

County of San Mateo
HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
Inter-Departmental Memorandum

Date: September 26, 2001
Hearing Date: October 23, 2001

To: The Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Maureen Borland, Director Human Services Agency
Glen H. Brooks, Jr., Central Region Director

Subject: RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING TWO MODIFICATIONS TO THE GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1, 2001

Recommendation

Adopt a resolution authorizing two modifications to the General Assistance standard of aid effective October 1, 2001. The first change is to increase the grant to the same level as the CalWORKs grant, consistent with the statutory formula. The second change is to authorize the Human Services Agency to determine eligibility by "deeming income and resources" of a person who sponsored the entry of a GA applicant or recipient into the United States.

Background

State law requires counties to provide support for indigent county residents who do not qualify for other financial assistance programs. Every county has a General Assistance program which meets this requirement by providing financial assistance to adults with no children who are not eligible for federal SSI or state CalWORKs assistance. It is incumbent on the County Board of Supervisors to set the county "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. 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." Beginning in 1997, the Board of Supervisors authorized implementation of a statute that permitted the General Assistance grant to include the value of in-kind payment up to forty dollars (\$40) per month in medical care provided by counties for those GA recipients who are not eligible for Medi-Cal.

As part of the GA eligibility determination, Welfare & Institutions Code §17001.7 authorizes counties to "deem" the income and resources of any person who sponsored the entry of a General Assistance applicant or recipient into the United States. Implementation of the deeming process requires Board of Supervisors' approval. Section 17001.7 contains a formula that sets forth the amount of the sponsor's income that can be deemed to be unearned income of the immigrant who applies for or receives GA. It also provides that the deeming of the sponsor's income shall not apply to an immigrant whose sponsor has "abandoned" his or her duty to support the immigrant, which includes battery, abuse, neglect or refusal to support the immigrant. Certain classes of immigrants are exempt from the deeming process, including those who are granted political asylum or who entered the United States under designated refugee assistance programs.

Discussion

The State Department of Social Services has advised counties that effective October 1, 2001, the State will increase grants to CalWORKs assistance units for one person from \$319 to \$336 per month. Consistent with the 1991 legislative intent that permits counties to set General Assistance (GA) grants according to the CalWORKs grant, we recommend that the monthly GA standard for aid to be increased effective October 1, 2001 as follows:

The Honorable Board of Supervisors

- From \$319 to \$336 for individuals who live alone, in shared housing, or who are homeless.
 - For individuals in this group who are not eligible for Medi-Cal and who rely on the County of San Mateo to provide their health care needs, \$40 of this \$336 will continue to be the value of in-kind health care services, resulting in an increase from \$279 to \$296 in vendor/vouchers and cash;
- From \$352 to \$371 for individuals who receive drug and alcohol treatment.
- From \$375 to \$395 for individuals who receive board and care treatment.

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. As with the October 1, 2001, General Assistance grant level increase, we are requesting that 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 \$58.

The deeming of sponsor's income and resources are currently requirements for the state and federal Food Stamp and CalWORKs programs. However, Board of Supervisors' authorization is required to implement the deeming process for the General Assistance program. The recommended standard of aid will bring the county GA program into alignment with state public assistance programs, and with other counties which deeming the income and resources of sponsored alien, applying for, or receiving General Assistance. Additionally, the implementation of this process will bring about some collateral cost savings. If approved by this Board, effective October 1, 2001, San Mateo County will begin to evaluate sponsored aliens applications for General Assistance considering the contributions deemed to the sponsored applicant's income. The deeming process will be fully consistent with the requirements of Welfare & Institutions Code § 17001.7. Current recipients will be evaluated for continuing eligibility at their annual renewal.

County Counsel has reviewed the applicable statutes as well as the resolution.

Fiscal Impact

The Net County cost increase of \$53,215 to the General Assistance program payment standards was anticipated and included in the Recommended FY 2001-02 Budget. The deeming process would lower County costs by shifting the financial responsibility of care and support to those sponsors who have executed written promises to ensure that the immigrants do not become a public charge. Currently, there are only four GA recipients whom the Human Services Agency has not been able to evaluate for eligibility through the deeming process, because the agency lacks the Board approved authority. Although the present number of sponsored immigrants within the appropriate deeming time frame and receiving aid is small, the potential cumulative total of their aid and other potential applicants could become significant.

Contact: Bill Dean x7606

**RESOLUTION NO.
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF SAN MATEO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING CHANGES TO THE GENERAL ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM PAYMENT STANDARDS**

RESOLVED, by the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Mateo, State of California,
that

WHEREAS, counties are required provide General Assistance (GA) for indigent county residents who do not qualify for other financial assistance programs, and it is incumbent on the county board of supervisors to set the county "standard of aid."

WHEREAS, beginning in 1993, the County of San Mateo implemented WIC §17000.5, which permits counties' GA standard of aid to be based on a statutory formula that is tied to state CalWORKs grant levels, and

WHEREAS, the state CalWORKs grant will be increased by 5.31% effective October 1, 2001, to reflect a Cost of Living Adjustment, and

WHEREAS, this Board of Supervisors continues to wish to set the County of San Mateo's GA standard of aid on the basis of the statutory formula, which would result in a corresponding 5.31% increase to the GA grant effective October 1, 2001, which increase be added to the housing portion of the General Assistance Program for those persons not in facilities

WHEREAS, beginning in 1997, the County of San Mateo implemented WIC §17000.5 (a), which permits the GA grant to include the value of in-kind aid which includes, but is not limited to, the monthly actuarial value of up to forty dollars (\$40) per month of medical; and

WHEREAS, Welfare & Institutions Code (WIC) § 17001.7 provides that in adopting

standards of General Assistance, the Board of Supervisors may, for purposes of determining eligibility for aid, deem the income and resources of any person or the person's resident spouse, who sponsored the entry of a general assistance applicant or recipient into the United States, and

WHEREAS, the Human Services Agency is requesting authorization to implement the practice of determining eligibility for General Assistance by deeming income and resources of sponsors to GA,

WHEREAS, consistent with WIC §17001.7, this Board desires to adopt a standard of General Assistance aid that deems a sponsor's or the sponsor's resident spouse's income and resources to GA applicants and recipients, and

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED AND ORDERED that the GA standard of aid which includes a 5.31% cost of living adjustment effective October 1, 2001 is hereby adopted.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY FURTHER RESOLVED AND ORDERED that the Human Services Agency is authorized to implement WIC § 17001.7, which provides that sponsored immigrants who apply for general assistance shall be evaluated for the appropriateness of deeming the income and resources of their sponsor and the sponsor's resident spouse in determining eligibility for the General Assistance program, consistent with WIC §17001.7, and all General Assistance recipients who are sponsored immigrants shall be evaluated for the deeming of their sponsor, the sponsor's resident spouse's income and resources , consistent with WIC §17001.7 at the time of their annual renewal.

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