

STORY COUNTY

GENERAL

ASSISTANCE

MANUAL

Revised 6-30-22

SECTION I - GENERAL PROVISIONS

- A. LEGAL AUTHORIZATION The guidelines and procedures set out in this manual implement the provisions of the General Assistance Ordinance of Story County. Together the Ordinance and this manual carry out the duties imposed upon the County by Chapter 252 of the Code of Iowa.
- B. DEFINITIONS Terms used in this manual shall have the same meanings as provided in the Story County General Assistance Ordinance.
- C. ELIGIBILITY To be eligible for General Assistance, an applicant must complete an application; the applicant and their family members must comply with the guidelines established in the General Assistance Manual.
1. Agree to use the applicant and their family members own potential resources as specified in Section IV (C) of this manual.
 2. Apply for all other public assistance programs (i.e. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), FIP, SSI, SSDI, Medicaid, Iowa Health and Wellness Plan, state insurance exchange, etc.)
 3. If the applicant and their adult family members through action or inaction, has created an ineligibility for assistance or a reduced level of assistance from any federal/state financial assistance programs they will be ineligible for General Assistance until they are eligible for federal/state financial assistance programs.
 4. Applicant who receives Section 8 or subsidized housing is ineligible for rent assistance.

SECTION II – ADMINISTRATION

- A. PERSONNEL The General Assistance program shall be administered by the Director who is appointed by and responsible to the Board of Supervisors. The Director may designate qualified and trained staff to help administer the program and carry out General Assistance duties. The General Assistance staff are responsible to the Director.
- B. DUTIES OF PERSONNEL The Director or designee shall:
1. Accept applications for General Assistance from persons residing in Story County and shall supply standard application forms for this purpose.

2. Investigate the factual statements presented on each application for General Assistance to determine their accuracy and reliability as appears necessary to the Director under the guidelines of Section III of this manual.
3. Determine eligibility of each applicant according to the guidelines set out in this manual.
4. Arrange vendor payments for the applicants determined to be eligible for General Assistance.
5. Assist applicants to attain self-sufficiency.

SECTION III – GUIDELINES FOR INVESTIGATION AND DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY

The Director or designee shall investigate the factual statements made on an application if it reasonably appears from either the application or from other information made available that the:

1. Applicant's situation indicates potential unused resources.
2. Applicant's property or cash reserves are near or equal to the limitation allowed.
3. Applicant knowingly provides false information on an application for assistance or provides false information during the determination of the applicant's request for assistance.
4. Applicant is transient or someone who changes his/her address frequently, or who has no permanent place of residence, or temporarily relocated for employment purposes.
5. Applicant fails to secure and maintain employment.

General Assistance may then be denied.

SECTION IV - ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- A. LOCATION Applicant must be a resident of Story County to be considered for assistance. A resident is defined as a person who maintains a domicile (home) such as an apartment, townhome, duplex, house, etc. where the person can document that they are the lawful renter/owner and that they have paid rent or have possessed a lease, deed or title for a minimum of six (6) consecutive months or is a resident of Story County as defined in Iowa Code 331.394.

B. ALTERNATE SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE General Assistance funds shall not be utilized until all other sources of public assistance have been applied for. Applicants shall be referred to programs as appropriate.

C. PERSONAL AND FAMILY RESOURCES All real and personal resources of the family, including net income from any source, shall be considered in making determinations for granting General Assistance with the following exceptions:

1. The applicant's family homestead.
2. Personal possessions and household furniture.
3. Tools and equipment used for home and family maintenance or support.
4. One motor vehicle and any additional vehicle more than ten years old.

D. EMPLOYMENT SEARCH Applicants and adult members of the applicant's family shall complete a job search and accept employment when available. This requirement shall not be enforced when, in the determination of the Director or designee, any of the following conditions exists:

1. The applicant suffers from mental health or physical illness which prevents gainful employment.
2. The applicant is disabled or otherwise unemployable.
3. The applicant is caring for a dependent family member who requires home care and supervision.

An applicant and their adult family member(s) are not eligible for assistance if unemployed for the purpose of seeking post high school training or education unless that person is participating in a vocational program that is part of an ICP (Individual Comprehensive Plan) developed by their social worker or case manager.

An applicant and their adult family member(s) who are unemployed due to voluntarily quitting a job or are justifiably discharged from a job are not eligible for General Assistance for a period of 90 days after leaving the job.

E. COMPUTATION OF INCOME Net income shall be the aggregate of all income including child support received of household members minus all medical expenses or child support actively paid out of household during the same thirty-day period of income eligibility.

Single persons living in a roommate situation shall be eligible for their proportionate share of the rent or utilities based on their own income. If the roommate needs help, that person must make an application for General Assistance in their own name.

For burial assistance, Social Security income is disregarded. When the applicant or applicant's household is over resources, the funds may be applied toward the burial assistance costs outlined under Burial Assistance in this Manual. Any funds applied shall be disregarded in the determination of resources.

General Assistance income and resource guidelines will be reviewed annually and amended per Board of Supervisor approval.

F. FREQUENCY

Needy:

1. An individual and their family members are eligible to receive General Assistance once in a six-month period.
2. Medical exceptions will be allowed if a physician's statement is provided that exempts the applicant and/or adult family member from any work. The maximum assistance for a medical exemption is three months for the applicant and adult family member in a six-month period.

Poor:

1. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Interim Assistance: Individuals eligible for SSI Interim may receive monthly assistance not to exceed the current General Assistance benefit per month for the duration of eligibility.

SECTION V - DISBURSEMENT OF GENERAL ASSISTANCE

After eligibility is established and verified, disbursement of General Assistance may be granted according to the following categories of need and their listed guidelines:

A. RENT

1. Rent payment shall only be made to owners of property. Rent shall not be paid to a relative.
2. Rent shall only be paid for housing that is currently being occupied by the applicant and their family.

3. The total amount of rent allowed for a single person is limited to \$450.00 or \$500.00 if utilities are included in rent.
4. The total amount of rent that General Assistance will pay for a family is \$550.00, or \$600.00 if utilities are included in the rent.
5. A family unit will be the same as a multi-person household.
6. When a single person has a room-mate who pays their portion of the rent and utilities, each person must apply to General Assistance for their portion of the rent.
7. Rent will be paid for the current month only. If there are months that have been unpaid, verification will be needed to show that the past due amounts have either been paid or resolved with the landlord before a county voucher will be issued.

B. UTILITIES

1. Utility assistance includes vendor payments to gas companies, light companies, water companies, fuel oil companies and merchants who may provide another type of fuel needed for heating or cooking.
2. The maximum amount authorized will be \$385 for any type of utility. If rent is being authorized also, the maximum amount authorized will not exceed \$500 for a single household or \$600 for a family.
3. Utilities are paid on a current basis, and it is not necessary to have a shut-off notice.
4. Utilities must be in the name of the applicant or another member of the household. If utilities are being shared with a non-applicant, the payment will be pro-rated.
5. Payment for utilities will be for current usage only. If a shut off notice has been received, verification will be needed of payment of past due amount before payment of current amount will be made.

C. FOOD

Applicants will be referred to food pantries or other sources before issuing a voucher for food. Story County would be the funder of last resort.

1. This category includes food and non-food expendable household items such as soap and paper products, household cleaning supplies and personal grooming supplies.

2. A food voucher may be given to an applicant for an amount of \$40 for a single person and an additional \$10 for each additional person, made out to the grocery store of the applicant's choice.
3. A food voucher will purchase staple food items only. Luxury items such as pop, candy, potato chips, etc. are not authorized.
4. Food vouchers will not be used as a supplement for the applicant and their family who are eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

D. MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

1. Prior authorization from the Director or designee must be obtained before obtaining medical assistance. In case of an emergency, when it is impossible to obtain prior authorization, the General Assistance Office must be contacted the first working day following the emergency.
2. Vendor payment may be made for prescriptions and also for some medical needs that require no prescription, such as insulin needles, bandages or gauze, etc. Payment for prescription or nonprescription drugs shall be limited to \$200.00 per eligible family member.
3. Payment may be made for dental work necessary to alleviate pain. Payment for necessary dental work may include dentures and denture repair or replacement. Dental vendor payments are limited to \$200.00 for extractions or restoration and cost of dentures not to exceed \$600.00 for full plate or \$300.00 for a partial set.
4. Vendor payment may be made for exam, refraction and glasses. (Limited to Medicaid frames and lenses only)
5. Vendor payment may be made for prescribed medical supplies not available through other resources, such as hearing aids, special shoes, etc.

E. MISCELLANEOUS

1. Transportation assistance for transients may be in the form of voucher payments not to exceed fifteen (15) gallons of gasoline and 1 qt. of oil OR a voucher payment for bus tickets to the closest designated bus stop across the Iowa border. This assistance will be limited to one time only.
2. Any other type of General Assistance found by the Director to be appropriate may be disbursed under this subsection. Under no circumstances shall the Director find taxes, interest, carrying charges, mortgage payment or any other type of debt to be a current need for which General Assistance may be disbursed.

F. BURIAL ASSISTANCE

1. Covered Funeral Home Expenses for Traditional Burial Include:

Removal from place of death to funeral facility
Embalming
Cloth covered casket
Outer Burial Container (concrete grave liner, non-protective)
Tent/vault set up and delivery
Private viewing (one hour of private family visitation)
Graveside Service – Monday through Friday
Transportation to local cemetery

2. Covered Cemetery Expenses Include:

Opening and Closing of gravesite

3. Covered Funeral Home Expenses for Cremation Include:

Removal from place of death to funeral facility
Cremation of remains/cremation process
Basic alternative cremation container
Private viewing (one hour of private family visitation)
Memorial service at church, funeral home, or graveside
– Monday through Friday
Transportation to local cemetery
Fees and permits (incl. medical examiner cremation permit)

The amount to cover the above expenses will be determined on a fiscal year basis through the Board of Supervisor's budget process

4. Additional funding may be supplied by the family: in an amount, up to the same amount as approved by the Story County Board of Supervisors (note: this is optional and must be agreed to in writing by the next of kin or officially designated representative and the Funeral Home and must be paid to the Funeral Home before the time of service) for the following:

Printed materials – register book, service folders
Clergy or music honorariums
Hairdresser/Barber
Flowers
Certified death certificates
Luncheon or reception charges
Obituaries
Other cash advance items

5. Conditions:

- a. An application for burial assistance shall be submitted to the Story County General Assistance program within two business days from date of death.
- b. The assistance available through the Story County General Assistance program is intended to help cover costs of funeral home services associated with burial or cremation, as well as expenses related to the interment of remains (i.e. cemetery fees). The funeral home will work with next of kin or officially designated representative to limit the services to meet the guidelines of this policy.
- c. The funeral home shall furnish complete invoices to Story County General Assistance as well as the next of kin or officially designated representative. If the total cost of services exceeds the amount approved by the county plus the amount contributed by the family, then the burden for any cost in excess of this total is the responsibility of the funeral home, cemetery, or participating vendors.
- d. A completed Story County General Assistance Burial Contract with original signatures shall be submitted with the invoice.
- e. Payment for out of county or out of state funerals will not be provided.

G. SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI) INTERIM ASSISTANCE

1. Applicant shall have applied for SSI and be in a current appeal for SSI disability benefits with Social Security Administration, applicant needs to be potentially eligible for SSI if determined disabled.
2. The applicant shall:
 - a. Meet General Assistance guidelines.
 - b. Provide documentation of medical condition and inability to work.
 - c. Complete & sign the Authorization for Reimbursement of Interim Assistance (form 470-1950).
 - d. Pursue their SSI disability application with Social Security Administration, keep scheduled appointments for state and federal programs, return requested information in a timely manner, and follow through with prescribed medical treatment.
 - e. Provide contact information for the attorney representing their SSI appeal.
3. Upon approval for SSI benefits, Social Security Administration will reimburse Story County for the benefit amount determined reimbursable. Any remainder of SSI benefit will be paid directly to the applicant.

4. SSI Interim Assistance shall terminate upon denial of an application for SSI benefits at the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) level or for failure to comply with the General Assistance guidelines. A reapplication for disability benefits for the same disability does not qualify the applicant for additional SSI Interim Assistance.

SECTION VI – DISBURSEMENTS AND RECORDS

- A. Eligibility and need shall be determined and any resulting disbursements made as soon as possible after an application is properly completed and all supporting documentation has been received. Disbursement of General Assistance shall be by payment to the vendor.
- B. Adequate records of all disbursements shall be tracked by applicant and by category, together with documentation that supports General Assistance payments.

SECTION V - APPEAL

The applicant may appeal denial of benefits by the director under the procedure set out in Sections 20.07 and 20.08 of the Story County General Assistance Ordinance.