



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence
Human Services Agency



Date: February 27, 2014
Board Meeting Date: March 11, 2014
Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Iliana Rodriguez, Director, Human Services Agency

Subject: Modifications to the General Assistance Standard of Aid

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the Director of the Human Services Agency, or her designee, to modify the rules and regulations of the General Assistance program by increasing the General Assistance grant to the same level as the CalWORKs grant, consistent with the statutory formula and increasing the maximum cash grant amount that is issued to General Assistance recipients from a maximum of \$58 per month to a maximum of \$80 per month.

BACKGROUND:

State law requires counties to provide support for indigent county residents who do not qualify for other financial assistance. Counties meet this requirement by providing financial assistance through the General Assistance (GA) program. The GA program provides the financial assistance in the form of vouchers for essential services and a minimal cash grant to individuals who have no minor children and whose income and property do not exceed certain limits. It is incumbent on the County Board of Supervisors to set the County's "standard of aid".

Since 1993, the County has chosen to set its GA grant levels according to a statutory formula which requires GA to be based on and subject to the same annual adjustment as CalWORKs grant levels (Cal. Welfare & Institutions Code 17000.5). Compliance with the formula relieves the county of the requirement of setting the grant based on the cost of subsistence in the county. It ensures consistency of grant levels between counties, and discourages recipients from "grant shopping".

In 1993, the Board adopted a resolution, which authorized a change in the General Assistance Program from a cash program to a program comprised of cash and vendor/vouchers for housing and food. Since 1993, the maximum cash payment issued to recipients has been \$58. Since 2003, the County has been issuing this \$58 to

recipients via an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card which the recipient then uses at an Automated Teller Machine (ATM) or Point of Sales (POS) device to access their monies. As a result of the EBT system implementation, GA recipients are not able to withdraw \$58 from an ATM machine at one time since ATM machines only dispense in \$20 bills; therefore GA recipients are only able to withdraw up to a maximum of \$40 at one time and have to wait until the next month's cash deposit to their EBT account before they can withdraw additional monies.

DISCUSSION:

The Human Services Agency is proposing changes to the County's rules and regulations for GA program administration. These recommendations are brought to the Board for approval as required by Ordinance Code Section 2.30.050: Increasing the GA grant to the same level as the CalWORKs grant, consistent with the statutory formula and increasing the maximum cash grant amount that is issued to GA recipients from a maximum of \$58 to a maximum of \$80 per month.

The State Department of Social Services has advised counties that effective March 1, 2014, the maximum aid payment to CalWORKs families will increase by five percent (5%). Consistent with the 1991 legislative intent that permits counties to set GA grant according to the CalWORKs grant, we recommend that the monthly GA standard for aid be increased effective March 1, 2014 as follows:

From \$317 to \$333 for individuals who live alone, in shared housing, or who are homeless.

From \$277 to \$291 for individuals residing in a Drug & Alcohol treatment facility.

From \$374 to \$393 for individuals residing in a Board & Care facility.

Furthermore, we are requesting increasing the GA recipient's cash grant amount to a maximum of \$80 per month so that GA recipients will be able to withdraw their entire cash benefit from their EBT account at one time. In addition, since 1993, the cost of incidental items has increased, therefore, there is a need to increase the cash grant amount in order to allow our GA recipients to purchase their personal incidental items.

County Counsel has review and approved the Resolution as to form.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Assuming stability in the number of current GA clients and average monthly payments, the estimated annualized cost of the 5% grant increase will be approximately \$146,000. If the increase begins in March 2014 as anticipated, the impact on the current fiscal year will be \$49,000 in additional Net County Cost.

The Net County Cost increase to the General Assistance program payment standards was anticipated and included in the Adopted FY 2013-14 Budget and will be included in the FY 2014-15 Recommended Budget.