

Olmsted County Community Services Department

Policy Statement

Code:4.103

TITLE: Emergency Assistance (EA) and Emergency General Assistance (EGA) Policy

PURPOSE: The purpose of this policy is to specify how Olmsted County Community Services Department, Family Support & Assistance Division will use money available through the *MFIP Consolidated Fund* and the *Emergency General Assistance Allocation* to help people in emergency situations with housing and utilities.

REFERENCE: MFIP Consolidated Fund. MN Statutes 256J.626, Subd.3
EGA, MN Statutes 256D.06, Subd.2; Minnesota Rules 95001.1261

PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE: Public Assistance Eligibility Staff

EFFECTIVE: July 7, 2003; Jan 1, 2008; Jan 1, 2009; Jan 1, 2010; Jan 1, 2011; Nov 1, 2011
Updates/Reviews: 04-FEB; 04-APR; 05-JUN; 06-JAN; 07-JAN; 08-JAN; 08-OCT; 08-Dec; 09-Jul; 10-JAN; 11-Apr; 11-Nov; 12-October; November 2014

Purpose and Availability

1. Emergency Assistance (EA / EGA) is short-term assistance for a current shelter/utility crisis that the eligible household cannot meet with their own resources. Resources are defined as current month earned or unearned income and liquid assets.
2. To the extent funds are available through the designated portion of the MFIP Consolidated Fund, as established by the county agency, and the Emergency General Assistance Allocation from the State of Minnesota, aid may be provided to help eligible low income households with emergency housing and utility needs. EGA funding will be used for individuals, married couples, or families not eligible for MFIP; Consolidated Fund resources will be used for MFIP eligible households.
3. Availability of funding will be at the sole determination and discretion of the county agency, or as specifically allocated by the State of Minnesota, Department of Human Services.
4. Referral to other local resources that may meet the emergency need, if not fully met through EA or EGA, is expected (e.g. public or private housing or utility assistance programs).

Eligibility Requirements

1. **Income Below 200% FPG**
To qualify for emergency assistance, the entire assistance unit (everyone who lives in the household) must have a combined net income under 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. The net income for all persons in the assistance unit for the entire calendar month of the application must be used. An earned income disregard will be allowed from earnings to arrive at net income. The disregard is based upon the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) earned income disregard.

2. Frequency limits

No one in the household may have used either Emergency Assistance (EA) or Emergency General Assistance (EGA) in the last twelve months.

3. Residency requirement

The applicant must be a resident of Minnesota for at least (30) thirty days and be physically present in Olmsted County. Migrant workers and their families are exempt from the 30 day requirement if they verify they have worked in Minnesota within the last 12 months and earned at least \$1000 in gross wages in Minnesota.

4. Citizenship requirement

One member of the household must meet Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) citizenship requirements for families and General Assistance (GA) citizenship requirements for single persons. Citizenship requirements by definition are complex, but generally mean legally residing in United States.

5. Household composition requirement (EA)

To be eligible for EA, the household unit must include a caregiver and child who is under the age of 18 or less than 19 years of age and a full time student in secondary school. Pregnant women meet this provision.

Eligibility Determination

1. DHS Combine Application Form (CAF)

Application for EA or EGA must be made using a completed CAF. An interview will be conducted, either in person or via phone.

2. Resources of all household members must be considered

Assistance is provided only if the emergency cannot be resolved by using assets, income, and available resources for all household members, with the exception of income from household members age 19 and under who are enrolled in secondary education.

3. Issuance must resolve the emergency

EA/EGA is not provided unless receiving assistance will resolve the emergency and not just delay the onset of the emergency. The financial assistance required by the emergency must be temporary and must not exceed 30 days. If the situation requires long term attention, staff will refer the applicant to other community resources.

4. Issuance must be cost effective

In addition to resolving an emergency, the issuance must provide a cost effective solution. A cost effective solution may involve a client moving to a more affordable residence or finding an alternative utility source.

5. Test of Income and Assets used for Basic Needs

The household must have used 50% or more of their net income on basic needs during the 60 days prior to the application date. This rule applies to EA as well as EGA.

Basic needs are defined as:

- Food - Thrifty Food Plan - The standardized maximum amount of monthly food support a unit can receive based on its household size less the amount of Thrifty Food Plan benefits already received.
- Shelter Expenses - (includes rent, mortgage, taxes, insurance, housing unit lot rent, association fees).
- Child Care
- Utilities
- Medical Expenses - (examples: prescriptions, medical and dental visits, health insurance premiums, etc.).

- Car Repair – (see Work Expense).
- Work Expense - Allow a flat \$250 allowance in work expense for applicants per month. No need to collect receipts, simply allow the deduction if employed. This allowance of \$250 per month includes money to cover transportation, clothing, and all work related expenses.

Issuance Limits

1. The amount of EA or EGA will be based on household size using the most current MFIP cash grant standard as published by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Each EA / EGA issuance *cannot exceed twice the monthly MFIP cash grant standard for applicant household*. This is based on the number of household members not the MFIP eligible household members.

2. Only vendor or protective payee payments will be issued.
3. Amounts greater than \$1,200 must have supervisory approval prior to issuance.
4. Verification of all factors needed to determine eligibility and emergency circumstances is required prior to issuance of EA / EGA.

Allowable EA/EGA Expenses

6. Allowable Expenses

The emergency must be related to shelter or utilities.

a. HOUSING

EA / EGA for housing is limited to occupancy payments (rent/mortgage) and does not include repairs of any kind.

- i. Verification of payment overdue or threat of eviction notice is required.
- ii. Housing aid is limited to dwellings with a current rental certificate as required by the local jurisdiction, or if a dwelling is not required by local ordinance to have such a certificate, verification of a landlord-tenant relationship must be provided.
- iii. Assistance for a rental unit damage deposit will not be provided if the family has already moved into the rental unit.

b. UTILITIES

Verification of pending utility shut-off is required.

Exceptions and Adjustments

1. Case by case exceptions

The Family Support and Assistance Director may authorize minor deviations from this policy, on a case by case basis, when necessary to achieve the goal of maintaining a subsistence reasonably compatible with decency and health.

Appeals and overpayments

1. **Overpayments**

The agency retains the authority to assess overpayments.

2. **Appeals**

The current appeal process, as defined by the Combined Manual, remains in place.

APPROVED BY:

OCCS Senior Management 9/25/08;
Olmsted County Human Services Committee 12/8/08;
Department of Human Services 12/21/09

Community Services Senior Management 4/4/11;
11/21/11

Reviewed by: 11/2014

- Public Assistance Supervisors
- Community Services Advisory Board
- OC Human Services Cmt

Approved by: 12/2014
Community Services Senior Management

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