

PPM Section	Financial Assistance	EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE CONSOLIDATED FUND and EMERGENCY GENERAL ASSISTANCE	Supersedes	
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It is the policy of Nicollet County Health & Human Services to meet the emergency needs of eligible individuals to the extent possible using the designated Emergency Assistance (EA) funds available through the MFIP Consolidated Fund and the Emergency General Assistance (EGA) funds, as established by the county agency. The intention of this policy is to ensure the best use of the limited funds in a fair and equitable manner.

I. LEGAL FOUNDATION

These policies and procedures derive from Minn. Stat. 256J.626 - MFIP Consolidated Fund.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. Family:

1. A minor child (under the age of 18) or a group of minor children related to each other, along with their natural, step or adoptive parent(s) or other caregiver, or
2. A pregnant woman who is not a minor and has no other eligible children and her spouse, if living with her, or
3. A minor caregiver's parent(s) who has no other minor children, or
4. A minor caregiver and child.

B. Household Unit: Any of the individuals listed in II. A. and household unit members living together.

C. Minor Child: Minor child means a child who is living in the same home of a parent or other caregiver, is not the parent of a child in the home, and is either less than 18 years of age or is under the age of 19, and is a full-time student in a secondary school or pursuing a full-time secondary level course of vocational or technical training designed to fit students for gainful employment.

D. Emergency: Is a sudden and unexpected set of circumstances that requires immediate action and if not resolved will result in severe hardship and/or be life threatening to a child and/or child's household unit.

E. Basic Need: The minimum personal requirements of subsistence, restricted

to shelter, utilities, food, clothing, and other items which pose a direct, immediate threat to the physical health or safety of the applicant/participant.

- F. Cost Effective: When the household unit's emergency can be resolved with an EA or EGA payment, and the household unit can be reasonably expected to sustain themselves in the future without additional aid. EA or EGA must resolve the crisis, not postpone it.

III. ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for Emergency Assistance a household unit must meet **all** of the following conditions:

- A. For Emergency Assistance (EA) at least one adult and one minor child must not have used EA or EGA in Minnesota in the past 18 months. For Emergency General Assistance (EGA), no one in the household unit may have received EGA in the past 12 months.
- B. A household unit member must meet the 30-day state residency requirement (per Minn. Stat. 256J.12, subd1, 1a) without exception and must currently be a resident of Nicollet County.
- C. For EA, a child under the age of 18 must reside with the caregiver at least 50% of the time as of the date of application.
- D. For EA, at least one child or pregnant woman in the household unit must meet the MFIP citizenship requirements in Minn. Stat. 256J.11. For EGA, at least one person in the household unit must meet GA or GRH citizenship or immigration status requirements listed under Citizenship and Immigration Status in the Combined Manual.
- E. For EA, the household unit must have gross income under 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG) for the applicable household unit size, for the past 60 days. For EGA, the applicant and household unit, member, if any, must have a current net income under 200% of the FPG for the previous year.
- F. No household unit member is currently in non-cooperation status or disqualification from Employment Services (date of Notice of Intent to Sanction), Child Support (date of notification from child support unit to financial unit), Child Care Assistance (date of notification from child care assistance unit to financial unit), or MFIP. Household unit must not currently be disqualified from any program. Disqualification from any program must not have caused the emergency.
- G. If applicant is found to have intentionally made false statements to attain EA or EGA the application will be denied. Applicant will be ineligible for 60 days and may face possible criminal prosecution.

- H. Any household unit member must not have quit a job, refused employment or refused training for employment without good cause in the past 60 days. Good Cause will be evaluated using Employment Services criteria for quitting suitable employment without Good Cause. Good Cause and Suitable Employment are defined by the definitions outlined in the DHS Combined Manual in 0028.18 (Good Cause for Non-Compliance - MFIP), and 0028.18.03 (Suitable Work/Unsuitable Work).
- I. The household unit is without resources available to meet emergency needs. The County agency will assess the income, assets and current living expenses of each member of the household unit, including anticipated income to determine if there are any available income/assets available to resolve the emergency.
- J. The applicant/household unit must first attempt to resolve the emergency by all available means including:
 - 1. Utilizing the applicant/household unit's liquid assets and any available household unit income.
 - 2. Make application for other program resources available in the community, including but not limited to, fuel assistance and rental assistance.
 - 3. The household unit must attempt to resolve the emergency by establishing a payment plan.
- K. During the 60 days prior to application, the household unit must not have used, without good cause, more than 50% of its income for purposes other than basic needs. In addition to shelter, utilities (including internet and cellular phone), and food, basic needs can include: child care expenses due to employment, car and/or transportation expenses, child support payments and garnishments, medical expenses, and student loans.
- L. Issuance of EA or EGA must be cost effective. This means that issuance of EA or EGA funds must resolve the emergency rather than postpone it, and the household unit will have adequate future income to meet ongoing needs and prevent a future emergency need.
- M. In order for EA or EGA to be approved and issued, the assistance provided must resolve the crisis and enhance the stability of the household unit. No assistance will be issued unless it is confirmed that the assistance, combined with payment by the applicant or funding from any other verified source, will continue or restore the needed service and resolve the crisis.
- N. For EGA, the household unit must not currently be eligible for or receiving MFIP.
- O. The maximum amount of EA or EGA that may be approved and issued for

a household unit is \$2500.

- P. County discretion is available to override the requirements in sections K and O based due to extenuating circumstances with approval from Health and Human Services Director.
- Q. Aid is subject to the availability of funds.

IV. PROCESSING THE APPLICATION

To apply for EA or EGA, a household unit must complete a DHS Combined Application Form or other form designated by Nicollet County. All adults in the household unit must sign the application. At least one adult is required to attend an interview either in person or over the phone with an Eligibility Worker.

- A. The application will be allowed to remain open or deemed pending for up to 30 days to allow all required information to be provided. Requests will be acted on in a timely manner after all required documentation is provided. A household unit will be notified in writing, whether their application was approved, denied or deemed pending. If the application is deemed pending, the county agency will notify the applicant when the application is approved or denied.
- B. All EA or EGA funds issued will be by vendor payment, unless circumstances of the case warrant payment directly to the applicant.
- C. The Eligibility Worker will review the case with the Financial Assistance Supervisor. The Eligibility Worker and Financial Assistance Supervisor will both sign off on the EA Payment Authorization Form indicating that all program criteria has been met. In the absence of the Financial Assistance Supervisor, the Late Day Eligibility Worker will review the case and sign off on their behalf. The Eligibility Worker will approve EA/EGA and provide a copy of the EA Payment Authorization Form to the Financial Assistance Supervisor. If the Eligibility Worker is requesting an override of eligibility criteria under section III.K, the case will be presented to the Director for approval and additional signature.

V. VERIFICATIONS

Required verifications for EA or EGA include:

- A. Income for current month and 60 days prior to application for all household unit members
- B. Current liquid assets and depleted liquid assets for 2 months prior to application for all household unit members
- C. Living expenses

- D. Living situation (Landlord Statement listing the tenants and expenses they are responsible for)
- E. Children living in the home 50% of the time or more.
- F. Identity of all adults in the home
- G. Late notice, disconnect notice, eviction notice, or notice of mortgage foreclosure.
Note: If the Applicant resides with a parent and asserts a loss of housing, the Applicant must present a written, notarized eviction notice from a parent.
- H. Other documentation may be required as necessary to verify validity of need or payments
- I. Failure to provide requested verifications, within the time period required by the Eligibility Worker, will be valid grounds for a denial.

VI. STANDARD EXPENSES ALLOWED

In the absence of documentation to show costs related to basic needs, the below will be applied:

- A. \$75.00 per household unit member for basic expenses per month.
- B. The amount of the thrifty food plan, as laid out in DHS Combined Manual 22.12.01, will be allowed for a grocery expense. If SNAP benefits were received during the 60 days prior to the application, they will be subtracted off the thrifty food plan.
- C. The costs of a land line phone bill OR cellular phone bills using the below rates:
 - a. For household units who pay a land line phone bill, a monthly cost of \$50 will be allowed as a standard amount.
OR
 - b. For household units who pay a cellular phone bill, a monthly cost of \$75 will be allowed as a standard amount for one adult household unit member. A standard amount of \$25 is allowed for additional adult household unit members.
- D. For household units who pay for internet a monthly cost of \$50 will be allowed as a standard amount.

VII. SERVICES COVERED

- A. Shelter, including rent, damage deposits, applications, or mortgage payments.

1. The county agency may issue EA or EGA for rent to assist persons who are homeless, in danger of homelessness, or living in sub-standard housing. This could include individuals who are at risk of an eviction because of back due rent.
 2. EA or EGA funds will not be issued when a household unit member is not named as a lessee on the lease, or if the landlord is unaware of the household unit member's presence in the unit. If the applicant intends to stay in the unit and is added to the lease, EA or EGA payment will be considered.
 3. EA or EGA funds for foreclosure will not be issued when a household unit member is not named as a borrower on the mortgage.
 4. EA or EGA for foreclosure may only be issued when the household unit has been refused financing through a bank or other lending institution.
 5. EA or EGA for foreclosure may only be issued if the creditor will accept the assistance payment, combined with any payments made by the household unit, as payment in full of arrears.
 6. The county agency may deny EA or EGA when the county agency determines that the household unit's anticipated income will not cover continued payment for the shelter.
 7. EA or EGA will not be issued for a damage deposit or the first month's rent after the household unit has already moved into the rented or leased quarters.
 8. Moving expenses when evicted, moving to a more cost-effective location, or have good cause.
- B. Home Repairs: Certain emergency home repairs (including but not limited to roof, foundation, wiring, heating system, or water and sewer system repairs, water heater) may be considered under the following circumstances:
1. Household unit member must own and live in the home.
 2. Prior authorization is required for all considered repairs.
 3. Household unit member must provide at least 2 estimates of repair costs.
 4. Vendor paid only upon completion of entire project.
 5. Cosmetic repairs will not be considered.

- C. Utilities: EA or EGA may be issued for utility costs when an otherwise eligible household unit has had a late notice, termination notice, or is threatened with a termination of municipal water and sewer services, electric, gas, or other heating fuel, including lack of wood when that is the heating source, or refuse removal services.
 - 1. EA or EGA will not be issued unless the county receives confirmation from the utility provider that assistance combined with payment by the applicant and funding from any other verified source will continue or restore the utility.
- D. Employment Related Expenses, including, but not limited to car expenses and child care expenses, if the EA or EGA payment would enable the applicant/household unit member to continue working or continue to search for employment.

VIII. APPEALS RIGHTS

- A. Applicants have the right to appeal all agency denials by contacting either the county agency or DHS Appeals Division. They must request an appeal hearing in writing and state what county agency action they are appealing.
- B. Applicants must request the appeal hearing no more than 30 days after getting the notice of proposed action, unless they show good cause for not making a request within that time. If they show good cause, they may appeal up to 90 days after getting the notice.