



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Office of Refugee Resettlement | 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20201
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COVID-19 Vaccinations and the Initial Domestic Medical Screening

Dear Colleague Letter 21-08

May 20, 2021

Dear Colleague:

This Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) builds on the message outlined in [ORR DCL 21-05](#) by clarifying how Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) funds may be used to support CDC's latest guidance to include COVID-19 vaccinations as part of the initial domestic refugee medical screening.

Impact of COVID-19

The pandemic has significantly impacted domestic refugee medical screenings by causing delays in initiating screenings due to the implementation of quarantine recommendations for newly arrived refugees, as well as reduced clinic capacity to comply with social distancing measures. In response to the pandemic, ORR has issued a series of policy letters allowing states and Replacement Designees to request health-related waivers to assist ORR-eligible populations affected by COVID-19. ORR continues to encourage solutions to ensure medical screening completions, including utilizing telehealth resources and online health education.

On May 5, 2021, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued *Pandemic Notification Alert: Interim COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing Guidance for Newly Arrived Refugees*, clarifying that vaccinating refugees against COVID-19 is now considered part of the initial domestic screening and should be offered to eligible populations. In response, ORR provides the following funding clarifications to assist grantees in incorporating COVID-19 vaccinations into medical screenings programs. Grantees should refer to CDC guidance on how to provide COVID-19 vaccinations.

Medical Screening and Coordination

ORR recognizes incorporating the COVID-19 vaccination into the initial medical screenings may pose logistical challenges in coordinating additional screening visits. In accordance with 45 C.F.R. § 400.107, [ORR State Letter 12-09](#), and [ORR State Letter 12-13](#), ORR clarifies RMA may fund the following activities, if not already covered by another source (e.g., Medicaid, U.S. Department of State's Reception and Placement program), provided that any additional costs are judicious:

- Additional appointments needed to complete the medical screening (e.g., separate tuberculosis [TB] screening if clients were not tested for TB before or at the same time as COVID-19 vaccine administration per CDC recommendations as of the date of this DCL);
- Reasonable interpretation and transportation costs related to additional visits needed to complete medical screenings, including the second COVID-19 vaccine dose if needed;
- Coordination services for clients, including arranging initial and follow up appointments, scheduling reminders, providing COVID-19 education, and other assistance to coordinate screening visits for clients; and

- Outreach and guidance to screening clinics regarding implementation of the CDC's *Pandemic Notification Alert: Interim COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing Guidance for Newly Arrived Refugees* and related subsequent guidance.

Vaccine Administration Reimbursement

Vaccination providers should not bill for COVID-19 vaccines, but may request reimbursement for vaccine administration fees from private insurance or Medicaid. ORR reiterates that in accordance with [ORR Policy Letter 21-05](#), RMA funds can be used to cover COVID-19 vaccine administration fees during medical screenings, if not covered by another federally funded program (e.g. Medicaid).

Grantees should submit a revised FY 2021 ORR-1 with budget justification if a grantee anticipates increased medical screening costs for incorporating COVID-19 vaccinations into the initial medical screenings that would exceed a grantee's current budget estimates.

For any questions about this DCL, please contact Curi Kim, Director of the Division of Refugee Health, at Curi.Kim@acf.hhs.gov.

Sincerely,

Cindy Huang
Director
Office of Refugee Resettlement