

(563) 326-8723 Fax (563) 326-8730

June 1, 2010

TO: Dee F. Bruemmer

FROM: Lori A. Elam

RE: General Assistance Guidelines: Elimination of the Work Readiness Program

As you are aware, the General Assistance program has seen a record number of people due to the poor economy. The Case Aides have reported a record number of people in the Work Readiness Program this year as well. Every client in the Work Readiness Program has an “employability plan”, completes a job search sheet every two weeks and works in the county buildings cleaning. The goal of the Work Readiness Program is to have the client become self-supportive by learning skills and appropriate work habits. The clients in this program are capable of working and have no medical restrictions.

Historically, the Work Readiness Program began in the early 1980’s to help save the county money by having people work for the welfare provided. The clients would clean county buildings at night without county staff supervision. Problems occurred with that situation, so the cleaning was moved to the daytime hours. The program saved the county money as FSS staff didn’t need to clean the county buildings. The program was then expanded to include other agencies such as United Neighbors and Café on the Vine. The program numbers have always fluctuated depending on the economy. Scott County is unique in that it is the only county that currently has a work program within the General Assistance program in the state of Iowa.

The current Work Readiness Program has a record number of clients in it, 52 total. Case Aides have reported many clients “working the system”. Many clients have taken advantage of the program. The Case Aides on a daily basis deal with falsified job search sheets, no shows for work and repeated requests to see a doctor because the clients are “sick” and unable to work. The Community Services Department is operating this program with one less staff person as we streamlined the program and the procedures when an employee retired last summer. We have attempted to be “lean”, but the poor economy and the record number of people seeking assistance has stretched staff and resources beyond projections. Staff have done a great job addressing the needs of clients.

Scott County has always been known for having the best welfare assistance program in the state. As budgets become more and more strained, I believe it’s time to make our county comparable to other large counties in the state and not be the “best” in terms of welfare assistance. Many of the clients we see on a daily basis are capable of working and supporting themselves.

I am proposing the elimination of the Work Readiness Program. The program would no longer exist effective July 1, 2010 and clients previously in the program would have their rent paid for three months and then no longer be eligible for county assistance. They would be expected to find a job and become self sufficient. These individuals would not be eligible for assistance for

one year. The county would continue to pay the rent for those who are waiting for Social Security approval and benefits (67 clients currently), as the county gets reimbursed for those funds paid on behalf of a client once approved for Social Security.

The projected savings are as follows:

Currently, we pay for 52 clients in the Work Readiness Program at \$450 per month ongoing as long as they complete the program requirements. The county also pays \$20 a month for laundry services and another \$8 for non-food supplies for these clients.

So for 52 clients at \$450 a month for 12 months, we spend \$280,800.

If we only pay for 3 months of rent in a year for those same people, the cost would be \$70,200, resulting in a projected savings of \$210,600.

The laundry and non-food costs for those 52 people for 12 months is \$17,472.

If we only pay for 3 months in a year for those same people, the cost would be \$4,368, resulting in a projected savings of \$13,104.

Another hidden savings would be in the Community Health Care (CHC) budget as we would no longer need to send these clients to the doctor when they claim to be ill and can't work their units.

The projected grand total savings is \$223,704.

One staff person spends an average of 2 hours a day on the Work Readiness Program dealing with paperwork duties: time cards, scheduling and class. The elimination of this program would free up 10 hours a week for her to see other clients needing help both in the General Assistance Program and Protective Payee Program. The elimination of the program would also free up 4 hours a day (20 hours a week) for a FSS staff person, as they would no longer need to supervise the clients cleaning. FSS does not feel that the elimination of the program would cause them any difficulty in cleaning the county buildings.

I have included a spreadsheet showing what 10 other counties around the state pay in terms of rental assistance. Under the new proposal, Scott County would continue to be one of the "best", similar to Blackhawk County and Johnson County in terms of the number of months paid in a year and similar to Clinton, Linn and Polk County in terms of amount paid.

The General Assistance Program should be designed to assist individuals on a short term basis, not "on-going" for possibly years. This change would eliminate the clients who are simply "working the system" and have no real desire to find a job or work. It would also protect tax payer dollars and free up funds for clients who truly need help on short term basis. The downside to this proposal is that some clients may be evicted from their apartments for failure to pay rent, become homeless and possibly move out of the area.

The revised guidelines, if approved, would be implemented July 1, 2010. I will be at the Committee of the Whole meeting to address any questions.

THE COUNTY AUDITOR'S SIGNATURE CERTIFIES
THAT THIS RESOLUTION HAS BEEN FORMALLY
APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON

DATE

SCOTT COUNTY AUDITOR

RESOLUTION

SCOTT COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

JUNE 10, 2010

APPROVING CHANGES TO THE GENERAL ASSISTANCE GUIDELINES RELATING
TO THE ELIMINATION OF THE WORK READINESS PROGRAM

BE IT RESOLVED BY the Scott County Board of Supervisors as follows:

- Section 1. The Work Readiness Program will be eliminated from the General Assistance program. Scott County will no longer provide on-going rental assistance for those individuals who are capable of working. Scott County will only pay up to three months of rental assistance for individuals who are able to work. Scott County will continue to provide on-going rental assistance for those judged disabled and awaiting Social Security benefit approval.
- Section 2. This resolution shall take effect July 1, 2010.

