

Janet T. Mills  
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.  
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services  
Office for Family Independence  
109 Capitol Street  
11 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011  
Tel.: (207) 624-4168; Toll-Free: (800) 442-6003  
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay); Fax: (207) 287-3455

**SUBJECT:** GA Guidance During the COVID-19 Civil Emergency  
**TO:** Municipalities providing General Assistance  
**DATE:** April 28, 2020

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, in Executive Order 29-A, on April 27, 2020.

### **Economic Impact Payments**

Economic Impact payments, also referred to as stimulus payments, received under S. 3548, 116<sup>th</sup> Congress: CARES Act shall not be considered as a resource in determining eligibility for General Assistance. Per Executive Order 29-A, as authorized by Governor Mills, these payments are exempted from the requirements of income usage for the purposes of determining 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 health disparities related to poverty and 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**

Economic Impact payments shall be considered exempt from the definition of "income or "lump sum payment" for the duration of the COVID-19 state of emergency in Maine, and for a period of 30 days after the termination of the state of emergency in Maine. 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 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 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 Russell, General Assistance Program Manager  
Maine Department of Health and Human Services