization preparation services, referral and interpreter services may be extended beyond the five years.
- Resources and income of the refugee are not considered when determining eligibility for RSSP.
- Refugees applying for or in receipt of RCA or RMA are automatically eligible for RSSP.
- Refugees eligible for RSSP are provided services in the following priority order:
  - All newly arriving refugees during their first year in the U.S.
  - Refugees who are receiving cash assistance under OWF or RCA.
  - Unemployed refugees who are not receiving OWF, SSI, or RCA.
  - Employed refugees in need of services to retain employment or to attain economic independence.