

1. What is General Assistance?

A service administered by a municipality, required by the State, for the immediate aid of persons who are unable to provide the basic necessities essential to maintain themselves or their families.

2. **Basic necessities are** food shelter utilities heating fuel prescriptions personal care items sewer and water certain other items when they are essential

A phone is not a basic necessity unless you have a doctor's note and there are other programs or people can qualify for a free cell phone.

3. Tools used to understand General Assistance

State law title 20 2M RSA section 4301 and following.

DHHS policy

Local GA ordinance with yearly maximum appendixes

GA manual

Information forms on Maine Municipal website

Maine Welfare Directors Association website.

4. Maximum Benefits. (Current one is attached)

Every year the State recommends and the local municipality approves the maximum limits for each of these basic necessities as listed above. Depending on the size of the applicant's household there are limited maximums of financial help for heat, housing, food, electricity and there is an overall maximum which cannot be exceeded by the sum of individual maximums for these basic necessities. The only exception is where there is an emergency present that is not due in any way to the fault of the applicant.

For example the overall maximum for a single person is \$655 a month. If that person receives a Social Security disability check of \$700 a month they are not entitled to assistance unless there is an emergency that they did not help create.

If an applicant with a total household of two needs everything including housing, food, electricity, fuel, personal care supplies, their overall maximum is \$741. The overall maximum for an unheated apartment for two people assuming they can share the same bedroom would be \$547. That would leave \$194 for food for the month heating fuel for the month electricity for the month impersonal hair care and household supplies for the month.

This is a limited program with limited benefits and in order to qualify the applicant **must be 100% truthful in all the responses and not to have contributed to their situation** by quitting their job or at fault for being kicked out of their housing unit

5. Eligibility is the key issue

Two tracks:

1.- **an initial applicant** who is a person who is not reply from GA within the past year

2.- for **repeat applicants** who is a person who has applied in the last year. **A repeat applicant needs to demonstrate how they used their resources for the last 30 days,** usually by bringing in receipts to show that those resources were only spent on items characterized under general assistance as basic necessities. A car payment, a class trip payment, a television set, cable TV, the Internet are all not considered as basic necessities. **Any money spent on items such as this in the prior month will be treated as cash presently in the hand of the applicant to pay for the basic necessities they are currently seeking help with from the GA program.**

An applicant's "Need" completely depends on whether their income or other assets are sufficient to provide for only the items the State has listed for basic necessities. Any money spent on other items is considered to be cash still available to the applicant that is available to pay for these State defined basic needs.

If the need is less than the maximum level of assistance then they may qualify for the difference in what they have and the maximum level identified in the Ordinance.

6. Two budgets need to be calculated for every applicant.

#1 **The Deficit** which is the difference between the applicants household income and the applicable maximum level of assistance

#2 **The Unmet Need** which is the difference between the applicant's household income and the households allowable 30 day expenses.

Generally, the applicant is eligible for the lower number between the Deficit or the Unmet Need.

7. What if an emergency exists?

An emergency is defined as

- any life-threatening situation or
- a situation beyond the control of the individual

which if not alleviated immediately could reasonably be expected to pose a threat to the health or safety of the person.

Factors "recommended" to consider:

- A. Whether GA is needed immediately
- B. Whether this is an initial application and the person may not be aware of the rules of GA
- C. The household composition of children infants elderly disabled people
- D. Major changes in the household such as medical problems or layoffs
- E. The availability of other resources to reduce or eliminate the problem.
- F. If the applicant has an opportunity to rectify the situation
- G. Whether the applicants have eviction utility disconnection notice or mortgage foreclosure
- H. Whether there is an imminent emergency that may result in undue hardship and unnecessary cost. (An emergency analysis can be conducted without an eviction or disconnection notice)
- I. Whether this is situations beyond the applicants control and poses a threat to their health or safety.

8. Two situations when an applicant is not eligible for emergency GA

- A. When the applicant is currently disqualified for committing fraud, violating work requirements were not using potential resources.
- B. Where the applicant could have averted the emergency using their own income and resources.

Once an emergency analysis is completed if the amount of the emergency assistance provided to the applicant is not enough to cure the emergency then no assistance will be granted.

9. Arrearages or back owed bills.

Generally GA does not pay for them unless it's an emergency.

The period of review for a back bill such as an electric bill is every month that bill went in arrears. The applicant must demonstrate that each of those months when the bill was not paid to show that there were eligible for general assistance during those months.

10. Disqualification:

For 120 days if you cause your own problem by quitting your job

For 120 days if the applicant knowingly and willfully makes any false representation of a material fact to the Administrator

Oct1 2016 to Sept 30, 2017

OVERALL MAXIMUMS

Persons in Household				
1	2	3	4	5
655	741	876	1,191	1,266
Household of 6 = 1,341				
* Add \$75 for each additional person				

FOOD MAXIMUMS

Persons	Weekly	Monthly
1	45.95	194
2	83.70	357
3	118.58	511
4	150.97	649
5	179.42	771
6	215.30	925
7	237.40	1,022
8	271.42	1,169

Add \$146 per month for each + person

Housing Maximums

BEDROOM	UNHEATED		Heated	
	Weekly	Monthly	Weekly	Monthly
0	116	497	137	592
1	127	547	156	671
2	149	639	184	793
3	211	908	255	1,096
4	215	926	269	1,155

PERSONAL CARE & HOUSEHOLD SUPPLIES

Number in Household	Weekly Amount	Monthly Amount
1-2	\$10.50	\$45.00
3-4	\$11.60	\$50.00
5-6	\$12.80	\$55.00
7-8	\$14.00	\$60.00

NOTE: For each additional person add \$1.25 per week or \$5.00 per month.

HEATING FUEL

Month	Gallons	Month	Gallons
September	50	January	225
October	100	February	225
November	200	March	125
December	200	April	125
		May	50

NOTE: When the dwelling unit is heated electrically, the maximum amount allowed for heating purposes will be calculated by multiplying the number of gallons of fuel allowed for that month by the current price per gallon. When fuels such as wood, coal and/or natural gas are used for heating purposes, they will be budgeted at actual rates, if they are reasonable. No eligible applicant shall be considered to need more than 7 tons of coal per year, 8 cords of wood per year, 126,000 cubic feet of natural gas per year, or 1000 gallons of propane.

SUPPLEMENT FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN UNDER 5

When an applicant can verify expenditures for the following items, a special supplement will be budgeted as necessary for households with children under 5 years of age for items such as cloth or disposable diapers, laundry powder, oil, shampoo, and ointment up to the following amounts:

Number of Children	Weekly Amount	Monthly Amount
1	\$12.80	\$55.00
2	\$17.40	\$75.00
3	\$23.30	\$100.00
4	\$27.90	\$120.00

ELECTRIC

NOTE: For an electrically heated dwelling also see "Heating Fuel" maximums below. But remember, an applicant is not automatically entitled to the "maximums" established applicants must demonstrate need.
 1) Electricity Maximums for Households Without Electric Hot Water: The maximum amounts allowed for utilities, for lights, cooking and other electric uses excluding electric hot water and heat:

Number in Household	Weekly	Monthly
1	\$14.00	\$60.00
2	\$15.70	\$67.50
3	\$17.45	\$75.00
4	\$19.20	\$86.00
5	\$23.10	\$99.00
6	\$25.00	\$107.00

NOTE: For each additional person add \$7.50 per month.

2) Electricity Maximums for Households With Electrically Heated Hot Water: The maximum amounts allowed for utilities, hot water, for lights, cooking and other electric uses excluding heat:

Number in Household	Weekly	Monthly
1	\$19.10	\$86.00
2	\$23.75	\$102.00
3	\$27.70	\$119.00
4	\$32.25	\$139.00
5	\$37.30	\$160.00
6	\$41.00	\$176.00

NOTE: For each additional person add \$10.00 per month.

1-800-442-6003

Revised 10-1-16