



COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES  
OF PHILADELPHIA

Recent Changes to Programs  
Administered by the  
Department of Public Welfare  
July 26, 2012

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Recent Changes in DPW Benefits

- Elimination of General Assistance cash assistance on August 1
- Changes in TANF welfare-to-work rules
  - New pre-eligibility work search
  - Need to comply with work requirements before sanction is lifted
  - Full family sanctions sooner
- Changes to Medical Assistance
  - Prior GA recipients continue to be eligible for Medical Assistance
  - GA MNO recipients have new work requirement
  - Immigrants needing Emergency Medical Assistance
  - Lawfully residing pregnant women and children
  - Pennsylvania and the Affordable Care Act
- SNAP (food stamps) asset test

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General Assistance

- General Assistance has provided \$205 a month (\$316 for couples) for individuals who:
  - have no other income,
  - are not living with children, and
  - meet one of the following criteria:
    - Medically-verified disability
    - Domestic violence survivors
    - Drug or alcohol treatment program that precludes work
    - Good Samaritan Neighbors, i.e., those taking care of un-related children
- General Assistance has been the only source of income for many elderly immigrants who cannot work, since they cannot get SSI.



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### General Assistance Has Been Eliminated

- Gov. Corbett's budget eliminated General Assistance effective August 1.
- There is no other safety net for this population.
- As of April 2012, there were 69,116 Pennsylvanians, including 35,097 Philadelphians.

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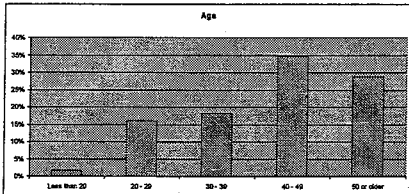
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### Who receives GA?



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### What to Tell Folks Losing GA?

- See if qualify for cash under another program:
  - TANF for pregnant women,
  - TANF for people caring for children
  - TANF for children
  - State Blind Pension for people with vision problems
- If might fit in another category, **appeal** and call CLS or come through intake.

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### What to Tell Folks Losing GA? (continued)

- Apply for SSI and stick with it.
  - Get in treatment and stay with it.
  - Appeal if SSI application is turned down.
  - Get a lawyer for your appeal.
- Rally 7/31 at Governor's Office

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### Changes to TANF Work Rules

- New pre-eligibility work search
  - Must apply for 3 jobs/week
  - Starts when applicant notified (at interview or by mail) of requirement
  - Must provide proof (Job Application Report Form) before benefits will be authorized
  - UC job search form may be used as proof

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### Exceptions to Pre-Eligibility Job Search

- Already working 20 hours/week
- Disabled or caring for disabled HH member
- Child under 1 (max of 12 months in parent's life)
- Under 18 in high school or GED program
- Domestic Violence Survivor
- Child under 6 and no child care
- No transportation
- Other good cause (homelessness, personal emergency etc)

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## Changes to TANF Work Rules

- **Sanctions: New Penalties for Non-Compliance with Work Requirements**
- **Must comply with work requirements for at least 1 week before benefits will be reinstated at the end of the first or second sanction period**
- **Pre & post 24 months distinction eliminated**

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## New Penalties for First Sanction

- **First Sanction: individual cut off for 30 days**
  - sanction continues until in compliance for at least one week
  - After 90 days, entire family ineligible until in compliance for at least one week

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## New Penalties for Second Sanction

- **Second Sanction: individual cut off for 60 days**
  - sanction continues until in compliance for at least one week
  - After 60 days, entire family ineligible until in compliance for at least one week

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### New Penalties for Third Sanctions

- Third Sanction makes entire family permanently ineligible
- Be sure to appeal any sanction notice
- Remember Good Cause –including Domestic Violence
- Refer to CLS or PLA for representation!

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### Changes to GA-related MA

- All people who will lose their GA cash assistance should continue to qualify for MA (and food stamps.)
- MA providers cannot refuse to treat or give medicines to a MA recipient who cannot afford the co-pay.
- GA MA will continue. All those who would have qualified for GA cash can still apply for and receive GA MA.

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### Changes to GA-related MA (continued)

- DPW is predicting many people losing GA cash assistance will not bother to submit renewals to continue to receive MA.
- Possible change in Employability Assessment Form.
- Custodial parents in the Medically Needy Only category will only be eligible if they are working 100 hours/month. (If they are working this much, their income will make them ineligible.)

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## Emergency MA

- Emergency Medical Assistance provides health coverage for people whose immigration status ordinarily makes them *ineligible* for MA, but who have emergency medical conditions.
- Two main groups who need EMA:
  - Legal immigrants who have not yet been here 5 years (except refugees/asylees, pregnant women, and children, who are not subject to the 5-year bar);
  - Undocumented immigrants.

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## Emergency MA (continued)

An emergency medical condition is:

- A medical condition manifesting itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity including severe pain so that the absence of immediate medical attention **could reasonably be expected** to result in **one** of the following:
  - Placing the patient's health in serious jeopardy.
  - Serious impairment to bodily functions.
  - Serious dysfunction of a bodily organ or part.

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## Recent Changes in Emergency MA

- Stricter interpretation of what constitutes an "emergency medical condition."
- People receiving EMA are no longer put in health plans, but are kept in fee-for-service MA (Access).
- More rigorous prior authorization procedures, and many more denials of treatment.

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### Helping People Who Need Emergency MA

- Medical documentation of emergency medical condition has become much more important.
  - Ask doctors to be specific, especially about the likely harm, the treatment needed, the severity of the symptoms, the expected duration of needed treatment, and urgency.
- Coverage for chronic conditions has become much harder.
  - People with non-emergent chronic conditions may need to rely on City Health Centers.

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### MA Eligibility of Lawfully Present Kids and Pregnant Women

- Now pregnant women and children under 21 need only be “lawfully residing” in the U.S. (and otherwise eligible) to get MA.
- This means some people who are not “qualified” immigrants can now get MA (if pregnant or under 21).
  - E.g., people with TPS status, anyone with work authorization.

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### Pennsylvania and the Affordable Care Act The Supreme Court Decision

- Upholds the ACA’s individual mandate, guarantees of insurance access for people with pre-existing conditions, federal funding for health insurance exchanges, subsidies for people under 400% FPL.
- Does NOT strike down Medicaid expansion, but prohibits feds from removing all federal Medicaid funding from states that do not expand Medicaid.

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**Pennsylvania and the  
Affordable Care Act**

**Expand Medicaid**

This makes sense for our clients, for medical providers serving low-income patients, and for the state. 100% federal match for first 3 years, declining slowly over the next 3 years to 90% in 2020, to cover everyone under 133% FPL. Hospitals will lose DSH funds in 2014, so MA expansion is crucial to many hospitals serving low-income communities.

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**Pennsylvania and the  
Affordable Care Act**

**Enhance MA and CHIP application processes**

ACA requires electronic application processes that are faster and more efficient than the system currently in place in PA. PA can take advantage of federal funds made available through the ACA to upgrade their systems.

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**Pennsylvania and the  
Affordable Care Act**

**Set up an exchange**

Deadlines to get a PA exchange started are coming up very soon. Setting up a partnership exchange with the federal government for now will allow time for preparation of a PA exchange.

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## SNAP (Food Stamps)

- Families can receive food stamps even if they are working. A family of three, for example, can have up to \$2,472 per month in income (160% FPIG).

Maximum Grant	
1	\$200
2	\$367
3	\$526
4	\$668

- Immigrants are generally ineligible for their first five years in the U.S.
  - Exceptions: children, people receiving disability benefits, and refugees/asylees are all eligible with no wait.



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## SNAP Asset Test

- As of May 1, asset test reinstated:
  - \$5,500 limit for most;
  - \$9,000 limit if anyone in household is over 60 or receiving disability benefits.
  - Must submit bank statements or other proof at application.

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## Exceptions to SNAP Asset Test

- The following assets *do not count*:
  - Residence,
  - Retirement funds,
  - Life insurance,
  - One car per household,
  - Burial plots,
  - Income-producing property,
  - Inaccessible resources (less than \$1,500 equity value),
  - Tax refunds, and more.
  - See DPW's SNAP Handbook § 540.5, available online.

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Questions?

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Contact Information

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