

DATE: November 19, 2018

OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM # 18-11-03

SUBJECT: General Assistance Program Restored

TO: Executive Directors

FROM: Inez Titus
Director
Bureau of Operations

PURPOSE

To announce that the Department of Human Services (DHS) will begin issuing General Assistance (GA) cash benefits on November 19, 2018 and to provide instructions on how to process benefits.

BACKGROUND

GA Cash is a state-funded assistance program providing cash and other services for eligible persons. The GA Cash program started in 1936 and was eliminated with Act 2012-80 (Act 80) as of August 1, 2012. On July 18, 2018, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court struck Act 80 in its entirety, ruling that the legislative process used to pass the Act did not comply with the Pennsylvania Constitution. The Court's decision requires DHS to reinstate the GA program.

County Assistance Offices (CAOs) have been accepting applications, interviewing applicants, and requesting needed verifications in anticipation of system changes to enable cash assistance payments to eligible individuals to be processed and issued.

DISCUSSION

GA Cash is for individuals not eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), including single individuals without children. Individuals *must* be

determined ineligible for TANF before being reviewed for GA Cash. The following are categories of eligibility for GA Cash:

1. An individual with a verified mental or physical disability that precludes employment, either temporarily or permanently. Note: The majority of GA eligible applicants will qualify in this category.
2. Children under the age of 18, or full-time secondary school students ages 18-20 expected to graduate prior to their 21st birthday. Individuals cannot be eligible for TANF – for example, an 18-year-old living on his/her own is not a TANF child.
3. Two-parent households with a child under the age of 13, or age 13 and older with a verified physical or mental disability. The household cannot be eligible for TANF. Note: Most applicants in this category would be eligible for TANF.
4. A pregnant woman whose pregnancy is medically verified. This should be a very rare circumstance, as a pregnant woman should be eligible for TANF or, if subject to the five-year bar, eligible as a C/04.
5. A non-parental caretaker, who is not a specified relative, of a child under the age of 13; or a caretaker of an individual 13 and older with a verified physical or mental disability that requires the caretaker to remain in the home. Disability and need for care must be verified by a medical professional. If another adult lives in the household, the caretaker is not eligible for GA.
6. A victim of domestic violence (DV) who is receiving protective services. This category is limited to nine months in a lifetime. Nine months is equal to 275 days of assistance in the category and can be reviewed in history.
7. An individual who is currently undergoing active treatment for drug or alcohol substance (D&A) use. These individuals must be in a treatment program licensed by the Department of Health or the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, or one administered by the federal government. The treatment program must preclude the individual from employment and must be verified by a medical professional. This category is also limited to nine months in a lifetime. Nine months is equal to 275 days of assistance in the category and can be reviewed in history.
8. One additional GA program is the pre-release grant. In order to be eligible for a pre-release grant when released from a state prison, the individual must be eligible under one of the GA categories listed above first. The issuance is a one-time payment of a half month of the full GA Cash grant for the county of residence, and the cash must be intended to be used to make arrangements for food and shelter once released from prison, and the individual must have no other resources available.

Some of the program features of GA include:

- Recipients must be ineligible for TANF.
- Recipients cannot be receiving State Blind Pension or Social Security benefits.
- No 60-month lifetime limit.
- Recipients who are potentially eligible for federal benefits, including Supplemental Security Income (SSI), must apply for those benefits as a condition of eligibility.
- Recipients cannot be a specified relative, eligible adult, or essential person to a child who would be eligible for TANF except that the child is receiving SSI.
- Full-time college students are not eligible unless they received TANF in the past 5 years.
- An applicant who voluntarily terminated employment without good cause is not eligible for GA for 30 days after the job termination.
- TANF support requirements apply and include the \$50 disregard for spousal support income.
- Verification of proof of permanent or temporary disability that prevents ability to work (form PA 1663 or PA 1664) required for eligibility based on physical or mental disability.
- Proof of inability to work due to caring for sick or disabled person may be verified with the form PA 1820.
- Anyone living together may be in a GA budget group, provided their needs are considered together for eligibility.
- Emancipation applies to a minor who is married or at least age 16 and no longer living under parental control. They must have established themselves as a separate entity capable of acting independent of parental control.
- Unearned income has the same deductions as TANF unearned income.
- Earned income deductions include a disregard of \$20 plus 50 percent of the next \$60 and a maximum of \$25 for personal expenses.

Each of the specific categorical requirements for GA Cash are defined in the system with a qualification code, similar to TANF deprivation codes. Using the correct qualification code ensures that rules of eligibility are applied correctly for each category. The codes will also allow DHS to track GA categories and ensure the correct federal or state funding is applied to both cash assistance and medical assistance. The GA Cash qualification codes are:

- | | |
|----|---|
| 01 | Under age 18 |
| 02 | Age 18-20, full-time secondary student graduating prior to 21st birthday |
| 04 | Temporary disability of less than 12 months |
| 05 | Care for child under age 13 (non-parental) |
| 06 | Parental/non-parental care for ill person or disabled person age 13 or older |
| 07 | Drug or alcohol use treatment, participates in approved program precluding employment |

- 14 Two parent budget group with child under 13 years of age
- 15 Pregnant, not eligible for TANF
- 16 Victim of domestic violence
- 19 Pre-release grants
- 24 Permanent disability of 12 months or more

Two new qualification codes will also be available:

- 97 Permanently disabled - MRT Certified/SSA Verified
- 98 Undocumented individuals subject to the 5-year bar

PROCEDURES

Permanent system changes needed to restore the program will be implemented as soon as possible. In addition, a new Cash Assistance Handbook chapter (CAH 106) has been published. Training materials have been updated.

The following temporary processes will allow eligible clients to receive GA Cash benefits until permanent system changes are implemented.

INTERVIEWING:

All cash assistance applications require a face-to-face interview. When an application is received, send the applicant a list of pending verifications using the PA 253. Schedule a face-to-face interview. If the individual provides information that allows you to determine the GA Cash category, send appropriate verification forms. For example, if the application includes a statement that the individual is disabled, send a PA 1663 with the PA 253. Please see the attached [GA Cash Verification Checklist](#).

If the applicant needs Medical Assistance (MA) in order to verify a disability, first evaluate MA using ex-parte review. If ongoing MA can be authorized, open ongoing MA. If an ex-parte opening cannot be completed, open MA for a 30-day non-continuous eligibility (NCE) using the following categories:

- MG91 (MAGI MA): US citizen, refugee or permanent resident not subject to the 5-year bar) or
- PD00D (GA-related MA): Permanent resident subject to the 5-year bar or temporary non-citizen)

Mail or give the individual the PA 1663/PA 1671 for completion by the medical provider.

Remember that it is a condition of eligibility for GA Cash based on permanent disability for the individual to apply for federal benefits for which they may be eligible, particularly SSI. Have the applicant sign the reimbursement forms and the Disability Advocacy Program referral form. The forms to be signed are the PA-176 SSI, PA-162S and the FIRM 176K. Failing to apply for federal benefits without good cause makes the individual ineligible for 60 days and thereafter until they comply.

A GA Cash applicant who voluntarily, without good cause, quits a job in the 30 days prior to application, is not eligible until those 30 days have passed. The PA 1898 can be given to verify the reason for terminating employment.

Follow the normal cash assistance interview process, including the completion and signing of the PA 1661 Agreement of Mutual Responsibility (AMR). Determine if the individual is mandatory for or exempt from work requirements. Explain good cause and determine if applicant has good cause for not participating in work activities or is exempt from applying for support based on domestic violence. The [AMR](#) has been revised and is available on DocuShare.

Income limits for GA Cash are based on the Family Size Allowance for the county of residence and size of the budget group. Most GA Cash budget groups will consist of one individual. Resource limits for GA Cash are \$250 if the budget group is one individual, and \$1,000 if the budget group consists of two or more individuals. If no verification of income or resources is provided, or the applicant does not sign a voluntary withdrawal from (PA 18329), pend the application.

Data enter all case information needed to reject or authorize a GA Cash budget.

TIME CLOCK LOOK UP FOR TIME-LIMITED GA:

For the time-limited drug and alcohol and domestic violence GA Cash categories, you will need to verify any past days used out of the lifetime limit of 275 days (each) to determine eligibility. Each of these categories has its own clock. In each category, if 275 days have been used in the past, the applicant is not eligible under this criterion.

If some time has been used, subtract the number of days used from 275 to identify how much time is left for eligibility in these categories. To verify past days used in these categories:

In CIS – Enter CQCLCK and the case record number on the CISMNU screen.

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Main Menu | Inquiry Menu | Clerical Transactions | AECM | AECM History Menu | Login | Logout
CISMNU                                CIS MAIN MENU                                08/15/2018 15:37:11

                                ACTION MENUS
1. Application Entry & Case Maintenance ..... >CAAEMN
2. Clerical Transactions ..... >CACKMN
3. Clerical OTI Issuance and Reconciliation ..... >CAOIMN
4. Scratchpad ED/BC ..... >CASPMN
5. Caseload Management Alerts ..... >CAATMN
6. Client Notices ..... >CACNMN
7. CAO System Reference ..... >CASRMN

                                INQUIRY MENUS
1. Primary Inquiries ..... >COMENU
2. Application Entry & Case Maintenance ..... >CQAEMN
3. AECM History ..... >CQHIMN
4. Caseload Management Alerts ..... >CQATMN
5. Client Notices ..... >CQCNMN
6. System Reference ..... >CQSRMN
7. IEVS ..... >IVMENU
8. Disqualified Recipient System Menu ..... >DQRMMN
9. Semi-Annual Reporting Inquiries ..... >COMRMN

Next Trans:> cqclck Parameters: 04/0252544 Xmit:
Submit OVR

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The CIS individual tracking clock will display.

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CQCLCK                                CIS INDIVIDUAL TRACKING CLOCK                                08/15/18 15:39:30
                                Operator:                                Page: 1 of 3
Indiv No V Status                    D Cslid Worker                                Beg: 08/22/17
030162993 7 INACTIVE                    0 4312 21625                                End: 09/30/17
                                Chg: 08/22/17

Number of Benefit Days in Status:

TANF Days: 0244
GA Days: 0242
Act 35 Days: 0912
Timeout Days: 0000
Extended TANF Days: 0000
GA Drug and Alcohol Days: 0000
GA Domestic Violence Days: 0000

Number of Benefit Months in Status:

EB 20 Months: 00
EB 21 Months: 00

Next Trans: Parameters: Xmit:
Submit OVR

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In eCIS – Select the individual from the Case Summary screen.

Household Information		
Payment Name: FIGNAR, ANGELA - 26F	Main Contact #: (724) 683-2991	Caseload:
Mailing Address: 1164 ELM ST MONACA, PA 15061	Residence Address: 1164 ELM ST MONACA, PA 15061	My COMPASS Account Summary:
School District: 04200		Automated Processes: Search

Current Household Individuals								
Remove	Individual Name	Indiv #	V	SSN	DOB	Budget	Package	Cleared
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - FIGNAR, ANGELA - 26F (I)	30162993		***-**-8239	01/20/1992			Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 - DEFELICE, AVA N - 9F (I)	50238968		***-**-5610	04/01/2009			Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 - DEFELICE, GAGE M - 8M (I)	87708109		***-**-2798	04/09/2010			Yes

Select Benefit Clock from the Individual Information screen.

Individual Information			
FIGNAR, ANGELA - 26F(30162993)			
Updated: 08/22/2017		Updated By: TTOMSIC-DE	
Last Name: FIGNAR	First Name: ANGELA	MI:	App:
SSN: 210-72-8239	Verification: 7 - Validation (system entered)		Gender: F - Female
DOB: 01/20/1992	Verification: E - Electronic Document		Education: 12 - High School Diploma, GED, Nat External Diploma Pgm
DOD:			
Demographics			
Citizen: 1 - US Citizen	Verification: V - Electronic Verification	Voter Registration: 6 - Declined - already registered	
Race: 5-White	Ethnicity: 1 - Non-Hispanic	Language: 1 - English	
Marital Status: 1 - Single/Never Married	Verification: S - Client statement		
	Interpreter Needed?: N - No		
Other Information			
Benefit Clocks			
Eligibility History			
No Eligibility Record found for the case# 40252544			
Case Number: Select... ▼	Individual: FIGNAR, ANGELA - 26F ▼		

The Benefit Clocks will be displayed.

FIGNAR, ANGELA - 26F(30162993)			
Updated: 08/22/2017		Updated By: TTOMSIC-DE	
Last Name: FIGNAR	First Name: ANGELA	MI:	App:
SSN: 210-72-8239	Verification: 7 - Validation (system entered)		Gender: F - Female
DOB: 01/20/1992	Verification: E - Electronic Document		Education: 12 - High School Diploma, GED, Nat External Diploma Pgm
DOD:			
Demographics			
Citizen: 1 - US Citizen	Verification: V - Electronic Verification	Voter Registration: 6 - Declined - already registered	
Race: 5-White	Ethnicity: 1 - Non-Hispanic	Language: 1 - English	
Marital Status: 1 - Single/Never Married	Verification: S - Client statement		
	Interpreter Needed?: N - No		
Other Information			
Benefit Clocks			
Number of TANF Benefit Days: 244	Number of GA Benefit Days: 242	Timeout Days: 0	
Act 35 Days: 912	Extended TANF: 0	GA Drug and Alcohol Days: 0	
EB 20 Months: 0	GA Domestic Violence: 0		
Eligibility History			
No Eligibility Record found for the case# 40252544			

REJECTING GA CASH APPLICATIONS:

CASE REJECTION PROCESSING INSTRUCTIONS – AP REJECTION

In addition to the processes outlined above, the CAO may also reject GA Cash applications from the Program Information screen (AP rejection) for the following reasons:

- 037 – Already receiving cash benefits in PA
- 038 – Receiving cash benefits in another state
- 042 – Failure to furnish required verification
- 047 – Failure to be interviewed
- 052 – Residence – in another county or out-of-state
- 056 – Institutionalization
- 063 – Voluntary withdrawal
- 066 – Disqualification (fraud)
- 069 – Not meeting GA Cash categorical requirements
- 350 – Failure to satisfy penalties
- 351 – Failure to pay fines and costs
- 352 – Failure to appear in court
- 650 – Failure to meet minor parent rules

To reject for one of these reasons, AP the application for cash assistance (CA); click on 'Program Information' on the Case Summary screen. Select the appropriate GA Cash rejection notice code from the drop down; then select the option needed. There is no need to send a manual notice for these rejections.

If the applicant does not provide all verifications or does not complete the interview process, reject the application at 30 days past the application date for reason codes 042 or 047, respectively.

If the applicant is ineligible due to not meeting any GA Cash category requirements, the appropriate notice to send at rejection is notice code 069, option 4.

When rejecting from the Program Information screen, the rejection will not be captured or tracked specifically as a GA Cash rejection, as no category has been selected. These rejections will be reported as "CA" cash rejections out of AP.

CASE REJECTION PROCESSING INSTRUCTIONS – RESOURCES or INCOME

When the CAO has verification that resources or income are over the appropriate limit, applications may be rejected following these steps:

- select General Assistance from the special program request dropdown on the Program Request Questions screen and the appropriate qualification code
- continue normal case processing
- the D/05 category will be rejected for excess resources or income for GA Cash
- system notices for resource or income rejection are displayed on the Client Notice screen
- select the correct option and commit case

CASE REJECTION PROCESSING INSTRUCTIONS – OVER GA TIME LIMIT

When the CAO has verification that an individual has used over 275 days in a time-limited GA Cash category (Domestic Violence or Drug and Alcohol treatment), applications may be rejected following these steps:

- verify the number of days used in the past for the category (for D&A, both MA and Cash past days used are counted)
- Send a notice with code 074 and selecting the correct option from the Client Notice screen. The 074 notice code may not be prompted for the D/05 category and the CAO may need to select this code.

AUTHORIZING GA BUDGETS:

In general, the process to be used to open GA Cash cases requires the caseworker to select the new Special Request Category “General Assistance – GA” from the dropdown on the Program Request Questions screen.

Case Non-Financial | Program Request Questions eCISance Previous Next

Cash
Last Update: 09/18/18 By: t-jyoungma Update Authorized By: t-jyoungma Authorized By: T-JYOUNGMA

*Cash - Head of Household:
YYYY, GRETA - 53F

Individual	Special Category	GA Qual. Code
YYYY, GRETA - 53F		

Emergency Shelter Allowance Request Reason:

MA
Last Update: 09/18/18 By: t-jyoungma Update Authorized By: t-jyoungma Authorized By: T-JYOUNGMA

Next, select the appropriate qualification code from the GA Qual Code field.

Payment Name: YYYY, GRETA - 53F Case #: 268678901 County: 26 Dist: 0 Status: In Progress Mode: Case Open

Case Non-Financial | Program Request Questions eCISance Previous Next

Cash
Last Update: 09/18/18 By: t-jyoungma Update Authorized By: t-jyoungma Authorized By: T-JYOUNGMA

*Cash - Head of Household:
YYYY, GRETA - 53F

Individual	Special Category	GA Qual. Code
YYYY, GRETA - 53F	GA - General Assistance	24 - Permanent disability gre

Emergency Shelter Allowance Request Reason:

MA
Last Update: 09/18/18 By: t-jyoungma Update Authorized By: t-jyoungma Authorized By: T-JYOUNGMA

When eligibility is run, a D/05 G budget will be built. D/05 G budgets are differentiated from D/05 Repatriated National budgets by the target type 'G'. CAOs will still be able to process a Repatriated National budget by selecting "Repatriated Nationals – RN" from the Program Request Questions screen dropdown.

Eligibility Result Summary Previous Next

Cash Eligibility Result Summary														
Budget	Elig Month	Non-Fin Result	Resource Result	Income Result	Child Care Result	SFU Comp Changes	SFU Closure	Benefit Amount	Payment Period	Run Date	OTI	OTI Amount	OTI Period	Auth
D 05 G	Sep 2018	Pass	Pass	Pass	No	No		\$174.00	09/18/18-00/00/00	09/18/18	Yes	\$87.00	09/18/18-10/01/18	No
D 05 G	Oct 2018	Pass	Pass	Pass	No			\$174.00	10/02/18-00/00/00	09/18/18	No			No

[Build New Budget Composition](#)

Medical Assistance Eligibility Result Summary

[Run Eligibility](#)

The qualification code selected on the Program Request Questions screen will be visible on the Non-Financial Eligibility Results.

Eligibility | Non-Financial Eligibility eCIStance

Non-Financial Eligibility Results							
Last Update: 09/18/18		By: t-joyungma		Update Authorized By: t-joyungma		Authorized By: T-JYOUNGMA	
Budget: D 05 G		Eligibility Month: Sep 2018		Run Date: 09/18/2018		Case Number: 26/8678901	
Eligibility Result	Failure Reason	Override	Override Reason				
Pass		N - No					
Individual Details							
Individual	Eligibility Status	Dep/Qual Code	Eligibility Result	Benefit Package	Failure Reason	Non-Fin Override	Non-Fin Override Reason
YYYY, GRETA - 53F*	EA - Eligible Adult	24	Pass	50 - Adult		N - No	

* Indicates Target Individual

[SAVE](#)

If the GA budget has earned income adjusted to the grant, the employed individual may be eligible for an income incentive if they are:

- receiving GA; or
- an applicant who has received GA in one of the four calendar months prior to application; or
- an applicant who is determined eligible through the GA earned income incentive eligibility test.

When running eligibility, if the individual has earned income, the Income Incentive screen will be triggered. GA individuals are only eligible for the GA earned income incentive for a period of four months. The CAO will enter the GA Begin Date on the Income Incentive screen, and eCIS will populate the end of the income incentive period in the GA End Date field. Run eligibility and continue case processing to authorize the budget.

Payment Name: SCHMIDT, CALVIN - 50M Case #: 268678772 County: 26 Dist: 0 Status: Open Mode: Program Add

Income | Income Incentive eCISance Previous Next

Last Update: 08/03/18 By: t-jyoungma Update Authorized By: t-jyoungma Authorized By: T-JYOUNGMA

Individual Name:
SCHMIDT, CALVIN - 50M

GA Begin Date: 08/2018 GA End Date: 11/2018

Sanction: Interrupt Code: Healthy Begin Incentive:

Individual: SCHMIDT, CALVIN - 50M Go Add More

Unlock Reset Cancel Previous Next

Additional information on the GA earned income incentive is located in the GA Cash Assistance Handbook chapter CAH 106.

RENEWALS:

GA Cash has a one-year renewal requirement. The renewal date will be populated at 12 months after the application is approved.

SEMIANNUAL REPORTING (SAR):

GA Cash budgets with earned income are subject to SAR and will have a SAR Code 1 and a six-month SAR date.

GA Cash budgets with no earned income are not subject to SAR and will have a SAR Code 6 and no SAR date.

NOTICES:

If the applicant is eligible, the appropriate current notices will be sent by the system. There is no need for a manual notice for eligible applicants.

SPECIAL ALLOWANCES:

Use current special allowance (SPAL) codes to issue employment and training and medical transportation one-time issuance SPALs for those individuals mandatory to participate in RESET.

Many GA Cash recipients will have good cause for not meeting work requirements due to a permanent or temporary disability.

A Medical Transportation Allowance (MTA) for medical appointments not covered by the Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP) can be issued for the D/05 GA Cash recipients by using special allowance code 200. Use code 265 for vendor payments to medical transportation providers.

ELECTRONIC BENEFITS TRANSFER (EBT) CARD REPLACEMENTS:

For purposes of program integrity, when a GA recipient reports an EBT card lost or stolen, the CAO will deactivate (otherwise known as status) the card, rendering it unusable. The CAO will then replace the card as requested by the recipient.

NEXT STEPS

1. Share and review this information with appropriate staff members.
2. Handbooks will be updated.
3. Past Operations Memoranda and Policy Clarifications will be made obsolete as necessary.
4. Please contact your area manager if you have questions regarding this Operations Memorandum.

Attachments