

NUMBER

#17-06-01

DATE

January 4, 2017

OF INTEREST TO

County Directors

Social Services Supervisors

and Staff

Financial Assistance Supervisors

and Staff

Fiscal Supervisors and Staff

ACTION/DUE DATE

Please read information and
prepare for March 1, 2017
implementation

EXPIRATION DATE

January 4, 2019

Increase in Monthly Assistance Standards for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)

TOPIC

This bulletin summarizes changes in monthly assistance standard amounts for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), effective March 1, 2017.

PURPOSE

To provide information and instructions on changes in RCA assistance standards.

CONTACT

Submit policy questions to PolicyQuest.

Contact the TSS Help Desk for all MAXIS related questions

SIGNED

JAMES G KOPPEL
Assistant Commissioner

TERMINOLOGY NOTICE

The terminology used to describe people we serve has changed over time. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the use of "People First" language.

I. Background

Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) provides cash benefits to persons with eligible status who are ineligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), for up to 8 months after arrival in the United States.

The federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which regulates the RCA program, requires that RCA assistance standards are aligned with the MFIP assistance standards for the same household size.

When the MFIP Housing Grant was implemented in 2015, the RCA assistance standard was not adjusted. In order to come into federal compliance and re-align RCA assistance standards with MFIP, the RCA assistance standard is now being increased. ORR approved Minnesota's State Refugee Plan for FFY2017, which increases the RCA assistance standard by \$110 per month.

RCA policy updates will be available in the Combined Manual on March 1, 2017.

MAXIS system changes to support the new assistance standards will be implemented for the benefit month of March 2017. See MAXIS system instructions below for more details.

Legal Authority: 45 C.F.R. Chapter IV, Part 400, Subpart E

II. RCA Assistance Standards

RCA assistance units are one-person or two-person households (singles or childless couples). See Combined Manual 0030.03.06 (RCA Assistance Standards).

A. Current RCA Policy

Currently, RCA assistance standards are as follows:

- \$250 – one person unit
- \$437 – two person unit
- Over 2 person unit – follow the cash portion of the MFIP assistance standard table (Combined Manual 0020.09)

B. New RCA Policy

Effective for the benefit month of March 2017, RCA assistance standards will increase by \$110 per month per assistance unit. The \$110 increase will NOT be issued as a separate housing grant as it is for MFIP. The increase will be included as part of the monthly RCA cash grant.

All RCA-eligible applicants and participants will receive the increased grant beginning in the benefit month of March 2017.

The new RCA assistance standards will be as follows:

- \$360 – one person unit
- \$547 – two person unit
- Over 2 person unit – will continue to follow the cash portion of the MFIP assistance standard table **plus** \$110. The sum of these two will be the RCA assistance standard.

III. MAXIS System Changes

MAXIS system changes to implement the increased RCA assistance standard will be available to workers when processing cases on or after 02/01/2017 effective for the benefit month of 03/2017. MAXIS will determine the correct RCA assistance standard for the household based on the household unit size and benefit month.

A. Conversion of Active and Suspended RCA Cases

Conversion of active and suspended RCA cases to receive the increased RCA assistance standard for 03/2017 will not occur automatically. All active and suspended RCA cases will need to be manually converted by workers for the benefit month of 03/2017. Take the following steps:

1. Process each RCA case through background for the benefit month of 03/2017.
2. In FIAT, make changes or updates as needed; there are no changes to how RCA should be processed in FIAT.
3. In ELIG, approve new RCA eligibility results for 03/2017 with the increased assistance standard.
4. If the RCA recipient receives SNAP, enter the increased RCA grant into the SNAP budget for 03/2017 in FIAT and approve new SNAP results in ELIG. RCA recipients will see a decrease in their SNAP allotment due to this RCA grant increase. The new SNAP ELIG results must be approved on or before the 10 day cut-off in 02/2017 for 03/2017.

B. Processing Pending or Reinstated RCA Cases

Any pending or reinstated RCA cases being processed on or after 02/01/2017 should continue to be processed as normal. The RCA assistance standard will be given as follows:

- Any benefit months on or before 02/2017 will be given the current RCA assistance standard
- Any benefit month on or after 03/2017 will be given the increased RCA assistance standard

If the RCA recipient has applied for SNAP or receives SNAP, enter the correct RCA grant into the SNAP budget in FIAT and approve SNAP results in ELIG. Pay careful attention to the RCA assistance standard being entered into the SNAP budget when processing multiple months. RCA recipients will see a decrease in their SNAP allotment due to this RCA grant increase. The new SNAP ELIG results must be approved on or before the 10 day cut-off in 02/2017 for 03/2017.

C. Notices to RCA Applicants/ Participants

No new notice text was created to inform RCA applicants/participants about the increased RCA assistance standard. Workers should add a SPEC/WCOM to the approval notice generated for the 03/2017 benefit month explaining the reason for the increase.

Use the following notice text:

As of March 1, 2017 the monthly RCA standard has increased by \$110.00.

If you are receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), this increase may affect those benefits.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Advisory

This information is available in accessible formats for people with disabilities by calling (651) 431-4049 (voice) or toll free at (800) 234-1138 or by using your preferred relay service. For other information on disability rights and protections, contact the agency's ADA coordinator.