

Community Services Department

600 W. 4th St.
Davenport, Iowa 52801

Item 8
03-29-11



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March 21, 2011

TO: Dee F. Bruemmer

FROM: Lori A. Elam

RE: General Assistance Policy Change for FY12

As you are aware, the General Assistance program saw a record number of people due to the poor economy in FY10. Several changes were made in the policies in order to stretch the funds to help as many people as possible. The Work Readiness Program ended 6/30/10. In addition, the county began paying rental assistance for 3 months only for individuals who were capable of working effective 7/1/10. Currently clients who are capable of working are not eligible for rental assistance for 1 year after 3 months of assistance. The county continues to pay rental assistance for those individuals who are waiting approval from Social Security, as their physician has declared them unable to work.

The FY11 budget for rental assistance was originally set at \$297,566 with the hope that the economy would improve and changes in the county policy would allow the General Assistance program to serve more and stretch dollars further. A budget amendment was approved to add \$186,785 to the FY11 budget. Every day the office is seeing at least 2-3 new people (never been in our office) seeking rental assistance. Although the economy is slowly improving, the unemployment rate continues to be high.

In January, the Board of Supervisors were given additional information on the type of people we serve in the General Assistance program, more specifically, the number of people waiting for Social Security benefits approval. In January, 2011 we had 61 clients who are waiting for Social Security approval. In February we had 64 clients. The cost for rental assistance for those individuals is \$28,800 per month and annually \$345,600 with the current rental policy.

There are counties who do not assist those waiting for Social Security benefits and other counties who stop assistance after the client is denied twice by Social Security or denied by an Administrative Law Judge. Scott County does receive reimbursement for most of those who get approved for Social Security, but at a very slow rate. In FY09 the county received reimbursement in the amount of \$157,406 and in FY10 \$119,991. So far in FY11 we have received \$79,569. In FY10 there were 30 individuals approved for Social Security. So far in FY11, 20 individuals have been approved.

Because this is the second year in a row that the General Assistance program has needed a budget amendment, I am recommending another policy change regarding rental assistance effective 7/1/11. The policy change would be to provide rental assistance for one (1) month in a twelve (12) month period to those capable of working and to provide rental assistance to those waiting for Social Security approval until they are denied by the Administrative Law Judge. These changes would be consistent with Linn and Polk County General Assistance policies.

We have approximately 28 new people each month who are receiving rental assistance. This number is extremely high and we had hoped it would decline over the year. If the county were to pay only 1 month of rental assistance for those 28 new people, it would cost \$12,600. Assuming we continue to receive 28 new people each month, the annual cost would be \$151,200. Again this rental assistance is for those individuals who are able to work.

When the cost of rental assistance is added together for those waiting Social Security (64) and those new people (28) for a 1 month period, the budget would be approximately \$496,800. This annual amount is based on the assumption that all 64 clients waiting for Social Security remain on the program for the entire year. Some will be approved, some may move out of the area and some may pass away. We currently have 31 clients who have been denied by the Administrative Law Judge. Again the county will receive reimbursement for some of those approved for Social Security benefits during the year. The numbers in our program fluctuate from month to month making it somewhat difficult to predict budget figures.

I have included an updated spreadsheet showing what 10 other counties around the state pay in terms of rental assistance. If Scott County decreases the number of months paid and/or denies those who have been repeatedly denied by Social Security, Scott County would be similar to many counties listed.

The General Assistance Program should be designed to assist individuals on a short term basis, not "on-going" for years. This change should 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.

I am recommending Scott County revise the rental assistance policy to pay rent for 1 month in a 12 month period for anyone capable of working and to deny rental assistance to those who have been denied Social Security benefits by an Administrative Law Judge. The FY12 budget for rental assistance is \$484,000.

If the changes are approved, I would suggest an implementation date of July 1, 2011 as that would give our office time to notify clients and landlords as well as Social Security.

County	Rental Amount Paid	Details
Blackhawk	\$175; additional \$25 per mth/per person in HH	Assist 3 times a year total for rent
Cedar	Look at Fair Market Value and pay half of cost	Assist 2 times a year in a rolling year; Clients set up on a repay- if no repay attempt, not eligible for assistance for 18 months; Do not assist those waiting for Social Security benefits
Clinton	\$300; Do not look at HH size	Assist once in a 12 month period for rent- \$300; Do not assist those waiting for Social Security benefits
Des Moines	\$200; \$250 for 2 person HH	Assist only 1 month using a calendar yr- 1/1-12/31; Do assist those waiting for Social Security benefits but if denied twice, no longer assist.
Dubuque	\$138-\$200 depending on HH size	Assist 3 times per year; Clients set up on repay; Can appeal to BOS for additional months of assistance; Do assist those waiting for Social Security benefits
Johnson	\$350 for HH of 1; \$450 for HH of 2 or more	Assist 3 times a rolling year
Keokuk	\$150	Maximum dollar amount of assistance-\$150 over a 12 month period; client set up on repay; Do not assist those waiting for Social Security benefits
Linn	\$350; Do not look at HH size	Assist only 2 months; Clients set up on repay; Do assist those waiting for Social Security benefits until denied at the Administrative Law Judge level
Muscatine	\$50	Assist for 12 months and client must come in and reapply each month; pay for those waiting for Social Security benefits but if denied once, county only pays \$50
Polk	\$430-\$628 depending on HH size	Assist 1 time per 12 month period; Do assist those waiting for Social Security benefits until denied at the Administrative Law Judge level
Current Scott	\$450; Do not look at HH size	Assist up to 3 times per year and client must come in and reapply each month; Clients set up on repay; Assist those waiting for Social Security benefits
REVISED SCOTT	\$450; Do not look at HH size	Assist 1 time per year; Clients set up on repay; Assist those waiting for Social Security benefits until denied at the Administrative Law Judge level

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

DATE

SCOTT COUNTY AUDITOR

R E S O L U T I O N
SCOTT COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
MARCH 31, 2011

APPROVING CHANGES TO THE GENERAL ASSISTANCE GUIDELINES RELATING
TO RENTAL ASSISTANCE

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

- Section 1. The General Assistance Program will provide on-going rental assistance for persons who are waiting for social security disability benefits approval until they have been denied at the Administrative Law Judge level.
- Section 2. General Assistance will provide rental assistance for one (1) month in a twelve (12) month period for persons who have no income, or income below TANF guidelines, and no resources to meet basic needs.
- Section 3. This resolution shall take effect July 1, 2011.