



# Aitkin County Health & Human Services

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## EMERGENCY GENERAL ASSISTANCE (EGA) POLICY

### Section 1. EGA Availability

**1.1.** Effective July 1, 2011, Emergency Minnesota Supplemental Aid (EMSA) is no longer funded. Persons who would have been eligible for EMSA may apply for EGA. Aitkin County will continue to provide aid to assistance units in emergency situations as long as funding is available through the State Allocation of EGA as established by the county agency and pending approval of the county board.

**1.1.1.** Availability of funding will be at the sole determination and discretion of the Director of Health and Human Services or designee. No county funds will be expended to supplement, extend, expand, or substitute for Emergency General Assistance.

**1.1.2.** If, at any time, expenditures meet or exceed the State EGA Allocation, the program will be suspended.

### Section 2. Definition of an EGA Unit

**2.1.** Aitkin County will grant EGA to an individual or married couple who meets the eligibility criteria established by Aitkin County in this policy.

**2.1.1.** For the purpose of this EGA guideline, an assistance unit is defined as individuals and married couples who do NOT live in the same location as:

**2.1.1.1.** A pregnant woman.

**2.1.1.2.** A minor child (defined as one who is less than 18 years old OR is under the age of 19 and a full-time student in secondary school or equivalent level of vocational or technical training, designed to fit students for gainful employment AND is not the parent of a child in the home) who is living with an eligible caregiver as defined by MN Statute, Sec. 256J.08.

### Section 3. Eligibility for EGA

**3.1.** No assistance unit member is eligible for, or a current recipient of, MFIP or DWP.

**3.2.** EGA eligibility will be determined for the applicant's initial request. If EGA has been issued, it will not be available again until at least 12 months have passed from the date of issuance.

**3.2.1.** If an individual previously received Aitkin County EGA during the previous 12 month period, the assistance unit is NOT eligible for EGA.

**3.2.2.** If an assistance unit member previously received Aitkin County Emergency Assistance or any other Minnesota County's Consolidated (Crisis) Fund as an eligible caregiver 18 and older during the previous 12 month period, the assistance unit is not eligible for EGA.

**3.3.** EGA will try to resolve the emergency situation in the most cost effective manner. The EGA must resolve the emergency, not postpone it.

- 3.4.** The assistance unit's current gross income is at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines in effect at the time of application.
- 3.5.** At least one assistance unit member must have resided in the state for at least 30 days before the date of application or maintain Minnesota residency, and must currently be a resident of Aitkin County.
  - 3.5.1.** The county of residence for applicants is the county they live in at the time they apply or, if they live in an excluded-time facility, their county of financial responsibility.
- 3.6.** No assistance unit member is under sanction for failure to cooperate with MFIP, DWP, GA, MSA or Child Support program requirements, or has been disqualified due to program violations. The sanction must not have created the emergency.
- 3.7.** In the previous 60 days, no assistance unit member has refused to accept employment or training for employment in this state or another state without good cause as defined in MN Statute, Sec. 256J.57.
- 3.8.** The assistance unit is without resources available to resolve the crisis; the county agency will assess all sources of income, both available and anticipated, assets, and current living expenses of each assistance unit member.
  - 3.8.1.** Available income includes income from sources that may be excluded for other programs, such as tax returns, child support, and tribal payments.
  - 3.8.2.** Available income includes benefits from GA and MSA. The upcoming month's cash benefit will be vendor paid to the landlord and/or utility company if doing so would contribute to the resolution of the emergency. Voluntary vendor payments of future cash benefits will be discussed with the client to prevent future emergencies.
- 3.9.** EGA is necessary to avoid destitution (including the threat of destitution) or to provide emergency shelter arrangements.
  - 3.9.1.** In order for EGA to be approved and issued, the funding provided must resolve the crisis and enhance the stability of the assistance unit. All eligible and covered expenses of EGA will not be issued unless it is confirmed that assistance, combined with payments by the applicant or funding from any other verified sources, will continue or restore the needed service, and resolve the crisis.
- 3.10.** The assistance unit must not have used, without good cause as determined by the county agency, more than 50% of net income for purposes other than basic needs during the 60 days prior to application. Examples of good cause may be chemical dependency, mental illness, domestic abuse, etc.
  - 3.10.1.** A client's net income will be determined by subtracting mandatory deductions, such as federal and state tax, FICA, medical insurance premiums, child support, etc. will not be considered. Basic needs are limited to:
    - 3.10.1.1.** Shelter and utilities cost.
    - 3.10.1.2.** Food up to the amount of Thrifty Food Plan allotment minus any Food Support issuances that have occurred.
    - 3.10.1.3.** Medical expenses not covered under a private, state, or federal program.
    - 3.10.1.4.** Transportation costs (\$0.22/mile or monthly cost of bus pass)

**3.10.1.5.** Other work expenses or costs to retain or obtain employment.

#### **Section 4. Processing EGA Applications and Payments**

- 4.1.** To apply for EGA, the assistance unit must complete a DHS Combined Application Form, DHS-5223, or other forms designated by Aitkin County.
- 4.2.** Each assistance unit shall be processed on a separate case. One application form can be used if it contains required signatures.
- 4.3.** All assistance units responsible for resolving the emergency are required to apply.
- 4.4.** An interview shall be conducted in person with one responsible member of the assistance unit or their authorized representative. A phone interview can be completed in hardship situations. If an interview is not completed within the 30 day processing period, the application will be denied.
- 4.5.** The county agency will notify the assistance unit as soon as possible, and no later than 30 days from the date of application whether their application was approved or denied.
- 4.6.** Funding approved under the EGA guidelines will be vendor paid.
- 4.7.** The county agency director or designee will make the final decision for approval or denial of EGA funds.

#### **Section 5. Verifications**

- 5.1.** Required verifications for EGA may include: income, assets, living expenses, living situation (landlord statement), household composition, and emergency need.
- 5.2.** Applicants will be required to sign the following forms:
  - 5.2.1.** DHS-2243A, General Authorization for Release of Information.
  - 5.2.2.** DHS-3365, Mandatory Vendor Form.
  - 5.2.3.** Aitkin County Crisis Funds Worksheet.
  - 5.2.4.** Emergency Assistance Limits Form
- 5.3.** The county agency will check MONY/INQX in MAXIS for previous EMER issuances to verify the client meets requirements found in Section 3.2.
- 5.4.** Failure to provide requested documentation will be valid grounds for denial. When a client cooperates but still cannot produce adequate source of proof, the best available information may be used.
- 5.5.** The client has the right to appeal eligibility determinations through the State of Minnesota. Decisions will be based on the Aitkin County EGA Policy.

#### **Section 6. EGA Limitations**

- 6.1.** The maximum amount of EGA that may be approved and issued for the assistance unit, adding together all expenses needing payment to resolve the crisis, cannot exceed four times the cash grant standard under GA for the

assistance unit's size. In special circumstances, amount four times the cash grant may be approved by the Director or Financial Assistance Supervisor.

- 6.2.** The assistance standard for a married couple with no children shall be used when calculating the assistance amount for a married couple.
- 6.3.** Emergency needs that may be funded by EGA are limited to the following:

- 6.3.1. Rent**

- 6.3.1.1.** The county agency may issue EGA for rent to prevent eviction from rented or leased shelter.

- 6.3.1.1.1.** The county agency will deny EGA when the county agency determines the unit's shelter costs are not cost effective based on anticipated income.

- 6.3.1.1.2.** EGA will not be issued for payment of late fees.

- 6.3.1.1.3.** EGA will not be issued for more than three months' rent, including current month.

- 6.3.1.1.4.** EGA will not be issued to reimburse prepayments made by assistance unit towards the emergency.

- 6.3.2. Mortgage and Contract for Deed Arrears**

- 6.3.2.1.** When a home is owned, occupied, and maintained by the assistance unit, the county agency may issue EGA for mortgage or contract for deed arrears on behalf of an otherwise eligible unit.

- 6.3.2.1.1.** EGA may only be issued when no subsequent foreclosure action can be reasonably expected within the next 12 months following the issuance.

- 6.3.2.1.2.** EGA may only be issued when the assistance unit has been refused refinancing through a bank or other lending institution.

- 6.3.2.1.3.** EGA may only be issued when the creditor will accept the assistance payment, combined with any payments made by the assistance unit, as full payment of arrears.

- 6.3.2.1.4.** EGA may pay mortgage arrearages, including the escrow account.

- 6.3.2.1.5.** EGA will not be issued to reimburse prepayments made by the assistance unit towards the emergency.

- 6.3.3. Damage or Utility Deposits**

- 6.3.3.1.** Damage and Utility Deposits will be paid only in special circumstances upon the discretion of the agency director or designee.

- 6.3.4. Utility Disconnect/Shutoff Costs**

- 6.3.4.1.** EGA for utility costs may be made when an otherwise eligible assistance unit has had a termination or is threatened with a termination of municipal water and sewer service, electric, gas or heating fuel service (minimum fill), or refuse removal service, or lacks wood when that is the primary heating source.

**6.3.4.2.** The county agency may not issue assistance unless it receives confirmation from the utility provider that assistance combined with payment by the applicant and funding from any other verified sources will continue or restore the utility.

**Section 7. Appeals**

**7.1.** Assistance units must request an appeal hearing in writing and state what county agency action is being appealed.

**7.1.1.** Clients may use the Appeal to State Agency (DHS-0033) or send a letter indicating disagreement with the county agency's decision.

**7.2.** The appeal request must be received within 30 days of receiving a notice of proposed action, or show good cause for not requesting within that time. People may file an appeal up to 90 days after receiving the notice of proposed action if they show good cause for not filing within 30 days.

**Revised 1/12/2018**

**County Board Approval Date** \_\_\_\_\_