



# **Guide to Accessing Benefits & Services**

# Introduction

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), provides funding to state governments and nonprofit community-based organizations to provide benefits and services for refugees and other eligible populations, including Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees. Arranging **quick access to these available benefits should be a top priority** for Sponsor Circles, as they are a critical source of living support for newcomer families, especially until they are able to secure employment. Sponsor Circle fundraising is intended to support the newcomers during their initial resettlement period in the community, but if employment has not been secured by the time the sponsorship period ends, **Sponsor Circles should ensure that newcomers are connected to the benefits and services for which they are eligible.**

The types of benefits and services available to newcomers and general information on how they are accessed is outlined in this guide. Each state sets its own level of benefits and in many states this might even vary between counties. We encourage you to contact your Sponsor Circle Umbrella (SCU) who can connect you with your state's State Refugee Coordinator (SRC) and State Refugee Health Coordinator (SRHC) for information on specific points of access to these services and benefits in your location. You may also contact your SRC/SRHCs office directly, though we recommend you include your SCU point of contact in these communications. Many states provide this guidance on their SRC/SRHC websites. You can find your state's SRC and SRHC contact/website information [here](#).

Applications for benefits and services are usually done through a state or county government benefits office closest to your location. In some states, eligible individuals can apply online. In some locations, local resettlement agencies may be the designated office for applying for these ORR-funded benefits and services. For a state-by-state listing of local resettlement agencies, view the [ORR state program directory](#), which also includes a link to ORR state contacts.

## **What benefits and services are available for Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees?**

Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees (UHP) may be eligible for federal "mainstream" (non-ORR funded) benefits, such as cash assistance through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), health insurance through Medicaid, and food assistance through Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). UHP newcomers may also be eligible for assistance connecting to cash assistance, medical assistance, employment preparation, job placement, English language training, and other services offered through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). Many of these benefits and services are each provided through different local entities, so we encourage you to research this in your location. Again, your State Refugee Coordinator can assist you in locating these benefits and services in your community.

# Refugee Medical Screening

A critical first service which Sponsor Circles should address within the first 30 days of arrival is to assist the **newcomers in accessing and completing a Refugee Medical Screening**.

## What is Refugee Medical Screening?

Ukrainian humanitarian parolees are eligible for [Refugee Medical Screening](#) (RMS) upon arrival in the U.S. RMS is a [domestic medical screening tool developed by the CDC](#) over decades to inform state public health officials of the particular health issues common in refugee populations, and to help them identify and treat health and mental health conditions that may threaten their wellbeing. More info may be found [here](#). RMS screening also provides vaccinations required for school and work, and may include referrals to primary care providers or specialists for ongoing health care. These health assessment services, which should occur within the first 30 days after arrival, or soon thereafter, are generally coordinated by state-level refugee health programs.

## Accessing Refugee Medical Screening

Each state has designated clinics (local health departments or private clinics including community health centers and academic medical centers) that receive targeted funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement to provide the RMS screening. Please be aware that many local clinics are not funded to provide the comprehensive panel of tests included in the RMS. This generally reflects the scope and organization of each state's domestic health assessments and public health capacities.

Sponsor Circles located in a community that has not resettled refugees (or other similarly eligible populations) may not have local health departments that have designated public or private clinics, and they may not be familiar with the RMS or may be reluctant to complete the screening. We encourage you to contact your [State Refugee Health Coordinator](#) who can be very helpful in assisting Sponsor Circles to find the closest available refugee health screening clinic, especially Sponsor Circles located in non-traditional resettlement locations. For further reading, ORR has published a [Policy Letter](#) that explains how clinics may be reimbursed for costs associated with this comprehensive screening.

# Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

## What is TANF

TANF is a time limited program specifically for families with at least one child, or including pregnant people, and provides financial assistance for the family's basic needs. Each state receives funding from the federal government to implement its own TANF program. Eligibility for Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees can be found [here](#).

## Accessing TANF Benefits

Each state sets its own TANF benefit amounts and this may even vary from county to county. Information on TANF programs by state may be found [here](#).

# The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

## What is SNAP

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the largest federal nutrition assistance program. SNAP provides benefits to eligible low-income individuals and families via an Electronic Benefits Transfer card. This card can be used like a debit card to purchase eligible food in authorized retail food stores. To see if you might be eligible for SNAP benefits, use [SNAP eligibility](#).

## Accessing SNAP Benefits

Like TANF, each state sets its own benefits. Visit [SNAP's Application and Local Office Locators page](#) to learn how to apply in your state and locate nearby SNAP-authorized retailers by using the [SNAP Retailer Locator tool](#).

# Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

## What is SSI

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is administered by the Social Security Administration. The SSI program provides monthly payments to adults and children with a disability or blindness who have [income](#) and [resources](#) below specific financial limits. SSI payments are also made to people age 65 and older without disabilities who meet the financial qualifications. To find the closest Social Security office to you go to: [www.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp](http://www.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp). Information on benefits is available in many languages at [www.ssa.gov/multilanguage](http://www.ssa.gov/multilanguage).

## Accessing SSI Benefits

Information about eligibility for SSI can be found [here](#) and how to apply may be found [here](#).

# Refugee Cash Assistance

## What is Refugee Cash Assistance

Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) benefits are generally equivalent to public cash benefit levels established by state governments. RCA helps individuals meet their most basic needs, such as for food, shelter, and transportation. Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees not eligible for SSI or TANF may receive RCA, which may be available for up to eight months to help meet most basic needs, such as food, shelter, and transportation.

RCA processes and benefit amounts differ by location, and mirror the local public cash benefit levels for each state.

## Accessing Refugee Cash Assistance

Contact your [State Refugee Coordinator](#) for information about RCA in your state.

# Refugee Cash Assistance

## What is Refugee Medical Assistance

RMA provides the same health insurance coverage as Medicaid. The benefits are generally similar to Medicaid and services vary depending on state Medicaid programs. RMA services vary depending on state Medicaid programs and medical screening processes. Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees may receive up to 12 months of RMA to cover their medical needs.

## Accessing Refugee Medical Assistance

Contact your [State Refugee Coordinator](#) for information about RMA. In some states, Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees may have access to [Marketplace coverage through the Affordable Care Act](#).

# Employment Assistance: Refugee Support Services (RSS)

## What are Refugee Support Services

Ukrainian humanitarian parolees may be eligible to access RSS, which provides a wide range of services in support of employment and self-sufficiency: employability services; job training and preparation; assistance with job search, placement, and retention; English language training; childcare; transportation; translation and interpreter services; and case management.

## Accessing Refugee Support Services

Local resettlement agencies are most commonly the designated office for RSS, other community based organizations may also be funded by ORR to provide RSS. To find out the closest office in your state, please start with your State Refugee Coordinator (SRC). You can find your state's SRC contact information [here](#).

For a state-by-state listing of local resettlement agencies, view the [ORR state program directory](#), which also includes a link to ORR state contacts.

# Commonly Asked Questions

## **When should the newcomer apply for benefits and services?**

Now. Do not wait. Newcomer benefits and services are only available for a limited time. ORR-funded cash and medical assistance are limited to a maximum of 12 months from their date of eligibility. Most ORR employment services and other services aimed at economic self-sufficiency are available until the end of the parole term or until five years from the date of humanitarian parole, whichever is sooner.

## **What should the newcomer bring?**

The newcomer should bring proof of nationality, humanitarian parole, and the date they received the humanitarian parole. Each individual in a family applying for ORR benefits and services should bring their own proof and the date their humanitarian parole (or other ORR-eligible status) was granted. For mainstream service providers, such as TANF and SNAP, please refer to local guidelines from those offices for required documentation and be sure that newcomers bring this to their appointment(s).

## **What if eligibility workers don't understand the newcomers eligibility for benefits or deny applications from newcomers?**

Sponsor Circles located in a community that has not resettled refugees (and other eligible populations) may find that local public benefits offices like SNAP or TANF may not be familiar with the eligibility of Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees. It may be helpful to review and print out these ORR Policy Letters to bring to enrollment appointments.

- [Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees Eligible for ORR Benefits and Services - Policy Letter 22-13 May 26, 2022](#)
- [Status and Documentation Requirements for the ORR Refugee Resettlement Program](#)

If eligibility workers have questions about the information contained in these Policy Letters, they should contact ORR's Refugee Policy Unit at [RefugeeEligibility@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:RefugeeEligibility@acf.hhs.gov).

## **What if I have more questions about benefits and services?**

Your Sponsor Circle Umbrella (SCU) is available to help you with any questions or concerns that come up for your Sponsor Circle or the newcomers. We encourage you to check in with your SCU contact regularly throughout the sponsorship period as they are here to provide your Sponsor Circle with ongoing support and guidance.