

Department of Health and Human Services - Biennial Budget FY'14-15

General Assistance (GA)

1. **Request:** Please provide more information on the emergency exceptions to the housing 270 day limit.

Response:

Clarification on exceptions to the 270 day GA Housing Assistance Cap

Legislative language from LD 1903

Sec. R-2. 22 MRSA §4308, sub-§§1-A and 1-B are enacted to read:

1-A. Limit on housing assistance. Except as provided in subsections 1-B and 2, housing assistance provided pursuant to this chapter is limited to a maximum of 9 months during the period from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013.

1-B. Extension of housing assistance due to hardship. An applicant is eligible for housing assistance under this chapter beyond the limit established in subsection 1-A if the applicant has a severe and persistent mental or physical condition warranting such an extension or has an application for assistance pending with the federal Social Security Administration.

2. Emergencies. A person who does not have sufficient resources to provide one or more basic necessities in an emergency is eligible for emergency general assistance, even when that applicant has been found ineligible for nonemergency general assistance, except as provided in this subsection.

There are three exceptions to the 270 day (nine month) GA housing assistance cap.

1. If the GA administrator determines that the GA recipient has a severe and persistent mental or physical condition which would restrict that individual's ability to provide resources necessary to provide for their housing needs.
 2. The second exception would be that the client has a pending application for disability benefits filed with the Social Security administration.
 3. The third exception to the housing cap would be that the client is eligible for emergency General Assistance. For an individual to qualify for this last exception it must be documented in the case file/narrative that without GA housing assistance, the person would be at "imminent" risk of losing their housing within the next thirty days. Documentation may be, but need not be, an eviction notice.
2. **Request:** Please provide information on GA funding rates for homeless shelters and accounting of how those funds are used by the shelters.

Response:

Portland

- Portland has an unofficial agreement with the State (the Department is unsure of the origins of this agreement) which allows the City of Portland to negotiate bed night rates with the homeless shelters. As a result there are agreements with the City of Portland and the Shelters on the bed night amounts. In Portland the bed night amount is arrived at by

looking at the total overhead costs of the shelter, Rent, utility expenses, staff not including any case management staff and dividing the amount of beds into that amount.

- Portland has 311 shelter beds
- 70% are occupied by GA eligible individuals
- They get 20-\$24 per bed night
- 70% of 311 = 220 times \$20 per bed night times 365 days = \$1,606,000.00 per year for shelter beds in Portland

Bangor

- The bed night cost for the shelter and it was calculated by adding the heated zero bedroom rate for Bangor and adding the maximum allowance for electricity w/hot water and dividing by the 30 night eligibility period. The \$414.30 monthly (\$13.81 bed night), was calculated years ago and just has not been updated since the maximums changed. The shelter/city has not requested additional funding so rate has not been recalculated.
 - Official beds are 133 plus 26 overflow beds = 159 total
 - If we use 70% of that's 111 beds times \$13.81 per bed night times 365 days per year = \$559, 512 per year.
 - How many shelter beds does each of the service center cities have? How many of those are owned by the cities? How many are owned by a non-profit?

Homeless shelters in Portland and Bangor and the bed capacity of each can be seen below.

Portland

Shelter	Official Beds	Overflow Beds	Total Beds
NP Preble Street	16	0	16
NP Woman's Shelter	25	0	25
Oxford Street Shelter run by the City of Portland	154	0	154
Overflow Shelter run by the City of Portland	0	75	75
NP Mile Stone Foundation Shelter	41	0	41
NP – Non-profit Total		Grand	311

Portland had emergency housing costs in SFY 11 \$1,686,901.00

Bangor

Shelter	Official Beds	Overflow Beds	Total Beds
NP Step Up! (MAPS)	5	0	5
NP Bangor Area Homeless Shelter	38	5	43
P Hope House	69	21	90
NP Shaw House	16	0	16
NP Manna Ministries	5	0	5
Grand Total			159

NP = Non-profit

Bangor had emergency housing costs in SFY 11 of \$201, 181.00

Additional Information on Portland's Homeless Shelters

Portland Shelters-GA Costs			
Shelter	Number of Beds	GA payment per Bed Night	Actual Cost per Bed Night
City of Portland Oxford St. Shelter and Community Overflow	250	\$25	\$52.00
City of Portland Family Shelter	100	\$7	\$40.00
Preble St, Joe Kreisler Shelter	24	\$24	\$86.30
Preble St. Women's Shelter	24	\$20	\$53.51
Family Crisis Shelter	16	\$26	\$94.25
Milestone Substance Abuse Shelter	41	\$20	\$57

* Please note that the GA payment is the amount billed to DHHS. The actual reimbursement payment is based on the DHHS GA reimbursement formula. * Payments made to the adolescent Joe Krisler shelter are for individuals age 18-21 only.

The City of Portland has contracts with shelters which state the following: "The City, shall reimburse Shelter Provider for Eligible Costs of the Shelter ("Eligible Costs") under the State and City General Assistance Program, subjects to the limitation herein. Eligible Costs shall include all operating expenses customarily associated with the direct operation of a homeless shelter, including but not limited to, salaries, rent, utilities, insurance, client services, furniture and equipment. Eligible Costs shall not include real estate acquisition or rehabilitation, leasehold improvements and organizational expenses not directly related to the operation of the Shelter, without the prior written consent of the City." GA does not provide reimbursement for case management services including housing relocation and crisis intervention. Reimbursement is provided for the cost of operating the shelter bed night.