



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence
Human Services Agency



Date: February 11, 2015
Board Meeting Date: March 31, 2015
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:

- A) Increasing the General Assistance Standard of Aid grant by approximately 5%, to the same level as the CalWORKs grant, consistent with the statutory formula, effective April 1, 2015; and
- B) Increasing the Supplemental Security Income Board and Care rate from \$1,133 per month to \$1,145 per month, for those General Assistance recipients who reside in board and care facilities pending Supplemental Security Income approval, effective January 1, 2015.

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 this 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 particular county's Board of Supervisors to set that county's "standard of aid".

Since 1993, San Mateo 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 (Welfare and Institutions Code section 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 also ensures consistency of grant levels between counties, and discourages recipients from "grant shopping".

Occasionally, a GA recipient, whose application for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is pending, will require the highly structured setting of a board and care facility. Since 1993, for those recipients who meet the criteria according to the GA guidelines, the maximum grant level of the current California SSI board and care rate has been allowed in order to provide such recipients with the living situation which best suits their needs. If SSI is approved, the County is reimbursed for all interim assistance provided.

DISCUSSION:

The Human Services Agency (HSA) is proposing changes to the County's rules and regulations for General Assistance program administration. These recommendations are brought to the Board for approval as required by Ordinance Code Section 2.30.050:

A. Increasing the General Assistance grant to the same level as the CalWORKs grant, consistent with the statutory formula.

B. Increasing the maximum grant of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) board and care rate for those General Assistance recipients who reside in board and care facilities pending SSI approval.

The State Department of Social Services has advised counties that effective April 1, 2015, the maximum aid payment to CalWORKs families will increase by approximately five percent (5%). Consistent with the 1991 legislative intent that permits counties to set General Assistance (GA) grants according to the CalWORKs grant, HSA recommends that the monthly GA standard for aid be increased effective April 1, 2015 as follows:

From \$333 to \$350 for individuals who live alone, who live in shared housing, or who are homeless.

From \$291 to \$306 for individuals who reside in a drug and alcohol treatment facility.

From \$393 to \$413 for individuals who reside in a board and care facility.

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. Along with the April 1, 2015, General Assistance grant level increase, HSA is requesting this proposed increase be added to the vendor voucher portion, which is used primarily for housing costs. This is beneficial since housing costs in San Mateo County continue to be problematic for these clients. The maximum cash payment issued to clients remains at \$80.

In addition, the State Department of Social Services has advised counties that effective January 1, 2015, the SSI board and care rate increased from \$1,133 per month to \$1,145 per month. Therefore, HSA is recommending that the monthly GA standard for aid be increased effective January 1, 2015 as follows:

From \$1,133 to \$1,145 for individuals who reside in a board and care facility pending SSI approval.

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

Approval of this Resolution contributes to the Shared Vision 2025 of a prosperous community by providing funds to indigent individuals in the community until they gain employment or federal disability and become self-sufficient.

FISCAL IMPACT:

At the current General Assistance case load, annualized GA grant payments are estimated at \$2,800,000. A 5% COLA increase would add approximately \$140,000 to the County's annual cost, bringing the annual cost up to an estimated \$2,940,000.

The estimated COLA cost for the remaining portion of FY 2014-15 is \$36,800 in new Net County Cost. This estimate covers both the minority of our GA clients subject to the change in SSI board and care rates whose COLA became effective as of January 1, 2015 and the majority of our GA clients whose COLA increase is anticipated to begin April 1, 2015.

Funding for the COLA increase is included in the FY 2014-15 Adopted Budget and will be included in the FY 2015-16 Recommended Budget.