

**Operations Memorandum -
Cash Assistance
OPS120703**

July 20, 2012

SUBJECT: Elimination of General Assistance (GA) Cash Assistance and New Job Search Requirements

TO: Executive Directors

FROM: Richard Wallace, Acting Director, Bureau of Operations

PURPOSE

To inform County Assistance Offices (CAOs) of the changes required due to new legislation, and other changes being made. Changes effective **July 1, 2012** include:

- 1) New job search requirements as a condition of eligibility for cash assistance.
- 2) Changes to RESET sanctions for non-compliance with work requirements for cash recipients.

Additional changes effective August 1, 2012 include:

- 3) Discontinuance of the GA cash assistance program.
- 4) New job search requirements as a condition of eligibility for GA-related Non-Money Payment (NMP).
- 5) RESET sanctions for non-compliance with work requirements for GA-related NMP recipients subject to work requirements.
- 6) Providing instructions on completing an Agreement of Mutual Responsibility for GA-related NMP.
- 7) A new 100 hour/month work requirement for GA-related Medically Needy Only (MNO) custodial parents.

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

This Operations Memorandum details the discontinuance of GA cash assistance and new job search requirements for applicants 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 TANF. Eliminating the GA cash program will reduce state spending and help balance the budget. Act 80-2012, effective July 1, 2012, revises the Public Welfare Code to:

- Eliminate General Assistance cash assistance - GA cash assistance program shall cease August 1, 2012. These individuals will continue to be eligible for MA (some receive Medicaid, which is partly federally funded; some receive GA-related NMP, which is state funded. Both are types of MA).
- Make job search a condition of eligibility for cash assistance and GA-related NMP MA - As a condition of eligibility at application, applicants must apply for at least three jobs per week unless the individual is exempt or establishes good cause.

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 as of August 1, 2012. A conversion in the system to change the category of all GA cash assistance budgets to the correct MA category will occur. **No current recipient of GA cash assistance will lose their MA 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. When the file is provided, immediate action is required to put these individuals into the correct MA category to ensure that there is no gap in MA.

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

1. 18-20 years old and in secondary school expected to graduate by age 21
2. Children under the age of 21 not eligible for TANF
3. In a two-parent household with children under 13; or 13 and older and disabled.
4. Temporarily or permanently disabled.
5. Non-parental caretakers of children under 13; or 13 and older and disabled.
6. Undergoing drug and alcohol treatment that precludes employment.
7. A pregnant woman not eligible for TANF
8. 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 August 1, 2012. All applications received in the month of July 2012, even if processed in August, will be processed with a closing date of July 31, 2012 using a Non Continuous Eligibility (NCE) period based on their date of application. CAOs should review for ongoing eligibility for other types of cash assistance, including TANF and State Blind Pension.

A one-time cash closing notice and an MA notice of continuing eligibility will be sent for all converted cases when the batch process to convert cash to MA occurs. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits will be adjusted after the cash closes and a 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 August 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 while in the TANF budget. Eligibility for continued cash and MA will be reviewed at the budget's scheduled SAR or Renewal. No new EE individuals should be created in July. Instead, authorize GA cash NCE through July 31, 2012 for the EE individual and open TANF cash for the rest of the household.

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 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 must be converted to the appropriate MA category in 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 an effective date of July 31, 2012 and opened for the appropriate MA category with an effective date of August 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 Cash Assistance and GA-Related NMP MA

Act 80-2012 requires, as a condition of eligibility for cash assistance and for GA-related NMP MA, that 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.

This applicant job search requirement is effective for all cash applications received on or after July 1, 2012.

NOTE: Beginning August 1, 2012, this applicant job search requirement will also directly apply to GA-related NMP MA applicants. A detailed Operations Memorandum will be issued on changes to GA-related NMP MA.

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, Cash cannot be opened without proof that the required job applications have been completed.

The CAO will send the "[Job Application Report](#)" form (see attachment) to applicants for verification of cooperation with the applicant job search condition of eligibility. You will be notified when a final version is available on Docushare

Applicants who claim an exemption from the job search requirement must verify that they are exempt. The applicant may be given good cause, if needed, while verification of the exemption is pending. Exemptions include: a verified physical or mental disability which temporarily or permanently prevents employment or participation in a work activity, a single custodial parent who is caring for a child under the age of 12 months for a maximum of 12 months in a lifetime, or the applicant is under the age of 18 pursuing a high school diploma or GED.

The applicant job search begins on the date that the applicant is notified of the requirement. This would be the date the PA253 is provided to the applicant, either at interview or when mailed (allowing for three mailing days). It continues until all pending information is returned to the CAO. A week is seven days. On the 8th day, a new week begins, requiring at least three more job applications.

Examples:

1) A COMPASS application is made on July 2. The CAO sends the PA253 on July 9, listing the requirement to search for at least three jobs per week as a condition of eligibility that must be verified. The applicant job search requirement begins July 12.

2) An applicant walks into the CAO and completes an application on July 5. The client is interviewed on the same day and given a list of information to provide. The job application requirement begins July 5. The applicant returns verifications, including proof that she has completed three job applications on July 10. The date of eligibility is July 10.

In the first example above, the applicant returns all verifications, except proof of job applications, on July 10. She must verify three job applications by July 12. If not verified by July 13, benefits may not be

authorized and an additional three job applications must be verified each week until the applicant complies with the job search requirement.

Additional job applications are not required if the applicant has provided all information possible and has cooperated to get verification from a third party.

This applicant job search does not impact the job search time frame allowed for job search after authorization. Once TANF is opened, recipients will be referred to a CAO-directed activity, to EARN or to Work Ready. See “Changes in Employment and Training Determination of RESET Program Participation Requirements 12-07-02” for details on the changes to RESET referrals.

NEXT STEPS

1. Review this Operations Memorandum with all CAO staff.
2. Direct questions regarding this Operations Memorandum to your Area Manager.
3. This Operations Memorandum will become obsolete when all information is incorporated into the Cash Assistance and Medical Assistance Handbooks..

Attachment- [Job Application Report](#)