



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
Department of Public Welfare

OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM

Cash Assistance

SUBJECT: Elimination of General Assistance (GA) Cash Assistance and Other Legislative Changes

TO: Executive Directors

FROM: Rich Wallace
Acting Director
Bureau of Operations

Purpose

To inform County Assistance Offices (CAOs) of the changes required due to new legislation. Changes include:

- 1) Discontinuance of the GA cash assistance program;
- 2) New job search requirements as a condition of eligibility for cash assistance and GA-related medical assistance;
- 3) Changes to RESET sanctions for non-compliance with work requirements for TANF and GA-related NMP recipients subject to work requirements;
- 4) Changes to referral policy to employment and training programs;
- 5) Providing instructions on completing an AMR for GA-related medical assistance;
- 6) A new 100 hour/month work requirement for GA-MNO custodial parents.

Several additional Operations Memoranda are issued to discuss changes effective July 1, 2012:

- General Assistance Related Medical Assistance
- Changes in How CAOs Determine RESET Program Participation Requirements
- Changes to RESET Sanction Policy
- PA WORKWEAR (PAWW) Changes

This Operations Memorandum details the discontinuance of GA cash assistance and new job search requirements for TANF and for those GA-related NMP applicants and recipients who are subject to work requirements.

Background

GA is state funded assistance that provides money and other services for eligible individuals who do not meet the requirements for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Pennsylvania is facing a budget shortfall for FY 2011-12 and eliminating the GA cash program will reduce state spending and help balance the budget. Act __ of 2012, effective July 1, 2012 revises the Public Welfare Code to:

- Eliminate General Assistance cash assistance - GA Cash Assistance program shall cease July 1, 2012. These individuals will continue to be eligible for GA medical assistance.
- Make job search a condition of eligibility for cash assistance (TANF) and GA-related NMP MA - As a condition of eligibility at application, applicants must apply for at least three jobs per week unless good cause is established.

Discussion

Elimination of GA Cash Assistance and Continuation of MA

Currently, GA cash recipients receive MA as well as GA cash assistance. These individuals will continue to be eligible for MA when GA cash is eliminated. A conversion in the system to change the category of all GA cash assistance budgets to the correct medical assistance category will occur the last week of June 2012. **No current recipient of GA cash assistance will lose their medical assistance as a result of this conversion.** The majority of GA cash budgets will be converted automatically to the correct MA budgets. The few that require CAO review will be provided to the CAOs in an exception report file. Immediate action is required to put these individuals into the correct MA category to ensure that there is no gap in medical assistance.

This GA cash assistance discontinuance only affects state funded cash as defined under 62 P.S. 432(3) i.e. individuals who are one of the following:

- 18-20 years old and in secondary school expected to graduate by age 21
- Children under the age of 21 not eligible for TANF
- In a 2-parent household with children under 13 or 13 and older and disabled
- Temporarily or permanently disabled
- Non-parental caretakers of children under 13 or 13 and older and disabled
- Undergoing drug and alcohol treatment that precludes employment
- A pregnant woman not eligible for TANF
- A victim of domestic violence

Federally funded cash assistance categories will continue. In addition to TANF, these include:

- Repatriated Nationals (D/05)
- Refugee Cash Assistance (D/02)

NOTE: CIS uses the 'D' category code for these federal categories; however, they are not General Assistance.

Individuals will not be able to apply for GA cash after July 1, 2012. All applications received in the month of June 2012, even if processed in July, will be processed with a closing date of June 30, 2012 using a Non Continuous Eligibility (NCE) period based on their date of application.

A onetime cash closing notice and an MA notice of continuing eligibility (notice code 477) will be sent for all converted cases when the batch process to convert cash to MA occurs. SNAP benefits will be adjusted after the cash closes and notice of change in SNAP benefits will also be sent. An exception report will be generated by the batch process for any SNAP recalculation failing completion. CAOs must review this report and process any of their budgets that failed during the batch process.

An essential person is a GA-cash eligible individual living in a TANF household and who is related to the TANF child. Effective July 1, 2012 the system will no longer allow these essential persons to be created. Existing EE individuals will remain in the TANF budget until SAR or Renewal, or until maintenance transaction is performed on the case. These individuals will remain eligible for Medicaid.

The batch process will carry over the reapplication date of the GA budget to the converted MA equivalent budget. If the MA budgets need to be enrolled in SAR, the batch will create the SAR dates. The reapplication date for MA budgets will be the same as the original GA cash budgets and will not be changed as a part of this initiative. If the reapplication date is less than six months from the batch conversion date, a SAR date will not be necessary. If the reapplication date is greater than six months from the batch conversion date, the SAR date will be set to be six months prior to the reapplication date.

All inter-county transfer cases will require steps from the transferring county to ensure that the processing of closure and conversion is completed within the one time batch processing. All open D category budgets should be closed with effective date June 30, 2012 and open for the appropriate MA category with effective date of July 1, 2012 before transferring to the new county of residence. No D budgets will be able to be transferred.

During conversion, the batch will create Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) dates for the MA budgets to initiate a batch notification to Managed Care. All D cases will retain their current managed care plan in their mapped MA equivalent budget. Other external systems, such as PELICAN and PASCES will receive notification of this one-time batch conversion process.

Job Search as a Condition of Eligibility for TANF and GA-Related NMP MA

As a condition of eligibility for TANF and for GA-related NMP MA, an applicant who is not employed at least 20 hours per week is required to apply for at least three jobs per

week while the application is pending, unless the applicant is exempt from work requirements or establishes good cause. The applicant is required to provide verification of these job applications before assistance may be authorized. If all other pending verification is received within the 30 day application period, TANF or GA-related NMP MA cannot be opened without proof that the required job applications have been completed.

Applicants who claim an exemption from work requirements must verify that they are exempt. The applicant may be given good cause, if needed, while verification of the exemption is pending. Exemptions include: verified physical or mental disability, caring for a child under the age of six with no alternate child care available, or the applicant is under the age of 18.

This requirement to apply for three jobs a week while application is pending also applies to GA Non-Money Payment (NMP) MA applicants. See OPS [2], "General Assistance Related Medical Assistance".

This requirement to apply for jobs does not impact the job search time frame allowed for initial job search after authorization. Once TANF is opened, recipients will be referred to a CAO directed activity, to EARN or to Work Ready. See OPS [3], "Changes in How CAOs Determine RESET Program Participation Requirements", for details on the changes to RESET referrals.

Additional changes to the length and type of sanctions and requirements for maintaining and verifying compliance before a sanction may be ended are detailed in OPS [4], "Changes to RESET Sanction Policy".

Next Steps

1. Review this memorandum with all CAO staff
2. Direct questions regarding this memorandum to your Area Manager.
3. This Operations Memorandum will become obsolete upon completion of this initiative and all information is incorporated into the Cash Assistance Handbook.