

MADISON COUNTY, IOWA

TITLE VI: POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

CHAPTER 60

GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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**6.1 GENERAL PURPOSE:**

General assistance shall be for the purpose of providing, either in kind or by general assistance order, basic or special needs to poor or needy person, who reside in Madison County, when such are not supported by their own means, their responsible relatives or state or federal programs of assistance. General assistance is available to help people in need when the assistance will be conducive to such person's welfare and in the best interests of the public and is necessary to help the person through a period of hardship and/or is necessary to keep the family intact, or when the person is confronted with a dire emergency and when the person has earned/unearned income, the person has no liquid assets or other resources available to meet his/her basic needs, and when the assistance will prevent a crisis.

## **6.2 FORM OF BENEFITS.**

The assistance shall be purchased directly from the supplier or vendor for the applicant or the family unit. It may be for one or more of the items of assistance that can be provided.

## **6.3 DEFINITIONS.**

The definitions of terms used in this chapter are as follows:

1. "Basic needs" shall mean shelter and utilities.
2. "Circumstances which are attributable to the person" shall mean any and all those circumstances occurring to a person which involve failure to safeguard liquid assets and/or resources or failure to prioritize expenses.
  - a. "Failure to safeguard liquid assets and/or resources" shall mean that the person's liquid assets and/or resources were lost or stolen, and a police report has not been filed and there is no evidence that an assault or a break-in has occurred.
  - b. "Failure to prioritize expenses" shall mean that the person has not directed his/her income towards securing and paying for basic needs as a first priority or where the person has demonstrated a continued inability to plan and spread necessary expenditures over the usual period between assistance checks.
3. "Coordinator" means the Coordinator of General Assistance for the County or designee.
4. "Exception to Policy" means the General Assistance Coordinator, or his/her designee, granting assistance.
  - a. to a poor or needy person in an amount in excess of the amount that can be granted by worker's exception(s); or
  - b. to a poor or needy person whose income is in excess of the income eligibility standards imposed by resolution of the Madison County Board of Supervisors; or
  - c. to a poor or needy person who is not eligible for a state or federal program of assistance.

5. Household unit means the individual applying and all persons residing in the home except those persons who are residents of a licensed home providing adult foster care, residential care or room and board.
6. "Liquid assets" means cash or any other item of value of the family unit that can be readily converted to cash within seven (7) days but does not include customary household goods and furniture or other items of personal property that are exempt under Chapter 627, Code of Iowa.
7. "Net Worth" includes liquid assets and income or moneys, as of date of application, from any source, moneys due, savings and other deposits, bonds, cash value of life insurance policies and the value of all other real and personal property that can be converted to cash. This excludes clothing, wedding rings, household goods and personal effects, bedding, towels and similar equipment, one automobile, one homestead, and that which is exempt under Iowa Homestead Law Chapter 561; Chapter 627, excluding 627.6(2), 627.6(8)(A-E); and 627.13. "Net worth" also excludes tools of trade.
8. "Needy person" is a person or family unit of that person, residing in Madison County, Iowa, and who, because of circumstances which are not attributable to that person, needs immediate assistance or a person or family unit of that person who because of circumstances which are attributable to that person needs immediate assistance.
9. "Poor person" is a person or the family unit of that person residing in Madison County, Iowa, and who needs assistance because of a physical or mental disability that makes the person an unemployable person.
10. "Assistance" means the provision of basic and special needs.
11. "Special needs" shall mean transportation, medical needs, and funeral.
12. "State or federal programs of assistance" means a program funded by the state and/or federal government including but not limited to FIP, SSI, SSA, SSDI, Workers' Compensation, Veterans Benefits, Soldiers Relief, CIRHA, Section 8.

13. "Unemployable person" means one of the following:
  - a. A person who's physical and/or mental condition is so severe, as stated by a medical doctor or other competent authority, that employment in the competitive job market is not possible.
  - b. A person who may have some "ability" to work, according to medical doctor, or other competent authority, but cannot apply this ability on the job due to a physical and/or mental impairment. This person would require constant one to one supervision and could be disruptive and unmanageable in a work setting. Therefore, employment in the community is not feasible.
  - c. Adults who by reason of age or lack of job skills are unable to secure employment.
14. "Waiting approval and receipt" means that a poor or needy person has applied for assistance under any State or federal law, has pursued that application with due diligence, and has not received a decision on that application. "
15. "Legal Settlement" issue only relates to the County's ability to legally require reimbursement for General Assistance expenditures from client's County of Legal Settlement as defined by Chapter 252 of the Code of Iowa.

#### **6.4 ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES.**

To be eligible for General Assistance, applicants must meet or comply with the following requirements:

1. Apply for all State or Federal programs of assistance and will meet all program requirements to ensure that they remain eligible for assistance.
2. Complete a General Assistance application and provide requested information. A face to face interview is required unless an exception is made by the General Assistance Coordinator or Designee.
3. Must reside in Madison County.
4. Must be at least 18 years of age.
5. Must be a citizen or resident in the State of Iowa.

6. All persons in the household are employed, actively seeking employment, or unemployable.
7. Household unit income does not exceed 100% of Federal Poverty Guidelines
8. Students are not eligible if working less than 25 hours per week.
9. A person who is eligible for assistance or has received the maximum amount of assistance from Veterans Affairs, will not be eligible for General Assistance.
10. Persons who are discharged from the Family Investment Program (FIP) due to meeting the sixty-month maximum are ineligible for General Assistance.
11. Any grant money that the General Assistance office administers must be used first to meet the needs of a client before General Assistance funds are utilized.
12. To be eligible for second month of assistance in the 12-month period, applicants must comply with requirements for receiving assistance 6.10(b).

**6.5 INCOME GUIDELINES FOR ASSISTANCE ELIGIBILITY**

Assistance shall be provided to eligible poor and needy persons whose income is less than 100% of the Federal Poverty guideline.

**6.6 BASIC NEEDS BENEFITS.**

Specific basic needs assistance may be granted as follows:

**A. Shelter**

- a. Rent payments shall only be made to owners of property or their designee.
- b. In most cases rent payment may not be paid to any relative.
- c. Payments for rent shall not exceed \$450.
- d. When utilities are included in rent, payment shall not exceed \$550
- e. General Assistance is not available for deposits, first month's rent or back rent.
- f. Landlord must agree to accept a County voucher and agree not to evict for a period of 30 days from the date specified on the voucher.
- g. General Assistance will not be used for additional rent to cover pets.
- h. Affordability of housing is a consideration in determining eligibility.

**B. Utilities**

- a. Utility assistance includes payments for gas, electricity, water and fuel oil for the purpose of heating and cooking. General Assistance will only pay for a minimum fill for propane when propane is at 30% capacity or less.
- b. In determining eligibility for utility assistance, the applicant must be the individual in whose name the utilities are listed or another member of the household unit.
- c. General Assistance is not available for delinquent service, reconnect fees, utility deposits, repairs and/or miscellaneous equipment-related fees.
- d. Utility assistance shall not exceed \$250 per instance.

**6.7 LIMITATIONS ON SPECIAL NEEDS.**

The following special needs shall be in addition to the benefits allowed under of this ordinance:

**A. Transportation**

1. Actual cost of needed public transportation or where such is not available or feasible, the purchase of necessary gas and oil. Actual cost of purchase of necessary gas not to exceed a maximum of 20 gallons. Fuel vouchers will be provided for the purpose of job searches only. "Transportation" does not include car repairs.

**B. Medical**

1. Reasonable value of needed services if the services are not available under Medicaid and/or the Medically Needy program.
2. Prior authorization from the Coordinator or Designee must be obtained before obtaining medical assistance. In case of an emergency, when it is impossible to obtain prior authorization, the General Assistance office must be contacted on the first working day following the emergency.
3. Payments for inpatient services cannot exceed \$1000.00. Payments for inpatient services will not be made to a County Hospital located within the County.

4. Vendor payments may be made for prescriptions and for some medical needs that require no prescription, such as insulin needles, bandages, etc.
5. Payment may be made for dental work necessary to alleviate pain. Dental vendor payments will not exceed \$200.00.

**C. Funeral**

1. Eligibility for funeral assistance shall be provided to a poor person, as determined by the Coordinator, so long as the budgeted funds are available and have not been previously expended.
2. Payment shall be for cremation only and shall not exceed \$750 per individual, so long as budgeted funds are available and have not been previously expended.

**6.8 DURATION.**

**Poor Person:** Assistance can be used up to two times in a 12-month period. The two (2) month period is to begin with the month when the first assistance is issued.

**Needy Person:** Assistance can be used up to two times in a 12-month period. The two (2) month period is to begin with the month when the first assistance is issued.

**6.9 GRANTING OF EXCEPTION TO POLICY.**

An exception to policy may be granted for the purpose of providing assistance to:

1. A poor or needy person who has received the maximum assistance
2. A poor or needy person whose income is in excess of the income eligibility standard imposed by the Board of Supervisors.
3. A poor or needy person who is not eligible for a state or federal program of assistance.

**6.10 REQUIREMENTS FOR RECEIVING ASSISTANCE**

Needy person:

- a) A needy person who is available for employment and is unemployed shall immediately register for employment with Iowa Workforce Development. The needy person shall seek and accept any reasonable employment whether or not

it is suitable employment under the guidelines of Iowa Workforce Development. A refusal or failure to actively seek employment or refusal or failure to accept reasonable employment offered shall disqualify the needy person from receiving future benefits. The needy person may be required to provide proof that he or she is actively seeking employment. Once employed, a needy person may be required to demonstrate a good-faith effort to retain employment.

- b) A needy person who receives General Assistance funding, will be required to meet with General Assistance staff a minimum of two times for education and goal planning to reduce future need of assistance. In order to be eligible for the second month of assistance, a needy person must keep and participate in two sessions with General Assistance staff.

#### **6.11 RECOVERY OF EXPENDITURES.**

Expenditures for general assistance shall be recovered or repaid as follows:

1. From any homestead of a recipient to the extent provided in Section 252.14 of the Code of Iowa.
2. From the county of legal settlement of a recipient having legal settlement outside of Madison County, in accordance with sections 252.22 through 252.24 of the Code of Iowa, or from any other government or government agency to such extent as may be permitted by law.

#### **6.12 APPLICATION FOR ASSISTANCE.**

Applications for assistance shall be submitted by needy or poor persons to the Coordinator of General Assistance or designee at the Community Services Office in Winterset, Iowa, during usual business hours upon forms provided by the Coordinator. If, because of undue hardship, a needy or poor person cannot come to the General Assistance office, the Coordinator shall mail such person an application form or deliver the application form to such person.

If the applicant or the household unit is or appears to be eligible for assistance from any other federal, State or local source, the Coordinator shall immediately refer the applicant to that source. It shall be the obligation of the applicant to immediately make application to that



source, and applicant shall pursue such application with due diligence. If requested, the person applying shall provide the Coordinator with a verified statement of net worth, federal and State income tax returns for the past one (1) year, medical reports, medical authorization, bank statements or anything else required by the Coordinator that bears upon the person's eligibility and need for assistance. If past records are not available, then an oath may be taken. The Coordinator may also require, upon approval of the Board of Supervisors, that the applicant submit to a physical or mental examination to determine applicant's capacity to labor. The Coordinator shall also receive anything that the person applying desires to submit to establish eligibility or need, including statements or letters, medical reports and other written documents, as well as the verbal statements of the applicant. The Coordinator shall then proceed to conduct an investigation concerning the applicant's eligibility and needs. The applicant's file and the investigation and findings of the Coordinator shall be made available to that applicant, upon request, or to the applicant's attorney or other representative as designated by the client, by written authorization.

**6.13 INITIAL DETERMINATION.**

1. The Coordinator shall make an initial determination of the eligibility and needs of the applicant within ten (10) working days of the receipt of the application. Upon that determination, the Coordinator shall notify the applicant by telephone immediately, if possible, and within two (2) working days after the determination, mail to the applicant by ordinary mail, at the last address shown on the application, the Coordinator's written decision showing the reasons for the determination and the statutes or ordinances applied, together with the specific benefits and their amounts to which the applicant is entitled and proceed to provide such assistance.
2. If the Coordinator cannot make the initial determination within ten (10) working days, the Coordinator shall immediately inform the applicant by telephone, if possible, of the reasons why such determination cannot be made. The Coordinator shall also mail to the applicant, by ordinary mail, within two (2) working days thereafter, the Coordinator's written decision showing the reasons why such determination could not be made.

3. If an applicant has been previously found eligible within the last six (6) months, the Coordinator need not receive a new application but may update the application as the applicant requests benefits and then proceed to a determination of whether or not current assistance is warranted. Notice and mailing of such determination shall be provided as mentioned above.

**6.14 APPEAL.**

1. Every applicant, whether granted assistance or not, shall be informed in the Coordinator's written decision of the applicant's right to appeal, as well as the time limits, from such decision to the Board of Supervisors. The applicant shall be informed (a) of the method by which an appeal may be taken and (b) that the applicant may represent himself or herself or may be represented by another person.
2. Upon denial of General Assistance, the applicant shall receive written notice including right to appeal within fifteen (15) working days.
3. Any written appeal to the Coordinator by or on behalf of an applicant requesting appeal of the Coordinator's determination shall be received by the Coordinator and put immediately upon the Board of Supervisors' agenda, in accordance with Chapter 21 of the Code of Iowa, for the next regular Board meeting, provided that such appeal shall not be heard sooner than five (5) days after appeal is taken. The written appeal must be made to the Coordinator within ten (10) working days of the Coordinator's determination, provided the applicant's current address, telephone number, and reasons for the appeal are stated. The applicant shall be informed by ordinary mail of the date and time of the hearing before the Board. The applicant and the applicant's attorney or other representative, as designated by the applicant, upon written authorization, shall be granted access by the Coordinator to applicant's assistance case file if request is made. When emergency assistance has been denied, the appeal shall be taken immediately to the Board of Supervisors.

**6.15 APPEAL HEARING.**

1. The Board of Supervisors shall hear the applicant's appeal anew at the time scheduled in the agenda unless continuance is requested by the applicant. The applicant shall be permitted to present whatever evidence is desired in support of the appeal, including testifying, having other witnesses testify, offering documentary evidence and reasonable cross examination of other witnesses, if present. The technical rules of evidence shall not apply. The Board may set reasonable times for the parties to present evidence of any appeal. The applicant's file shall be admitted into evidence. The Board may question the applicant, and the Coordinator shall present the Board with the reasons for the determination. The appeal will be tape recorded. The hearing before the Board will not be an open meeting under Chapter 21 of the Code of Iowa, since the confidential files of the applicant will be in evidence. When the Board deliberates on the appeal, no parties shall be present.
2. The Board shall make a decision on the appeal within five (5) days. The Board's decision shall be only on the basis of the evidence submitted before the Board. The applicant shall be informed immediately by telephone of the decision and within four (4) working days thereafter the Board shall mail to applicant at applicant's last known address, by ordinary mail, its decision in writing. The decision shall state the reasons for the action, together with any statute or ordinance applied. The Board's decision shall also state that an appeal may be made of the Board's determination, as provided below, and the method by which such appeal may be taken.
3. A person who is aggrieved by a decision of the Board of Supervisors may appeal the decision as if it were a contested case before an agency and as if the person had exhausted administrative remedies in accordance with the procedures and standards in Section 17A.19, Subsections 2 through 8, except paragraphs b and c of Subsection 8, and Section 17A.20 of the Code of Iowa.

**6.16 ACTIONS OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS.**

In the event that the Board of Supervisors, in reviewing the actions of the Coordinator, questions any allowance of assistance benefits allowed by the Coordinator, it shall take no action concerning such allowance until it conducts a hearing. This hearing, the reasons for it, and notification to the applicant shall be given in the same manner as if the applicant had taken an appeal. This hearing shall proceed in the same manner as an appeal from the Coordinator's determination.

**6.17 ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS.**

The Coordinator may allow, upon application, the additional benefits provided for in Chapter 252 of the Code of Iowa. The provisions of Chapter 252.13 of the Code of Iowa, for repayment of benefits to the County, are applicable and the applicant shall acknowledge the same in writing.

**6.18 CONFIDENTIALITY.**

All applicants and/or recipients have the right to confidential treatment of information concerning their situation; however, it should be understood that such information may be shared, when appropriate, and with the Board of Supervisors. A certain amount of information may need to be released to direct providers of service, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, hospitals, doctors, clothing stores, landlord, utility provider, etc., in order to authorize release of goods to the client. In certain instances when the General Assistance employee is working cooperatively with other agencies, i.e., Veterans Affairs, Community Action Center, and/or County departments, certain information may be released in order to complete transactions. The client's signature on the application not only indicates information given on the application is factual and true to the best of the client's ability, but also authorizes the department to conduct transactions with those mentioned above, obtain further information, verify information and to cooperate with others necessary to complete the application, eligibility, final determination and transaction of assistance process.

**6.19 FRAUDULENT ACTIVITY.**

Any person or persons applying for or receiving assistance through the County General Assistance who knowingly and intentionally: (1) provides false information in order to become eligible or continue to be eligible, or (2) who alters vouchers or claims issued providers in order to receive additional assistance, will be denied future assistance for a period of three (3) years. Any individuals having allegedly committed fraudulent activity will be referred by the Coordinator to the County Attorney for potential prosecution.

**INCOME ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

(As of 1/13/21)

Family Size	<u>100%</u>			<u>150%</u>			<u>200%</u>			<u>250%</u>		
	<u>Gross Income</u>			<u>Gross Income</u>			<u>Gross Income</u>			<u>Gross Income</u>		
	Hourly	Monthly	Annual	Hourly	Monthly	Annual	Hourly	Monthly	Annual	Hourly	Monthly	Annual
1	\$6.19	\$1,073	\$12,880	\$9.29	\$1,610	\$19,320	\$12.38	\$2,147	\$25,760	\$15.48	\$2,683	\$32,200
2	\$8.38	\$1,452	\$17,420	\$12.56	\$2,178	\$26,130	\$16.75	\$2,903	\$34,840	\$20.94	\$3,629	\$43,550
3	\$10.56	\$1,830	\$21,960	\$15.84	\$2,745	\$32,940	\$21.12	\$3,660	\$43,920	\$26.39	\$4,575	\$54,900
4	\$12.74	\$2,208	\$26,500	\$19.11	\$3,313	\$39,750	\$25.48	\$4,417	\$53,000	\$31.85	\$5,521	\$66,250
5	\$14.92	\$2,587	\$31,040	\$22.38	\$3,880	\$46,560	\$29.85	\$5,173	\$62,080	\$37.31	\$6,467	\$77,600
6	\$17.11	\$2,965	\$35,580	\$25.66	\$4,448	\$53,370	\$34.21	\$5,930	\$71,160	\$42.76	\$7,413	\$88,950
7	\$19.29	\$3,343	\$40,120	\$28.93	\$5,015	\$60,180	\$38.58	\$6,687	\$80,240	\$48.22	\$8,358	\$100,300
8	\$21.47	\$3,722	\$44,660	\$32.21	\$5,583	\$66,990	\$42.94	\$7,443	\$89,320	\$53.68	\$9,304	\$111,650
9	\$23.65	\$4,100	\$49,200	\$35.48	\$6,150	\$73,800	\$47.31	\$8,200	\$98,400	\$59.13	\$10,250	\$123,000
10	\$25.84	\$4,478	\$53,740	\$38.75	\$6,718	\$80,610	\$51.67	\$8,957	\$107,480	\$64.59	\$11,196	\$134,350
Each add. Mbr	\$2.18	\$378	\$4,540	\$3.27	\$568	\$6,810	\$4.37	\$757	\$9,080	\$5.46	\$946	\$11,350

Hourly income is calculated on employment of 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year