

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES ENROLLMENT



Newcomers apply for food and cash assistance and medical insurance with the Department of Social Services (DSS) within 7 days of arrival. World Relief does this for or with clients. This document is to provide you context on the assistance programs your friend may be enrolled in or needs to be re-enrolled in.

OVERVIEW OF DSS FOOD AND CASH ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

- Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service.
- Provides funds for groceries to end hunger and move people forward to self-sufficiency.
- Amount of support is dependent on the family size, income, and expenses.
- Must re-apply every 6 months.

You can locate the Austin SNAP offices and learn more at the [Texas HHS website](#).

Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)

- Program of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).
- Goal is to help eligible refugees and other humanitarian immigrants by providing cash assistance as they gain self-sufficiency.
- For single individuals or married couples with no children.
- Amount of support is dependent on income and other expenses.
- Lasts up to 8 months from their arrival date (or from the date of their immigration status for asylees or victims of trafficking).

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

- Program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Goal is to provide families with financial assistance and related support services.
- Children over 18 are not included and must apply for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA).
- Amount of support is dependent on the family size and cost of rent.
- Lasts up to 21 months.
- Beginning in the second month after arrival, the families will be expected to contribute at least half of the cash assistance they receive towards rent.

Austin TANIF Offices

- Workforce Commission on 15th street
- Texas HHSC Brown-Heatly Building
- HHSC Benefits Office - Howard
- Austin Free-Net
- Capital Area Food Bank of Texas
- Central Texas Community Health Centers DBA Community Care
- **And other locations found on the [TANF Austin website](#)**

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Matching Grant Cases

If the newcomers are enrolled in the R&P Matching Grant Program through World Relief, they ARE NOT ELIGIBLE for cash assistance through the county. Matching Grant is a referral program to help eligible refugees and other populations achieve economic self-sufficiency through accelerated employment services. If newcomers qualify, they will be enrolled within 31 days of arrival and be provided specific case management for 240 days.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

Most families with children are eligible for Medicaid. Texas Office for Refugees (TXOR) offers the Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) program to provide access to healthcare for individuals who are ineligible for Medicaid.

- Medicaid: a joint federal-state program for low-income residents that pays for certain medical services, such as visits to the doctor, prescription drugs, and hospitalization.
- Only critical and immediate health care needs may be met in the initial weeks of resettlement.
- Refugee medical assistance (RMA) is available for 8 months.
- After enrolling and being approved, the newcomers will receive a packet in the mail with information on their medical benefits such as where they can receive services and how to select a primary care physician.
- Medicaid can retroactively cover medical expenses incurred prior to Medicaid approval.

ENROLLING IN DSS BENEFITS: WHERE TO GO

For information on Medicaid eligibility, program specifics, and office locations, please visit [Texas HHS website](#).

For information on RMA please visit the [TXOR website](#).

ENROLLING IN DSS BENEFITS: WHAT TO BRING

- Receipt of Social Security Card application: When the newcomers applied for social security cards, they were given a piece of paper that confirmed their application. They will need to provide this when applying for DSS benefits.
- I-94 or Passports: The I-94 is an official electronic record of entry into the United States for refugees. They can be accessed shortly after entry, usually within 24 hours. If delayed, still move forward with applying for DSS benefits. Special Immigrant Visa holders (SIVs) will utilize their passport.

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- Document of resettlement grant: WR will need to give the newcomers a document that signifies the total amount of funds they received from their resettlement grant.
- Rental Agreement: During their appointment with their DSS County Caseworker, they will need to show proof of address and the total amount they are spending in rent.

AT THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Every office will have their own protocols. Most likely, enrolling in DSS benefits will involve two separate trips.

- The first trip will be to complete all of the necessary paperwork. Once completed and handed in, they will be given an appointment time to return (often one-two business days later) in order to meet with their DSS County Caseworker.
- The second trip will be to meet with their DSS County Caseworker. Be sure to bring all of the necessary documents listed above.
- Once enrolled, a County Caseworker will be the point of contact for questions related to their benefits.

KEEP IN MIND

Applying for benefits can feel daunting, especially if this is your first go at it. Remember, you do not need to be an expert. Your willingness to learn alongside the newcomers will foster trust and can be a bonding experience. Your role is to assist the newcomers. The goal is that with time they will be able to independently manage their benefits.

REMEMBER TO

- Log your volunteer hours
- Log case notes if required of GNT or inform WR of:
 - Application of Medicaid, cash assistance, and SNAP
 - Receipt of Medicaid, cash assistance, and SNAP cards