

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner



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SUBJECT: GA Guidance for Economic Stimulus Payments
TO: Municipalities providing General Assistance
DATE: January 14, 2021

Dear Municipal Officer:

This memorandum is intended to provide guidance regarding the administration of the General Assistance (GA) program during the civil-emergency caused by the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, as authorized by Governor Janet T. Mills on December 22, 2020.

Economic Impact Payments

Economic Impact payments, also referred to as stimulus payments, received as part of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 shall not be considered as a resource in determining eligibility for General Assistance. Per SFY 20 Executive Order 29-A, as authorized by Governor Mills, stimulus payments made by the federal government as part of its response to COVID-19 shall be excluded from the definition of “income” or “lump sum payment” for the purposes of determining a household’s eligibility for General Assistance.

During the COVID-19 civil emergency, it is critical that all safety net programs remain accessible for all of Maine’s vulnerable population. Maine General Assistance applicants are at higher risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19 due to limited resources and income to provide for basic necessities such as rent, housing, medications, food and cleaning supplies. The suspension of 22 MRS §4301(7) with respect to Economic Impact payments will provide financial support for basic necessities and a more uniform application of how stimulus payments are treated with respect to other public benefit programs that assist vulnerable populations in Maine.

Verification of Economic Impact Payments

General Assistance Administrators should exempt Economic Impact payments in the same manner as done with LiHEAP benefits. Administrators may ask applicants to verify the date and amount of Economic Impact payment received. Administrators may also request that General Assistance applicants track their funds to document how these stimulus payments are being expended, for the purposes of discerning stimulus payments from commingling funds. As authorized by Governor Janet T. Mills, in SFY 20 Executive Order 29, General Assistance applicants unable to provide income and expense verifications shall have eligibility determined without penalties by self-attestation, when the applicant has a current application for General Assistance, and reports that the failure to provide verification is for a COVID-19 related reason.

Updates

Updates from the Department of Health and Human Services will be provided as they become available. Department staff will continue to be available to answer emails and phone calls to the GA Hotline.

For questions concerning the eligibility of an applicant, or to report changes regarding hours of operation or contact information for your afterhours overseer, please contact the General Assistance Hotline at 1-800-442-6003.

Thank you,

Sara Denson, General Assistance Program Manager
Maine Department of Health and Human Services