

# THE REVIEW PROCESS FOR GENERAL ASSISTANCE

The following procedures are used for the on-site review of General Assistance Program. The Department of Human Services has 3 Field Examiners who do the reviews in separate parts of the state. The procedures used may vary in some aspects from Field Examiner to Field Examiner and from municipality to municipality, as we must allow for large and small caseloads, professional welfare directors and selectmen or other part-time employees.

Entrance Conference – Either by phone at the time of scheduling or in person prior to the review, there should be an entrance conference which allows the examiner to explain to the administrator the purpose of the review, the scope of the review (fiscal/case records), the time period to be reviewed and the case selection process.

Fiscal Review – The purpose of this part of the review is to allow the examiner to verify that the amount submitted to the Department for reimbursement is the amount of General Assistance paid to vendors for direct costs of the program. This is done by reviewing bills paid, computer printouts, ledgers and warrants or a combination of these. It is imperative that no administrative costs are billed to the Department. If client reimbursements are reported, the examiner is to review the process used to arrive at the amount reported to ensure that the reimbursement formula (10%-50%-90%) was used properly so the municipality and the state gets their correct share. You are only to report on the 099 the amount of the state's share which will then be subtracted from the reimbursed amount.

Case Selection – In many instances, the examiner will be reviewing all cases for the time period in question. In small municipalities, the examiner may need to go back a number of months to achieve readings of ten cases, which is the ideal minimum. In large municipalities, cases may be selected at random. The method described in our policy manual is not always the best method due to caseload sizes and other factors.

Case Review – The examiner will review the application process whereby an application is processed for periods no longer than 30 days and that the application covers the payment selected and for 30 days forward. Receipts are to be requested for non-initial applications with misspent or non-verified expenditures added to the 30-day prospective income. The budget is to be computed using actual expenses or the allowed maximums, whichever is less. The deficit or the unmet need is the amount authorized whichever is less, unless an emergency exists. Ordinarily, recipients are not to receive more than the lesser of the deficit or unmet need, unless an emergency exists which could not have been averted by the client's income and resources. Narratives are to be entered in the case record whenever maximums are exceeded to justify amounts authorized. Appropriate forms should be used for all cases, including decision forms and notices on use of income requirements and emergency assistance. Copies of decision forms should be in the file as well as documentation that clients were notified of use of income and limits on emergency assistance. Receipts do not need to be entered in the case record. However, documentation should show that they were seen and used appropriately.

Requiring applicants to apply for other resources can be one of the easiest procedures to miss during case reviews. However, it is very important that applicants be required to apply for other programs when appropriate. TANF, SSI, UIB, WIC, etc. are available to many of our clients.

**DHS Form**

Other Issues at Review – The examiner must ensure that an updated general assistance ordinance is available for review by all applicants upon requests and that a notice of its availability is posted. The same is true for the statutes pertaining to General Assistance. Notice is to be posted which lists regular business hours, and emergency phone number to be called outside of business hours, the name of a person to be contacted in an emergency, the requirement that written decisions are to be issued within 24 hours, and the Department's toll-free number for reporting alleged violations. Notices related to the availability of statutes and ordinances and the posted hours and emergency services must be posted in plain sight 24 hours a day. This means that a notice placed on a bulletin board, etc., in a building, which is locked after normal business hours will not be acceptable.

Exit Conference – This allows the examiner to meet with the administrator to review his/her findings – good or bad. The examiner will explain errors/mistakes found and what needs to be done to correct the situation. This is also the time when the administrator can question, challenge or refute the review findings. The examiner will seek the administrator's signature and explain that the administrator has 10 days to submit written comments in response to the review findings prior to written notification of compliance/non-compliance is issued. All decisions are subject to fair hearing rights.