

## Q&A on Centralisation of the National Call Centre including the New Appointment Pool Scheduling

UNHCR Lebanon - November 2021

### Disclaimers:

This Q&A is to be used by outreach/front line workers including operators of the UNHCR National Call Centre as a reference to address questions from refugees about the centralisation of the National Call Centre and linked hereto the New Appointment Pool Scheduling for facilitating registration appointments. The content of this Q&A is explained to outreach/front line workers through information sessions. This Q&A is not to be distributed in printed version to refugees.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people. In Lebanon, UNHCR works closely with the Government and numerous other national and international partners in providing protection and assistance to refugees and stateless persons, as well as to Lebanese communities affected by the crisis.

### 1. General introduction

To address the difficulties refugees face in reaching UNHCR by phone, UNHCR is improving its call centre services.

The first element of this improvement is the introduction as of November 2021 of a 'New Appointment Pool Scheduling' for facilitating appointments for registration.

A second element is the centralisation of all the calls to the National Call Centre. From now on, all calls related to (i.) services and assistance provided by UNHCR (ii.) registration appointments (irrespective of the geographic location of the person requesting the appointment) and (iii.) other queries will first be responded to by the National Call Centre.

For queries that are not related to services and assistance nor to registration appointment, the National Call Centre operators will record the claim and refugees will receive a call back for counselling from relevant UNHCR field offices. This is nothing new, the National Call Centre operators have always recorded and referred protection claims to the field offices.

### 2. What if I have questions specifically about food assistance provided by WFP?

As many of you know, WFP has launched its own call centre. For calls about food and cash assistance provided by WFP, refugees can reach WFP directly by calling 1526. WFP's call centre operates from Monday to Saturday, from 8am to 7pm.

### 3. What is the New Appointment Pool Scheduling?

The 'Appointment Pool Scheduling' is a new system for facilitating appointments for registration. To make an appointment, refugees will continue to call UNHCR but instead of receiving an exact date and time for their interview appointment (as has been the case up until now), UNHCR will simply

confirm that the appointment request has been received and provide an indication of the approximate time of the appointment.

Right after the call, the person will receive an automated SMS from UNHCR confirming the appointment request. The SMS will include a personalized link that will direct them to a webpage containing all details related to their appointment. This link can be clicked anytime and will provide real time updates on the appointment, in case of any changes. The link is secured, and your personal data will be protected. Internet connection will be required to access the link, but to ensure that persons who do not have access to the Internet receive updates related to their appointments, UNHCR will send SMS every three months with details/updates.

#### 4. Why is UNHCR introducing a system for scheduling appointments?

This new system for scheduling appointments is being introduced to provide refugees with a more predictable timeframe for appointments. This new system will significantly reduce the need for cancellation and rescheduling of registration appointments, thereby providing refugees with a more transparent access to UNHCR. If UNHCR must cancel an appointment for unexpected reasons, the rescheduled appointment will be issued with minimum delay.

UNHCR is working to increase its capacity to schedule registration appointments in 2022, to reduce the waiting period.

#### 5. For what type of appointments do I need to call UNHCR?

Refugees can call UNHCR for any of the following types of registration appointments:

- New arrivals to the country not yet registered with UNHCR
- Renewal of UNHCR certificate (UN paper) and/or issuance of barcode token
- Housing attestation
- Any kind of issue related to a case file, such as registration of a newborn baby, merging or splitting family members, file review, transfer of files from one area of residence to another etc.

**Important:** Changes to phone numbers should URGENTLY be communicated to UNHCR through its call centre. UNHCR will not be able to communicate important information about registration appointments without up-to-date contact details.

#### 6. Are there other means of requesting an appointment, other than by calling UNHCR?

Please note that registration appointments can only be made by calling UNHCR.

#### 7. How will I know when my exact appointment date is?

Persons wishing to make a registration appointment must first call UNHCR to make a request. They will then receive a SMS to confirm that their request has been recorded in the 'Appointment Pool'.

Reminders are sent by SMS every 3 months with an indication of the date of the registration interview.

Between two to four weeks before the actual interview, the refugee will receive a personal phone call from UNHCR providing the exact date and time of the upcoming interview. Right after the call, UNHCR will send an automated SMS confirming the date and time.

UNHCR encourages all who have received confirmation of an appointment to show up at the Reception Centre on the scheduled time. It will not be possible to enter the Reception Centre before the time of the scheduled appointment. Persons arriving late, may also not be allowed in if the schedule is full.

**8. What happens if I miss the call from UNHCR to confirm my appointment? Will my appointment be cancelled?**

UNHCR will make three attempts to call to confirm the registration appointment, on different dates and times. If a call goes unanswered more than three times, UNHCR will assess what to do. It is very important to communicate any changes to phone numbers to UNHCR through the call centre.

**9. If I received confirmation of an appointment within the past few years, will I now have to make a new request under the Appointment Pool?**

If a family received confirmation of the date and time of their appointment before the announcement of the Appointment Pool Scheduling, they will be expected at the Reception Centre for their appointment as planned.

As UNHCR keeps a record of all requests for appointments, there is no need to call to check if an appointment that has been confirmed is still valid. This will only add more pressure on the call centre. **Any changes to an appointment, will be communicated by UNHCR, through phone and SMS, between two to four weeks before the scheduled appointment.**

**10. What do I do if I cannot come on the day of the appointment or if I miss the appointment date and I do not inform UNHCR?**

UNHCR encourages all who have received confirmation of an appointment to show up at the Reception Centre on the scheduled time. If for any reason, this is not possible, please call UNHCR in advance to ask for a new appointment. Missing an appointment and/or requesting a new appointment may prolong the waiting period for a new appointment. If the missed appointment is due to an emergency, UNHCR will do its best to reschedule as early as possible.

**Note specifically on appointments for renewal of UNHCR certificates (UN paper):**

Please note that having an appointment request recorded with UNHCR, prevents refugees from having their case files inactivated. However, missing an appointment for renewal of a UNHCR certificate, may lead to the inactivation of case files. Active case files are required to be eligible for services and assistance by UNHCR, WFP and partner organisations including health, cash and food and legal assistance. Therefore, it is very important to inform UNHCR when your certificate is expired or when it is not possible to show up for appointments for renewal of UNHCR certificates.

Pregnant women are encouraged to request an appointment as early as possible to avoid long waiting periods.