

CHAPTER 1161

MUNICIPAL GENERAL ASSISTANCE

§4301. Definitions

As used in this chapter, unless the context indicates otherwise, the following terms have the following meanings. [PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

1. Basic necessities. "Basic necessities" means food, potable water, clothing, shelter, fuel, electricity, nonelective medical services as recommended by a physician, nonprescription drugs, telephone where it is necessary for medical reasons and any other commodity or service determined essential by the overseer in accordance with the municipality's ordinance and this chapter. "Basic necessities" do not include security deposits for rental property, except for emergency purposes. For the purposes of this subsection, "emergency purposes" means any situation in which no other permanent lodging is available unless a security deposit is paid.

[PL 2019, c. 126, §2 (AMD).]

1-A. Direct costs. "Direct costs" means the total value of general assistance benefits paid out by a municipality that is in compliance with this chapter and the municipality's general assistance ordinance.

[PL 1991, c. 9, Pt. U, §2 (NEW).]

2. Dwelling unit. "Dwelling unit" means a building or part thereof used for separate living quarters for one or more persons living as a single housekeeping unit.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

3. Eligible person. "Eligible person" means a person who is qualified to receive general assistance from a municipality according to standards of eligibility determined by the municipal officers whether or not that person has applied for general assistance. "Eligible person" does not include a person who is a fugitive from justice as defined in Title 15, section 201, subsection 4. Beginning July 1, 2015, in accordance with 8 United States Code, Section 1621(d), "eligible person" means a person who is lawfully present in the United States or who is pursuing a lawful process to apply for immigration relief, except that assistance for such a person may not exceed 24 months.

[PL 2015, c. 324, §1 (AMD).]

4. Emergency. "Emergency" means any life threatening situation or a situation beyond the control of the individual which, if not alleviated immediately, could reasonably be expected to pose a threat to the health or safety of a person.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

5. General assistance program. "General assistance program" means a service administered by a municipality for the immediate aid of persons who are unable to provide the basic necessities essential to maintain themselves or their families. A general assistance program provides a specific amount and type of aid for defined needs during a limited period of time and is not intended to be a continuing "grant-in-aid" or "categorical" welfare program. This definition shall not in any way lessen the responsibility of each municipality to provide general assistance to a person each time that the person has need and is found to be otherwise eligible to receive general assistance.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

5-A. Homelessness. "Homelessness" means a situation in which a person or household is:

A. Living in a place that is not fit for human habitation; [PL 2019, c. 515, §1 (NEW).]

B. Living in an emergency shelter; [PL 2019, c. 515, §1 (NEW).]

C. Living in temporary housing, including but not limited to a hotel, motel, campground, unlicensed campsite or rehabilitation facility; [PL 2019, c. 515, §1 (NEW).]

D. Exiting a hospital or institution licensed under chapter 405 or a correctional facility where the person or household resided for up to 90 days if the person or household was in an emergency shelter or a place not fit for human habitation before entering the hospital, institution or correctional facility; [PL 2019, c. 515, §1 (NEW).]

E. Losing the person's or household's primary nighttime residence and lacking the resources or support networks to remain in that residence; or [PL 2019, c. 515, §1 (NEW).]

F. Fleeing or attempting to flee violence and has no other residence. [PL 2019, c. 515, §1 (NEW).]

[PL 2019, c. 515, §1 (NEW).]

6. Household. "Household" means an individual or a group of individuals who share a dwelling unit. When an applicant shares a dwelling unit with one or more individuals, even when a landlord-tenant relationship may exist between individuals residing in the dwelling unit, eligible applicants may receive assistance for no more than their pro rata share of the actual costs of the shared basic needs of that household according to the maximum levels of assistance established in the municipal ordinance. The pro rata share is calculated by dividing the maximum level of assistance available to the entire household by the total number of household members. The income of household members not legally liable for supporting the household is considered available to the applicant only when there is a pooling of income.

[PL 2013, c. 368, Pt. OO, §5 (AMD).]

7. Income. "Income" means any form of income in cash or in kind received by the household, including net remuneration for services performed, cash received on either secured or unsecured credit, any payments received as an annuity, retirement or disability benefits, veterans' pensions, workers' compensation, unemployment benefits, benefits under any state or federal categorical assistance program, supplemental security income, social security and any other payments from governmental sources, unless specifically prohibited by any law or regulation, court ordered support payments, income from pension or trust funds, household income from any other source, including relatives or unrelated household members and any benefit received pursuant to Title 36, chapter 907, Title 36, section 5219-II and Title 36, section 5219-KK, unless used for basic necessities as defined in section 4301, subsection 1.

The following items are not available within the meaning of this subsection and subsection 10:

A. Real or personal income-producing property, tools of trade, governmental entitlement specifically treated as exempt assets by state or federal law; [PL 1991, c. 9, Pt. U, §3 (AMD).]

B. Actual work-related expenses, whether itemized or by standard deduction, such as taxes, retirement fund contributions, union dues, transportation costs to and from work, special equipment costs and child care expenses; or [PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

C. Earned income of children below the age of 18 years who are full-time students and who are not working full time. [PL 1991, c. 9, Pt. U, §3 (AMD).]

In determining need, the period of time used as a basis for the calculation is the 30-day period commencing on the date of the application. This prospective calculation does not disqualify an applicant who has exhausted income to purchase basic necessities if that income does not exceed the income standards established by the municipality. Notwithstanding this prospective calculation, if any applicant or recipient receives a lump sum payment prior or subsequent to applying for assistance, that payment must be prorated over future months. The period of proration is determined by disregarding any portion of the lump sum payment that the applicant or recipient has spent to purchase basic necessities, including but not limited to: all basic necessities provided by general assistance; reasonable

payment of funeral or burial expenses for a family member; reasonable travel costs related to the illness or death of a family member; repair or replacement of essentials lost due to fire, flood or other natural disaster; repair or purchase of a motor vehicle essential for employment, education, training or other day-to-day living necessities; repayments of loans or credit, the proceeds of which can be verified as having been spent on basic necessities; and payment of bills earmarked for the purpose for which the lump sum is paid. All income received by the household between the receipt of the lump sum payment and the application for assistance is added to the remainder of the lump sum. The period of proration is then determined by dividing the remainder of the lump sum payment by the verified actual monthly amounts for all of the household's basic necessities. That dividend represents the period of proration determined by the administrator to commence on the date of receipt of the lump sum payment. The prorated sum for each month must be considered available to the household for 12 months from the date of application or during the period of proration, whichever is less.

[PL 2013, c. 551, §1 (AMD).]

8. Just cause. "Just cause" means a valid, verifiable reason that hinders an individual in complying with one or more conditions of eligibility.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

8-A. Lump sum payment. "Lump sum payment" means a one-time or typically nonrecurring sum of money issued to an applicant or recipient. Lump sum payment includes, but is not limited to, retroactive or settlement portions of social security benefits, workers' compensation payments, unemployment benefits, disability income, veterans' benefits, severance pay benefits, or money received from inheritances, lottery winnings, personal injury awards, property damage claims or divorce settlements. A lump sum payment includes only the amount of money available to the applicant after payment of required deductions has been made from the gross lump sum payment. A lump sum payment does not include conversion of a nonliquid resource to a liquid resource if the liquid resource has been used or is intended to be used to replace the converted resource or for other necessary expenses.

[PL 2001, c. 571, §2 (AMD).]

8-B. Landlord. "Landlord" means a person who owns a property and allows another person to use that property in return for payment.

[PL 2023, c. 133, §1 (NEW).]

9. Municipality of responsibility. "Municipality of responsibility" means the municipality which is liable for the support of any eligible person at the time of application.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

10. Need. "Need" means the condition whereby a person's income, money, property, credit, assets or other resources available to provide basic necessities for the individual and the individual's family are less than the maximum levels of assistance established by the municipality.

[PL 1985, c. 489, §§2, 14 (AMD).]

11. Net general assistance costs. "Net general assistance costs" means those direct costs incurred by a municipality in providing assistance to eligible persons according to standards established by the municipal officers and does not include the administrative expenses of the general assistance program.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

11-A. Operator. "Operator" means the lawful owner of a recovery residence or an individual or company designated by the lawful owner to have primary responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the recovery residence and for acquiring and maintaining certification pursuant to Title 5, section 20005, subsection 22 of the recovery residence in order to receive housing assistance payments through the general assistance program.

[PL 2023, c. 133, §2 (NEW).]

12. Overseer. "Overseer" means an official designated by a municipality to administer a general assistance program. The municipal officers shall serve as a board of overseers if no other persons are appointed or elected.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

12-A. Pooling of income. "Pooling of income" means the financial relationship among household members who are not legally liable for mutual support in which there occurs any comingling of funds or sharing of income or expenses. Municipalities may by ordinance establish as a rebuttable presumption that persons sharing the same dwelling unit are pooling their income. Applicants who are requesting that the determination of eligibility be calculated as though one or more household members are not pooling their income have the burden of rebutting the presumption of pooling income.

[PL 1991, c. 622, Pt. M, §22 (NEW).]

13. Real estate. "Real estate" means any land, buildings, homes, mobile homes and any other things affixed to that land.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

14. Recovery residence. "Recovery residence" has the same meaning as in Title 5, section 20003, subsection 19-D.

[PL 2021, c. 472, §2 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1985, c. 489, §§1,2,14 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 322, §1 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 840, §§1-3 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 9, §§U1-3 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 622, §§M20-22 (AMD). PL 1993, c. 410, §AAA1 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 571, §§1,2 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 510, §C6 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 368, Pt. OO, §§4-6 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 551, §1 (AMD). PL 2015, c. 324, §1 (AMD). PL 2019, c. 126, §2 (AMD). PL 2019, c. 515, §1 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 472, §2 (AMD). PL 2023, c. 133, §§1, 2 (AMD).

§4302. Delegation of duties; oath; bond

Overseers may authorize some person whom they shall designate to perform such of the duties imposed upon them by this chapter as they may determine. The overseers may designate more than one person to perform those duties. Before entering upon the performance of those duties, the person or persons so designated shall be sworn and shall give bond to the town for the faithful performance of those duties, in such sum and with such sureties as the overseers order. [PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).

§4303. Prosecution and defense of towns

For all purposes provided for in this chapter, the overseers or any person appointed by them in writing may prosecute and defend a town. [PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).

§4304. General assistance offices

1. Local office. There must be in each municipality a general assistance office or designated place where any person may apply for general assistance at regular, reasonable times designated by the municipal officers. Notice must be posted of these times, the name of the overseer available to take applications in an emergency at all other times, the fact that the municipality must issue a written decision on all applications within 24 hours and the department's toll-free telephone number for reporting alleged violations in accordance with section 4321.

[PL 1991, c. 209, §1 (AMD).]

2. District office. In situations where in the judgment of a municipality the number of applicants does not justify the establishment of a local office or designated place, or where for other reasons a local office or designated place is not necessary, 2 or more municipalities, by a vote of their respective legislative bodies, may establish a district office for the administration of general assistance and make agreements as to the payment of expenses and any other matters relevant to the operation of the office.

Any district office established pursuant to this subsection shall be located so as to be accessible by a toll-free telephone call from any part of every municipality it is designated to serve.

Every district general assistance officer shall be available for the taking of applications at least 35 hours each week and shall make provision for designated personnel to be available to take applications in an emergency 24 hours a day.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

3. Emergencies. In any case when an applicant is unable, due to illness, disability, lack of transportation, lack of child care or other good cause, to apply in person for assistance or unable to appoint a duly authorized representative, the overseer shall accept an application by telephone subject to verification by mail and a visit to the applicant's home with the consent of the applicant. Municipalities may arrange with emergency shelters for the homeless to presume eligible for municipal assistance persons to whom the emergency shelter provides shelter services.

[PL 1989, c. 322, §2 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1989, c. 322, §2 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 699 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 209, §1 (AMD).

§4305. Municipal ordinance required

1. Program required; ordinance. A general assistance program shall be operated by each municipality and shall be administered in accordance with an ordinance enacted, after notice and hearing, by the municipal officers of each municipality.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

2. Availability of ordinance. The ordinance and a copy of this chapter must be available in the town office and be easily accessible to any member of the public. Notice to that effect must be posted. A copy of this chapter must be distributed by the department to each municipality.

[PL 1991, c. 209, §2 (AMD).]

3. Standards of eligibility. Municipalities may establish standards of eligibility, in addition to need, as provided in this chapter. Each ordinance shall establish standards which shall:

A. Govern the determination of eligibility of persons applying for relief and the amount of assistance to be provided to eligible persons; [PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

B. Provide that all individuals wishing to make application for relief shall have the opportunity to do so; and [PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

C. Provide that relief shall be furnished or denied to all eligible applicants within 24 hours of the date of submission of an application. [PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

3-A. Maximum levels of assistance. Municipalities may establish maximum levels of assistance by ordinance. The maximum levels of assistance must set reasonable and adequate standards sufficient to maintain health and decency. A maximum level of assistance established by municipal ordinance is subject to a review by the department, upon complaint, to ensure compliance with this chapter.

[PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §2 (AMD).]

3-B. Temporary maximum levels. Notwithstanding subsection 3-A, municipalities shall establish an aggregate maximum level of assistance that is 110% of the applicable existing housing fair market rents as established by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development pursuant to 24 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 888.115, applying the zero-bedroom level for one person, the one-bedroom level for 2 persons, the 2-bedroom level for 3 persons, the 3-bedroom level for 4 persons and the 4-bedroom level for 5 persons. For each additional person, the aggregate maximum level increases by \$75. For the purposes of this subsection, municipalities with populations greater than 10,000 are deemed Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas in those counties for which there are 2 fair market rent values and the aggregate maximum level of assistance for all Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas is the average of the fair market rental values for the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas and areas that are not Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas for each county in which there are 2 fair market rental values.

Beginning October 2005 and annually thereafter, the aggregate maximum level of assistance must be established at the greater of 110% of the fair market rents as determined in this subsection and the amount achieved by annually increasing the most recent aggregate maximum level of assistance by the percentage increase in the federal poverty level of the current year over the federal poverty level of the prior year.

For the purposes of this subsection, "federal poverty level" means that measure defined by the federal Department of Health and Human Services and updated annually in the Federal Register under authority of 42 United States Code, Section 9902(2).

[PL 2005, c. 231, §1 (AMD).]

3-C. Maximum level of assistance from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013. Notwithstanding subsection 3-A or 3-B, for the period from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013, the maximum level of assistance is 90% of the maximum level of assistance in effect on April 1, 2012.

[PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. R, §1 (NEW).]

3-D. Maximum level of assistance for fiscal years 2013-14 and 2014-15. Notwithstanding subsection 3-A or 3-B, the aggregate maximum level of assistance for fiscal years 2013-14 and 2014-15 must be set as follows:

A. The aggregate maximum level of assistance for fiscal year 2013-14 must be the amount that is the greater of:

- (1) Ninety percent of 110% of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development fair market rent for federal fiscal year 2013; and
- (2) The amount achieved by increasing the maximum level of assistance for fiscal year 2012-13 by 90% of the increase in the federal poverty level from 2012 to 2013. [PL 2013, c. 368, Pt. OO, §7 (NEW).]

B. The aggregate maximum level of assistance for fiscal year 2014-15 must be the amount that is the greater of:

- (1) Ninety percent of 110% of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development fair market rent for federal fiscal year 2014; and
- (2) The amount achieved by increasing the maximum level of assistance for fiscal year 2013-14 by 90% of the increase in the federal poverty level from 2013 to 2014. [PL 2013, c. 368, Pt. OO, §7 (NEW).]

For the purposes of this subsection, "federal poverty level" means that measure defined by the federal Department of Health and Human Services and updated annually in the Federal Register under authority of 42 United States Code, Section 9902(2). For the purposes of this subsection, fair market rent is calculated in the same manner as in subsection 3-B.

[PL 2013, c. 368, Pt. OO, §7 (NEW).]

4. Ordinance filed. Each municipality shall present a copy of the ordinance establishing eligibility standards, maximum levels of assistance, administration and appeal procedures to the Department of Health and Human Services. The ordinance filed must include all forms and notices, including the application form, notice of decision and appeal rights. Any amendment or modification of the municipal ordinance must be submitted to the department.

[PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §4 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 689, Pt. B, §6 (REV).]

5. Review of ordinance.

[PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §5 (RP).]

6. Assistance by vouchers or contract. Except when determined impractical by the administrator for good cause shown, assistance is provided in the form of a voucher payable to vendor or vendors or through direct municipal contract with a provider of goods or services.

[PL 1991, c. 209, §3 (NEW); PL 1991, c. 209, §4 (AFF).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1985, c. 489, §§3,4,14 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 9, §U4 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 209, §§2,3 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 209, §4 (AFF). PL 1991, c. 622, §M23 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 780, §I1 (AMD). PL 1993, c. 410, §§AAA2-5 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 689, §B6 (REV). PL 2005, c. 231, §1 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. R, §1 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 368, Pt. OO, §7 (AMD).

§4306. Records; confidentiality of information

The overseer shall keep complete and accurate records pertaining to general assistance, including the names of eligible persons assisted and the amounts paid for their assistance. Records, papers, files and communications relating to an applicant or recipient made or received by persons charged with responsibility of administering this chapter are confidential and no information relating to a person who is an applicant or recipient may be disclosed to the general public, unless expressly permitted by that person. [PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).

§4307. Municipality of responsibility; residency

1. General assistance required. Municipalities shall provide general assistance to all eligible persons at the expense of that municipality, except as provided in section 4311.

A municipality may not move or transport a person into another municipality to avoid responsibility for general assistance support for that person. A municipality that illegally moves or transports a person, or illegally denies assistance to a person that results in that person's relocation, in addition to the other penalties provided in this chapter, shall reimburse twice the amount of assistance to the municipality that provided the assistance to that person. That reimbursement must be made in accordance with subsection 5.

A. [PL 1987, c. 349, Pt. H, §15 (RP).]

B. [PL 1987, c. 349, Pt. H, §15 (RP).]

[RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §198 (COR).]

2. Municipality of responsibility. Except as provided in subsection 4, a municipality is responsible for the general assistance support of the following individuals:

A. A resident of the municipality. For the purposes of this section, a "resident" means a person who is physically present in a municipality with the intention of remaining in that municipality to

maintain or establish a home and who has no other residence; and [PL 1987, c. 349, Pt. H, §15 (NEW).]

B. Eligible persons who apply to the municipality for assistance and who are not residents of that or any other municipality. If a person is not a resident of any municipality, the municipality where that person first applies shall be responsible for support until a new residence is established. [PL 1987, c. 349, Pt. H, §15 (NEW).]
[PL 1987, c. 349, Pt. H, §15 (RPR).]

3. Durational residency requirement prohibited. No municipality may establish a durational residency requirement for general assistance.
[PL 1987, c. 349, Pt. H, §15 (RPR).]

4. Special circumstances. Overseers of a municipality may not move or transport an applicant or recipient into another municipality to relieve their municipality of responsibility for that applicant's or recipient's support. The municipality of responsibility for relocations and institutional settings is as follows.

A. When an applicant or recipient requests relocation to another municipality and the overseers of a municipality assist that person to relocate to another municipality, the municipality from which that person is moving continues to be responsible for the support of the recipient for 30 days after relocation. As used in this paragraph, "assist" includes:

- (1) Granting financial assistance to relocate; and
- (2) Making arrangements for a person to relocate. [RR 2009, c. 2, §58 (COR).]

B. If an applicant is in a group home, shelter, rehabilitation center, nursing home, hospital or other institution at the time of application and has either been in that institution for 6 months or less, or had a residence immediately prior to entering the institution which the applicant had maintained and to which the applicant intends to return, the municipality of responsibility is the municipality where the applicant was a resident immediately prior to entering the institution. For the purpose of this paragraph, a hotel, motel or similar place of temporary lodging is considered an institution when a municipality:

- (1) Grants financial assistance for a person to move to or stay in temporary lodging;
- (2) Makes arrangements for a person to stay in temporary lodging;
- (3) Advises or encourages a person to stay in temporary lodging; or
- (4) Illegally denies housing assistance and, as a result of that denial, the person stays in temporary lodging. [RR 2009, c. 2, §58 (COR).]

C. [PL 2017, c. 130, §1 (RP).]
[PL 2017, c. 130, §1 (AMD).]

5. Disputes between municipalities. Nothing in this section may permit a municipality to deny assistance to an otherwise eligible applicant when there is any dispute regarding residency. In cases of dispute regarding which municipality is the municipality of responsibility, the municipality where the application has been filed shall provide support until responsibility has been determined by the department. The department shall make a written determination within 30 working days of a complaint or notification of a dispute. The department's decision must include the sources of information relied upon, findings of fact and conclusions of law regarding which municipality is responsible and the reimbursement due, if any, from the responsible municipality to the municipality providing assistance. If after 30 days the reimbursement has not been paid, the municipality to which reimbursement is due shall notify the department, the department shall credit the municipality owed the reimbursement and either deduct that amount from the debtor municipality or refer the bill to the Treasurer of State for payment from any taxes, revenue, fines or fees due from the State to the municipality.

[RR 2009, c. 2, §59 (COR).]

6. Appeals. Any municipality or person who is aggrieved by any decision or action made by the department pursuant to this section shall have the right to appeal pursuant to the Maine Administrative Procedure Act, Title 5, chapter 375. A request for that appeal shall be in writing and shall be made within 30 days of the written department decision. The appeal shall be held within 30 days of receipt of that request and shall be conducted by one or more fair hearing officers. In no event may an appeal be held before a person or body responsible for the decision or action. Review of any decision under this subsection shall be pursuant to the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 80C.

[PL 1987, c. 349, Pt. H, §15 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1987, c. 349, §H15 (RPR). RR 2009, c. 2, §§58, 59 (COR). PL 2015, c. 267, Pt. II, §1 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 130, §1 (AMD). RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §198 (COR).

§4308. Applications

In order to receive assistance from any municipality, the applicant or a duly authorized representative must file a written application with the overseer, except as provided in section 4304, subsection 3. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §6 (AMD).]

1. Initial and subsequent applications. Except as provided in section 4316-A, subsection 1-A, a person who makes an application for assistance, who has not applied for assistance in that or any other municipality must have that person's eligibility determined solely on the basis of need. All applications for general assistance that are not initial applications are repeat applications. The eligibility of repeat applicants must be determined on the basis of need and all other conditions of eligibility established by this chapter and municipal ordinance.

[PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §6 (AMD).]

1-A. Limit on housing assistance. Except as provided in subsections 1-B and 2, housing assistance provided pursuant to this chapter is limited to a maximum of 9 months during the period from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013.

[PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. R, §2 (NEW).]

1-B. Extension of housing assistance due to hardship. An applicant is eligible for housing assistance under this chapter beyond the limit established in subsection 1-A if the applicant has a severe and persistent mental or physical condition warranting such an extension or has an application for assistance pending with the federal Social Security Administration.

[PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. R, §2 (NEW).]

2. Emergencies. A person, including a person experiencing or facing homelessness, who does not have sufficient resources to provide one or more basic necessities in an emergency is eligible for emergency general assistance, even when that applicant has been found ineligible for nonemergency general assistance, except as provided in this subsection.

A. A person who is currently disqualified from general assistance for a violation of section 4315, 4316-A or 4317 is ineligible for emergency assistance under this subsection. [PL 1985, c. 489, §§5, 14 (NEW).]

B. Municipalities may by standards adopted in municipal ordinances restrict the disbursement of emergency assistance to alleviate emergency situations to the extent that those situations could not have been averted by the applicant's use of income and resources for basic necessities. The person requesting assistance shall provide evidence of income and resources for the applicable time period. [PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. OOO, §1 (AMD); PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. RRR (AFF); PL 1991, c. 591, Pt. OOO, §1 (AMD).]

A municipality may provide emergency assistance when the municipality determines that an emergency is imminent and that failure to provide assistance may result in undue hardship and unnecessary costs. [PL 2019, c. 515, §2 (AMD).]

3. Initial applicant. Notwithstanding section 4301, subsection 7, the household of an initial applicant that is otherwise eligible for emergency assistance may not be denied emergency assistance to meet an immediate need solely on the basis of the proration of a lump sum payment. Upon subsequent applications, that household's eligibility is subject to all the standards established by this chapter.

[PL 2001, c. 571, §3 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1985, c. 489, §§5,14 (RPR). PL 1989, c. 322, §3 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 9, §§U5,6 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 528, §OOO1 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 528, §RRR (AFF). PL 1991, c. 591, §OOO1 (AMD). PL 1993, c. 410, §AAA6 (AMD). PL 1999, c. 45, §1 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 571, §3 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. R, §2 (AMD). PL 2019, c. 515, §2 (AMD).

§4309. Eligibility

1. Eligibility of applicant; duration of eligibility. The overseer shall determine eligibility each time a person applies or reapplies for general assistance pursuant to this chapter and the ordinance adopted by the municipality in accordance with section 4305. The period of eligibility must not exceed one month. At the expiration of that period the person may reapply for assistance and the person's eligibility may be redetermined.

[PL 1989, c. 840, §4 (AMD).]

1-A. Determination of eligibility; applicant's responsibilities. Applicants for general assistance are responsible for providing to the overseer all information necessary to determine eligibility. If further information or documentation is necessary to demonstrate eligibility, the applicant must have the first opportunity to provide the specific information or documentation required by the overseer. When information required by the overseer is unavailable, the overseer must accept alternative available information, which is subject to verification.

[PL 1989, c. 840, §5 (NEW).]

1-B. Determination of eligibility; overseer's responsibilities. In order to determine an applicant's eligibility for general assistance, the overseer first must seek information and documentation from the applicant. Once the applicant has presented the necessary information, the overseer is responsible for determining eligibility. The overseer may seek verification necessary to determine eligibility. In order to determine eligibility, the overseer may contact sources other than the applicant for verification only with the specific knowledge and consent of the applicant, except that the overseer may examine public records without the applicant's knowledge and consent. Assistance may be denied or terminated if the applicant is unwilling to supply the overseer with necessary information, documentation, or permission to make collateral contacts, or if the overseer can not determine that eligibility exists based on information supplied by the applicant or others.

[PL 1989, c. 840, §5 (NEW).]

2. Redetermination of eligibility. The overseer may redetermine a person's eligibility at any time during the period that person is receiving assistance if the overseer is notified of any change in the recipient's circumstances that may affect the amount of assistance to which the recipient is entitled or that may make the recipient ineligible, provided that once a determination of eligibility has been made for a specific time period, a reduction in assistance for that time period may not be made without prior written notice to the recipient with the reasons for the action and an opportunity for the recipient to receive a fair hearing upon the proposed change.

[PL 1989, c. 840, §6 (AMD).]

3. Eligibility of members of person's household. Failure of an otherwise eligible person to comply with this chapter shall not affect the general assistance eligibility of any member of the person's household who is not capable of working, including at least:

- A. A dependent minor child; [PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]
 - B. An elderly, ill or disabled person; and [PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]
 - C. A person whose presence is required in order to provide care for any child under the age of 6 years or for any ill or disabled member of the household. [PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]
- [PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

4. Eligibility of minors who are parents. An otherwise eligible person under the age of 18 who has never married and who has a dependent child or is pregnant is eligible only if that person and child reside in a dwelling maintained by a parent or other adult relative as that parent's or relative's own home or in a foster home or other adult-supervised supportive living arrangement unless:

- A. The person has no living parent or the whereabouts of both parents are unknown; [PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. RRR (AFF); PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. SS, §3 (NEW); PL 1991, c. 591, Pt. SS, §3 (NEW).]
- B. No parent will permit the person to live in the parent's home; [PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. RRR (AFF); PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. SS, §3 (NEW); PL 1991, c. 591, Pt. SS, §3 (NEW).]
- C. The department determines that the physical or emotional health or safety of the person or dependent child would be jeopardized if that person and dependent child lived with a parent; [PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. RRR (AFF); PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. SS, §3 (NEW); PL 1991, c. 591, Pt. SS, §3 (NEW).]
- D. The individual has lived apart from both parents for a period of at least one year before the birth of any dependent child; or [PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. RRR (AFF); PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. SS, §3 (NEW); PL 1991, c. 591, Pt. SS, §3 (NEW).]
- E. The department determines, in accordance with rules adopted pursuant to this section, which must be in accordance with federal regulations, that there is good cause to waive this requirement. [PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. RRR (AFF); PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. SS, §3 (NEW); PL 1991, c. 591, Pt. SS, §3 (NEW).]

For the purposes of this subsection, "parent" includes legal guardian.
[PL 2023, c. 405, Pt. A, §67 (AMD).]

5. Presumptive eligibility. The overseer in a municipality shall presume eligibility to receive general assistance of a person who is provided shelter in an emergency shelter for the homeless located in that municipality. After 30 days, that person's eligibility must be redetermined. When presumptive eligibility is determined under this subsection, no other municipality may be determined to be the municipality of responsibility during that 30-day period.
[PL 2019, c. 515, §3 (NEW).]

6. Eligibility; recovery residence; exception. The overseer in a municipality may not deny general assistance to a person for the sole reason that the person is residing in a recovery residence. Beginning July 1, 2022, a municipality may not provide housing assistance to a person residing in a recovery residence that has not been certified in accordance with Title 5, section 20005, subsection 22, except that the person may receive housing assistance while residing in an uncertified recovery residence for one 30-day period only and the overseer shall inform the person of the requirements of this subsection. A person who is ineligible for housing assistance under this subsection may remain eligible to receive general assistance for other basic necessities. Upon request by a person residing in a certified recovery residence who has been determined eligible for housing assistance, a municipality

shall issue a housing assistance payment to the operator of the certified recovery residence instead of to a landlord.

[PL 2023, c. 133, §3 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1989, c. 840, §§4-6 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 528, §RRR (AFF). PL 1991, c. 528, §SS3 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 591, §SS3 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 368, Pt. OO, §8 (AMD). PL 2019, c. 515, §3 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 472, §3 (AMD). PL 2023, c. 133, §3 (AMD). PL 2023, c. 405, Pt. A, §67 (AMD).

§4310. Emergency benefits prior to full verification

Whenever an eligible person becomes an applicant for general assistance and states to the administrator that the applicant is in an emergency situation and requires immediate assistance to meet basic necessities, the overseer shall, pending verification, issue to the applicant either personally or by mail, as soon as possible but in no event later than 24 hours after application, sufficient benefits to provide the basic necessities needed immediately by the applicant, as long as the following conditions are met. [PL 2015, c. 494, Pt. A, §24 (AMD).]

1. Probability of eligibility for assistance after full verification. As a result of the initial interview with the applicant, the overseer shall have determined that the applicant will probably be eligible for assistance after full verification is completed.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

2. Documentation. Where possible, the applicant shall submit to the overseer at the time of the initial interview, adequate documentation to verify that there is a need for immediate assistance.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

3. Information obtained. When adequate documentation is not available at the time of the initial application, the overseer may contact at least one other person for the purpose of obtaining information to confirm the applicant's statements about the applicant's need for immediate assistance.

[RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §199 (COR).]

4. Limitations. In no case:

A. May the authorization of benefits under this section exceed 30 days; and [PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

B. May there be further authorization of benefits to the applicant until there has been full verification confirming the applicant's eligibility. [PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1991, c. 9, §U7 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 368, Pt. OO, §9 (AMD). PL 2015, c. 494, Pt. A, §24 (AMD). RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §199 (COR).

§4311. State reimbursement to municipalities; reports

1. Departmental reimbursement. When a municipality incurs net general assistance costs in any fiscal year prior to July 1, 2015 in excess of .0003 of that municipality's most recent state valuation relative to the state fiscal year for which reimbursement is being issued, as determined by the State Tax Assessor in the statement filed as provided in Title 36, section 381, the Department of Health and Human Services shall reimburse the municipality for 90% of the amount in excess of these expenditures when the department finds that the municipality has been in compliance with all requirements of this chapter. If a municipality elects to determine need without consideration of funds distributed from any municipally-controlled trust fund that must otherwise be considered for purposes of this chapter, the department shall reimburse the municipality for 66 2/3% of the amount in excess of such expenditures

when the department finds that the municipality has otherwise been in compliance with all requirements of this chapter.

The department shall reimburse each municipality and each Indian tribe 70% of the direct costs incurred by that municipality or tribe on or after July 1, 2015 for the general assistance program granted by that municipality or tribe. For the purposes of this subsection, "Indian tribe" has the same meaning as in section 411, subsection 8-A.

[PL 2015, c. 267, Pt. SSSS, §1 (AMD).]

1-A. Municipalities reimbursed. When a municipality pays for expenses approved pursuant to section 4313 for hospital inpatient or outpatient care at any hospital on behalf of any person who is otherwise eligible and who would have been entitled to receive payments for hospital care if that care had been rendered prior to May 1, 1984, for services under the Catastrophic Illness Program, section 3185, the department shall reimburse the municipality for 100% of those payments.

[PL 1995, c. 696, Pt. A, §39 (AMD).]

1-B. Reimbursement for administrative expenses. The department shall reimburse each municipality for the costs of a portion of the direct costs of paying benefits incurred prior to July 1, 2015 through its general assistance program if the department finds that the municipality was in compliance with all requirements of this chapter during the fiscal year for which reimbursement is sought. The amount of reimbursement to each municipality must be an amount equal to:

A. Fifty percent of all general assistance granted by that municipality below the .0003% of all state valuation amount; or [PL 1991, c. 9, Pt. U, §8 (AMD).]

B. Ten percent of all general assistance granted. [PL 1991, c. 9, Pt. U, §8 (AMD).]

Each municipality shall elect to be reimbursed under paragraph A or B at the beginning of the fiscal year for which reimbursement is sought.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, this subsection takes effect on July 1, 1989.

[PL 2015, c. 267, Pt. SSSS, §1 (AMD).]

1-C. Indian tribe reimbursement. The department shall reimburse each Indian tribe for the costs of a portion of the direct costs of paying benefits through its general assistance program if the department finds that the Indian tribe was in compliance with all requirements of this chapter during the fiscal year for which those benefits are sought.

The amount of reimbursement must be calculated for each fiscal year by adding 10% of all general assistance granted up to the threshold amount to 100% of all general assistance granted above the threshold amount.

For the purposes of this subsection, "Indian tribe" has the same meaning as in section 411, subsection 8-A. For purposes of this subsection, "threshold amount" means 0.0003 of the Indian tribe's most recent state valuation, as determined by the State Tax Assessor in the statement filed as provided in Title 36, section 381, relative to the year for which reimbursement is being issued.

[PL 2013, c. 368, Pt. OO, §10 (NEW).]

2. Submission of reports. Each municipality shall report on a schedule determined by the department through rulemaking the direct cost of paying benefits through the general assistance program on forms for reimbursement provided by the department.

A. [PL 2015, c. 267, Pt. SSSS, §1 (RP).]

B. [PL 2015, c. 267, Pt. SSSS, §1 (RP).]

Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

[PL 2015, c. 267, Pt. SSSS, §1 (AMD).]

3. Claims. The Department of Health and Human Services may refuse to accept and pay any claim for reimbursement that is not submitted by a municipality to the department within 90 days of the payment on which that claim is based or at the end of the reporting period for which reimbursement is sought unless just cause exists for failure to file a timely claim.

[PL 1991, c. 9, Pt. U, §10 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 689, Pt. B, §6 (REV).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1983, c. 824, §X4 (AMD). PL 1985, c. 567 (AMD). PL 1987, c. 833 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 9, §§U8-10 (AMD). PL 1993, c. 410, §AAA7 (AMD). PL 1995, c. 696, §A39 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 689, §B6 (REV). PL 2013, c. 368, Pt. OO, §§10, 11 (AMD). PL 2015, c. 267, Pt. SSSS, §1 (AMD).

§4312. Unorganized territory

Residents of the unorganized territory shall be eligible for general assistance in the same manner as provided in this chapter. The commissioner shall establish standards of eligibility for the unorganized territory and shall have the same responsibilities with regard to the unorganized territory as apply to overseers in a municipality. The commissioner may appoint agents to administer the general assistance program within the unorganized territory. All costs of providing general assistance in the unorganized territory shall be charged to the Unorganized Territory Education and Services Fund established under Title 36, chapter 115, except that costs which the State would reimburse under section 4311, if the unorganized territory were a municipality, shall be paid by the General Fund. [PL 1985, c. 459, Pt. B, §1 (RPR).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1985, c. 459, §B1 (RPR).

§4313. Reimbursement to individuals relieving eligible persons; prior approval; emergencies

Municipalities, as provided in section 4307, shall pay expenses necessarily incurred for providing basic necessities to eligible persons anywhere in the State by any person not liable for their support provided that the municipality of responsibility shall be notified and approve those expenses and services prior to their being made or delivered, except as provided in this section. [PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

1. Emergency care. In the event of an admission of an eligible person to the hospital, the hospital shall notify the overseer of the liable municipality within 5 business days of the person's admission. In no event may hospital services to a person who meets the financial eligibility guidelines adopted pursuant to section 1716 be billed to the patient or to a municipality.

[PL 1995, c. 696, Pt. A, §40 (AMD).]

2. Burial or cremation. In the event of the death of an eligible person, the funeral director shall notify the overseer prior to burial or cremation or by the end of 3 business days following the funeral director's receipt of the body, whichever is earlier. Notwithstanding section 4305, subsection 3, paragraph C, a decision on any application for assistance with burial expenses need not be rendered until the overseer has verified that a relative or other resource is not available to pay for the direct burial or cremation costs, but the decision must be rendered within 8 days after receiving an application. The parent, grandparent, children or grandchildren, by consanguinity, or the spouse or domestic partner are responsible for the burial or cremation costs of the eligible person in proportion to their respective abilities. When no legally liable relative possesses a financial capacity to pay either in lump sum or on an installment basis for the direct costs of a burial or cremation, the contribution of a municipality under this subsection is limited to a reasonable calculation of the funeral director's direct costs, less any and all contributions from any other source.

[RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §200 (COR).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1983, c. 701, §4 (AMD). PL 1985, c. 245 (AMD). PL 1987, c. 542, §§H4,H8 (AMD). PL 1993, c. 410, §AAA8 (AMD). PL 1995, c. 696, §A40 (AMD). PL 2005, c. 483, §1 (AMD). PL 2007, c. 411, §1 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 62, §1 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 567, §25 (AMD). RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §200 (COR).

§4314. Cooperation in administration of general assistance

1. State departments. Upon the request of any municipal official charged with the responsibility of administering general assistance, the Department of Health and Human Services and any other department of the State having information which has a bearing on the eligibility of any person applying for general assistance shall release that information. The information shall be restricted to those facts necessary for the official to make a determination of eligibility for general assistance.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 689, Pt. B, §6 (REV).]

2. Financial institutions. An officer of any bank, federally or state-chartered credit union, trust company, benefit association, insurance company, safe deposit company or any corporation or association receiving deposits of money shall, upon receipt of a written release signed by a depositor and a written request signed by the overseer of any municipality or its agents, or by the Commissioner of Health and Human Services or the commissioner's agents or by the Commissioner of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management or the commissioner's agents, disclose to that overseer or the Department of Health and Human Services or the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services the amount deposited in the corporation or association to the credit of the named depositor granting the release, who is a charge upon the municipality or the State, or who has applied for support to the municipality or the State. When the named depositor who is a charge upon the municipality is deceased and the municipality or its agents are acting in accordance with section 4313, subsection 2, the officer shall disclose the amount deposited in the corporation or association upon receipt of a written request from the municipality or its agents and a notarized affidavit signed by the overseer of the municipality or its agents stating that the named depositor is deceased.

[PL 2017, c. 28, §1 (AMD); PL 2019, c. 377, §6 (REV).]

3. Verification of employment. The applicant has responsibility for providing documentary verification of benefits received during the period for which assistance is requested, or in the month immediately prior to the application for assistance when those wages and benefits are expected to be the same during the period for which assistance is requested.

The overseer shall give the applicant written notice that if the applicant does not provide the documentary verification within one week of the application, the employer will be contacted.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, every employer shall, upon written request of the overseer, release information regarding any wages or other financial benefits paid to the applicant or a member of the applicant's household. No employer may discharge or otherwise adversely affect an employee because of any request for information pursuant to this section.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

4. Confidentiality. Any person who seeks and obtains information under this section is subject to the same rules of confidentiality as the person who is caretaker of the information which is by law confidential.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

5. Refusal. Any person who refuses to provide any information to an overseer who requests it in accordance with this section shall state in writing the reasons for the refusal within 3 days of receiving the request.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

6. Refusal; penalty. A person who refuses upon request to provide information under this section without just cause commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$25 and not more than \$100 may be adjudged.

[PL 2003, c. 452, Pt. K, §25 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

7. False information; penalty. A person who intentionally or knowingly renders false information under this section to an administrator commits a Class E crime.

[PL 2003, c. 452, Pt. K, §26 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1991, c. 626, §4 (AMD). PL 1995, c. 86, §2 (AMD). PL 1997, c. 455, §§8,32 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 452, §§K25,26 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 452, §X2 (AFF). PL 2003, c. 689, §§B6,7 (REV). PL 2017, c. 28, §1 (AMD). PL 2019, c. 377, §6 (REV).

§4315. False representation

Whoever knowingly and willfully makes any false representation of a material fact to the overseer of any municipality or to the department or its agents for the purpose of causing that or any other person to be granted assistance by the municipality or by the State is guilty of a Class E crime and shall reimburse the municipality for that assistance. Further assistance may be denied until that person reimburses the municipality for the assistance or enters into a written agreement, which must be reasonable under the circumstances, to reimburse the municipality or that person has been ineligible for assistance for a period of 120 days, whichever period is longer. [PL 2015, c. 312, §1 (AMD).]

A person disqualified from receiving general assistance for making a false representation must be provided notice and an opportunity for an appeal as provided in sections 4321 and 4322. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §9 (AMD).]

If the overseer of any municipality or the fair hearing officer finds that a recipient made a false representation to the overseer in violation of this section, that recipient is required to reimburse the municipality for any assistance rendered for which that recipient was ineligible. The recipient is ineligible from receiving further assistance for a period of 120 days or until that person reimburses the municipality for the assistance or enters into a written agreement, which must be reasonable under the circumstances, to reimburse that municipality, whichever period is longer. [PL 2015, c. 312, §2 (AMD).]

Any recipient whose assistance is terminated or denied under this section has the right to appeal that decision pursuant to the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 80-B. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §9 (AMD).]

No recipient who has been granted assistance, in accordance with this chapter, may have that assistance terminated prior to the decision of the fair hearing officer. In the event of any termination of assistance to any recipient, the dependents of that person may still apply for and, if eligible, receive assistance. [PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1991, c. 622, §M24 (AMD). PL 1993, c. 410, §AAA9 (AMD). PL 2015, c. 312, §§1, 2 (AMD).

§4315-A. Use of income for basic necessities required

All persons requesting general assistance must use their income for basic necessities. Except for initial applicants, recipients are not eligible to receive assistance to replace income that was spent within the 30-day period prior to the application on goods and services that are not basic necessities. The income not spent on goods and services that are basic necessities is considered available to the applicant. A municipality may require recipients to utilize income and resources according to standards established by the municipality, except that a municipality may not reduce assistance to a recipient who

has exhausted income to purchase basic necessities. Municipalities shall provide written notice to applicants of the standards established by the municipalities. [PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. OOO, §2 (NEW); PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. RRR (AFF); PL 1991, c. 591, Pt. OOO, §2 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1991, c. 528, §OOO2 (NEW). PL 1991, c. 528, §RRR (AFF). PL 1991, c. 591, §OOO2 (NEW).

§4316. Work requirement

(REPEALED)

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1983, c. 697, §§1,2 (AMD). PL 1985, c. 489, §§6,14 (RP).

§4316-A. Work requirement

1. Ineligibility for assistance. An applicant is ineligible for assistance for 120 days in all municipalities in the State when any municipality establishes that the applicant, without just cause:

- A. Refuses to search for employment when that search is reasonable and appropriate; [PL 1985, c. 489, §§7, 14 (NEW).]
- B. Refuses to register for work; [PL 1985, c. 489, §§7, 14 (NEW).]
- C. Refuses to accept a suitable job offer under this section; [PL 1985, c. 489, §§7, 14 (NEW).]
- D. Refuses to participate in a training, educational or rehabilitation program that would assist the applicant in securing employment; [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD).]
- E. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (RP).]
- F. Refuses to perform or willfully fails to perform a job assigned under subsection 2; or [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD).]
- G. Willfully performs a job assigned under subsection 2 below the average standards of that job. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD).]
- H. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (RP).]

If a municipality finds that an applicant has violated a work-related rule without just cause, under this subsection or subsection 1-A, it is the responsibility of that applicant to establish the presence of just cause.

[PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD).]

1-A. Period of ineligibility. An applicant, whether an initial or repeat applicant, who quits work or is discharged from employment due to misconduct as defined in Title 26, section 1043, subsection 23, is ineligible to receive assistance for 120 days after the applicant's separation from employment. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (NEW).]

2. Municipal work program. A municipality may require that an otherwise eligible person who is capable of working be required to perform work for the municipality or work for a nonprofit organization, if that organization has agreed to participate as an employer in the municipal work program, as a condition of receiving general assistance. The municipality may also require recipients, as a part of the municipal work program, to participate in a training, educational or rehabilitative program that would assist the recipient in securing employment. The municipal work program is subject to the following requirements.

- A. A person may not, as a condition of general assistance eligibility, be required to do any amount of work that exceeds the value of the net general assistance that the person would otherwise receive under municipal general assistance standards. Any person performing work under this subsection

must be provided with net general assistance, the value of which is computed at a rate of at least the State's minimum wage. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD).]

B. A person may not be required to work under this subsection for a nonprofit organization if that work would violate a basic religious belief of that person. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD).]

C. An eligible person performing work under this subsection may not replace regular municipal employees or regular employees of a participating nonprofit organization. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD).]

D. An eligible person in need of emergency assistance may not be required to perform work under this subsection prior to receiving general assistance. An applicant who is not in need of emergency assistance may be required to satisfactorily fulfill a workfare requirement prior to receiving the nonemergency assistance conditionally granted to that applicant. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD).]

E. Expenses related to work performed under this subsection by an eligible person must be considered in determining the amount of net general assistance to be provided to the person. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD).]

F. General assistance provided by a municipality for work performed by an eligible person under this subsection must be:

(1) Included in the reimbursable net general assistance costs; and

(2) Itemized separately in reports to the Department of Health and Human Services under section 4311. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 689, Pt. B, §6 (REV).]

G. A person may not be required to work under this subsection if that person is physically or mentally incapable of performing the work assigned. [PL 1991, c. 9, Pt. U, §12 (NEW).]
[PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 689, Pt. B, §6 (REV).]

3. Limitations of work requirement. In no case may any work requirement or training or educational program under this section interfere with a person's:

A. Existing employment; [PL 1985, c. 489, §§7, 14 (NEW).]

B. Ability to pursue a bona fide job offer; [PL 1985, c. 489, §§7, 14 (NEW).]

C. Ability to attend an interview for possible employment; [PL 1985, c. 489, §§7, 14 (NEW).]

D. Classroom participation in a primary or secondary educational program intended to lead to a high school diploma; or [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD).]

E. Classroom or on-site participation in a training program that is either approved or determined, or both, by the Department of Labor to be reasonably expected to assist the individual in securing employment. This paragraph does not include participation in a degree granting program, except when that program is a training program operated under the control of the Department of Health and Human Services or the Department of Labor. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 689, Pt. B, §6 (REV).]

[PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 689, Pt. B, §6 (REV).]

4. Eligibility regained. A person who has been disqualified by any municipality for not complying with any work requirement of this section may regain eligibility during the 120-day period by becoming employed or otherwise complying with the work requirements of this section. An applicant who is disqualified due to failure to comply with the municipal work program may be given only one opportunity to regain eligibility during the 120-day disqualification period, except that if an applicant who regains eligibility is again disqualified for failing to comply with the municipal work program

within the initial period of disqualification, the applicant is ineligible for assistance for 120 days and does not have the opportunity to requalify during the 120-day period.

[PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD).]

5. Just cause defined. Just cause for failure to meet work requirements or the use of potential resources must be found when there is reasonable and verifiable evidence of:

- A. Physical or mental illness or disability; [PL 1985, c. 489, §§7, 14 (NEW).]
- B. Below-minimum wages; [PL 1985, c. 489, §§7, 14 (NEW).]
- C. Sexual harassment; [PL 1985, c. 489, §§7, 14 (NEW).]
- D. Physical or mental inability to perform required job tasks; [PL 1985, c. 489, §§7, 14 (NEW).]
- E. Inability to work required hours or to meet piece work standards; [PL 1985, c. 489, §§7, 14 (NEW).]
- F. Lack of transportation to and from work or training; [PL 1985, c. 489, §§7, 14 (NEW).]
- G. Inability to arrange for necessary child care or care of an ill or disabled family member; [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD).]
- H. Any reason found to be good cause by the Department of Labor; and [PL 1985, c. 489, §§7, 14 (NEW).]
- I. Any other evidence that is reasonable and appropriate. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD).]

The overseer may not require medical verification of medical conditions that are apparent or are of such short duration that a reasonable person would not ordinarily seek medical attention. In any case in which the overseer requires medical verification and the applicant has no means of obtaining such verification, the overseer shall grant assistance for the purpose of obtaining that verification.

[PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §10 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1985, c. 489, §§7,14 (NEW). PL 1991, c. 9, §§U11-14 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 528, §§OOO3,4 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 528, §RRR (AFF). PL 1991, c. 591, §§OOO3,4 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 622, §§M25,26 (AMD). PL 1993, c. 410, §AAA10 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 689, §B6 (REV).

§4317. Use of potential resources

An applicant or recipient must make a good faith effort to secure any potential resource that may be available, including, but not limited to, any state or federal assistance program, employment benefits, governmental or private pension programs, available trust funds, support from legally liable relatives, child-support payments and jointly held resources where the applicant or recipient share may be available to the individual. Assistance may not be withheld pending receipt of such resource as long as application has been made or good faith effort is being made to secure the resource. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §11 (AMD).]

An individual applying for or receiving assistance due to a disability must make a good faith effort to make use of any medical and rehabilitative resources that may be recommended by a physician, psychologist or other professional retraining or rehabilitation specialist that are available without financial burden and would not constitute further physical risk to the individual. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §11 (AMD).]

An applicant who refuses to utilize potential resources without just cause, after receiving a written 7-day notice, is disqualified from receiving assistance until the applicant has made a good faith effort to secure the resource. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §11 (AMD).]

An applicant who forfeits receipt of or causes reduction in benefits from another public assistance program because of fraud, misrepresentation or a knowing or intentional violation of program rules or a refusal to comply with program rules without just cause is not eligible to receive general assistance to replace the forfeited assistance for the duration of the forfeiture. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §11 (AMD).]

An applicant who is found to be ineligible for unemployment compensation benefits because of a finding of fraud by the Department of Labor pursuant to Title 26, section 1051, subsection 1 is ineligible to receive general assistance to replace the forfeited unemployment compensation benefits for the duration of the forfeiture established by the Department of Labor. [PL 2013, c. 368, Pt. OO, §12 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1993, c. 410, §AAA11 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 368, Pt. OO, §12 (AMD).

§4318. Recovery of expenses

A municipality or the State, which has incurred general assistance program costs for the support of any eligible person, may recover the full amount expended for that support either from the person relieved or from any person liable for the recipient's support, their executors or administrators, in a civil action. In no case may a municipality or the State be authorized to recover through a civil action, the full or part of, the amount expended for the support of a previously eligible person, if, as a result of the repayment of that amount, this person would, in all probability, again become eligible for general assistance. [PL 1985, c. 489, §§8, 14 (RPR).]

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, municipalities have a lien for the value of all general assistance payments made to a recipient on any lump sum payment made to that recipient under the former Workers' Compensation Act, the Maine Workers' Compensation Act of 1992 or similar law of any other state. [PL 1995, c. 462, Pt. A, §44 (AMD).]

The department shall enter into an agreement with the Social Security Administration to institute an interim assistance reimbursement for the purpose of the repayment of state and local funds expended for providing assistance to Supplemental Security Income applicants or recipients while the Supplemental Security Income payments are pending or suspended. Written authorization must be given by the recipients. [PL 1991, c. 780, Pt. R, §5 (AMD).]

1. Repayment.

[PL 1985, c. 489, §§8, 14 (RP).]

2. Public assistance.

[PL 1985, c. 489, §§8, 14 (RP).]

A municipality may not recover from any recipient who has been injured while performing work under section 4316-A, subsection 2, any portion of any medical or rehabilitative expenses associated with that injury or any portion of any other general assistance benefits associated with that injury. [PL 1991, c. 9, Pt. U, §15 (AMD).]

Nothing in this section may be construed as limiting or affecting in any way the right of any individual to file an action under the Maine Tort Claims Act, Title 14, chapter 741, except that a municipality that provides general assistance to a minor is absolutely immune from suit on any tort claims seeking recovery or damages by or on behalf of the minor recipient in connection with the provision of general assistance. [PL 1991, c. 9, Pt. U, §15 (AMD).]

All collections, fees and payments received by the department from the Federal Government as a result of an interim assistance reimbursement must be dedicated to support the administration of the General Assistance program. [PL 1993, c. 415, Pt. H, §1 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1985, c. 489, §§8,14 (RPR). PL 1987, c. 67 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 9, §U15 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 622, §M27 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 780, §R5 (AMD). PL 1993, c. 415, §H1 (AMD). PL 1995, c. 462, §A44 (AMD).

§4319. Liability of relatives for support

1. Relatives liable. A parent of a child under 25 years of age and a spouse living in or owning property in the State shall support their children or husband or wife in proportion to their respective ability. Liability for burial expenses is governed by section 4313.

[PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §12 (AMD).]

2. Rental payments to relatives. A municipality or the State may decide not to make payments for rental assistance on behalf of an otherwise eligible individual when the rental payments would be made to a parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, sibling, parent's sibling or any of their children, unless the municipality finds that the rental arrangement has existed for 3 months prior to the application for assistance and is necessary to provide the relative with basic necessities.

[PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §12 (AMD).]

3. Recovery of assistance provided. A municipality or the State, after providing general assistance to a dependent of a legally responsible parent or to a person's spouse who is financially capable of providing support, may then seek reimbursement or relief for that support by initiating a complaint to the Superior Court or District Court, including by small claims action, located in the division or county where the legally responsible parent or spouse resides. The court may cause the legally responsible parent or spouse to be summoned and upon hearing or default may assess and apportion a reasonable sum upon those who are found to be of sufficient ability for the support of the eligible person and shall issue a writ of execution. The assessment may not be made to pay any expense for relief provided more than 12 months before the complaint was filed. Any action brought under this section is governed by the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure. The court may, from time to time, make any further order on complaint of an interested party and, after notice is given, alter the assessment or apportionment.

[PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §12 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1983, c. 701, §5 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 370 (RPR). PL 1991, c. 622, §M28 (AMD). PL 1993, c. 410, §AAA12 (AMD).

§4320. Liens on real estate

A municipality or the State may claim a lien against the owner of real estate for the amount of money spent by it to provide mortgage payments on behalf of an eligible person under this chapter on any real estate that is the subject of a mortgage, whether land or buildings or a combination thereof. In addition, a municipality may claim a lien against the owner of real estate for the amount of money spent by it to make capital improvements to the real estate, whether land or buildings or a combination of land and buildings, on behalf of an eligible person under this chapter. [PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. OOO, §5 (AMD); PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. RRR (AFF); PL 1991, c. 591, Pt. OOO, §5 (AMD).]

The municipal officers, their designee or the State shall file a notice of the lien with the register of deeds of the county wherein the property is located within 30 days of making a mortgage payment or, if applicable, payment for capital improvements. That filing secures the municipality or State's lien interest for an amount equal to the sum of that mortgage or capital improvement payment and all

subsequent mortgage or capital improvement payments made on behalf of the same eligible person. Not less than 10 days prior to the filing, the municipal officers, their designee or the State shall send notification of the proposed action by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the owner of the real estate and any record holder of the mortgage. The lien notification must clearly inform the recipient of the limitations upon enforcement contained in this section; it shall also contain the title, address and telephone number of the municipal official who granted the assistance. A new written notice including these provisions must be given to the recipient each time the amount secured by the lien is increased. The lien is effective until enforced by an action for equitable relief or until discharged. [PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. 000, §6 (AMD); PL 1991, c. 528, Pt. RRR (AFF); PL 1991, c. 591, Pt. 000, §6 (AMD).]

Interest on the amount of money secured by the lien may be charged by the State or a municipality, but in no event may the rate exceed the maximum rate of interest allowed by the Treasurer of State, pursuant to Title 36, section 186. For the State, the rate of interest shall be established by the department. For a municipality, the rate of interest shall be established by the municipal officers. Interest shall accrue from and including the date the lien is filed. [PL 1983, c. 697, §3 (RPR).]

The costs of securing and enforcing the lien may be recoverable upon enforcement. [PL 1983, c. 697, §3 (RPR).]

No lien may be enforced under this section while the person named in the lien is either currently receiving any form of public assistance or, as a result of enforcement, would become eligible for general assistance. [PL 1983, c. 697, §3 (RPR).]

In no event may the lien be enforced prior to the death of the recipient of general assistance or the transfer of the property. [PL 1983, c. 697, §3 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1983, c. 697, §3 (RPR). PL 1985, c. 489, §§9,14 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 528, §§0005,6 (AMD). PL 1991, c. 528, §RRR (AFF). PL 1991, c. 591, §§0005,6 (AMD).

§4321. Grant, denial, reduction or termination to be communicated in writing; right to a hearing

Any action relative to the grant, denial, reduction, suspension or termination of relief provided under this chapter must be communicated to the applicant in writing. The decision must include the specific reason or reasons for that action and must inform the person affected of the person's right to a hearing, the procedure for requesting the hearing, the right to notify the department and the available means for notifying the department, if the person believes that the municipality has acted in violation of this chapter. Proceedings relating to the grant, denial, reduction, suspension or termination of relief provided under this chapter are not public proceedings under Title 1, chapter 13, unless otherwise requested by the applicant or recipient. [RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §201 (COR).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §201 (COR).

§4322. Right to a fair hearing

A person aggrieved by a decision, act, failure to act or delay in action concerning that person's application for general assistance under this chapter has the right to an appeal. If a person's application has been approved, general assistance may not be revoked during the period of entitlement until that person has been provided notice and an opportunity for hearing as provided in this section. Within 5 working days of receiving a written decision or notice of denial, reduction or termination of assistance, in accordance with the provisions of section 4321, or within 10 working days after any other act or failure to act by the municipality with regard to an application for assistance, the person may request an appeal. A hearing must be held by the fair hearing authority within 5 working days following the

receipt of a written request by the applicant for an appeal. The hearing may be conducted by the municipal officers, a board of appeals created under Title 30-A, section 2691, or one or more persons appointed by the municipal officers to act as a fair hearing authority. An appeal may not be held before a person or body responsible for the decision, act, failure to act or delay in action relating to the applicant. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §13 (AMD).]

The person requesting the appeal and the municipal administrator responsible for the decision being appealed must be afforded the right to confront and cross-examine any witnesses presented at the hearing, present witnesses in their behalf and be represented by counsel or other spokesperson. A claimant must be advised of these rights in writing. The decision of such an appeal must be based solely on evidence adduced at the hearing. The Maine Rules of Evidence do not apply to information presented to the fair hearing authority. The standard of evidence is the standard set in Title 5, section 9057, subsection 2. The person requesting the appeal must, within 5 working days after the appeal, be furnished with a written decision detailing the reasons for that decision. When any decision by a fair hearing authority or court authorizing assistance is made, that assistance must be provided within 24 hours. Review of any action or failure to act under this chapter must be conducted pursuant to the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 80-B. The municipality shall make a record of the fair hearing. The municipality's obligation is limited to keeping a taped record of the proceedings. The applicant shall pay costs for preparing any transcripts required to pursue an appeal of a fair hearing authority's decision. [RR 2009, c. 2, §60 (COR).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1983, c. 697, §4 (AMD). PL 1985, c. 489, §§10,14 (AMD). PL 1987, c. 737, §§C66,C106 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 6 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 9, §2 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 104, §§C8,C10 (AMD). PL 1993, c. 410, §AAA13 (AMD). RR 2009, c. 2, §60 (COR).

§4323. Department of Health and Human Services; responsibilities

The Department of Health and Human Services shall, in accordance with this section, share responsibility with municipalities for the proper administration of general assistance. [PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. AAA, §13 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 689, Pt. B, §6 (REV).]

1. Review. The department shall review the administration of general assistance in each municipality for compliance with this chapter. This review shall be made on a regular basis and may be made in response to a complaint from any person as necessary.

The department shall inspect the municipality's records and discuss the administration of the program with the overseer. The overseer or the overseer's designee shall be available during the department's review and shall cooperate in providing all necessary information.

The department shall report the results of its review in writing to the municipality and, when applicable, to the complainant. The written notice shall set forth the department's findings of whether the municipality is in compliance with this chapter.

[RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §202 (COR).]

2. Violation; penalty. If the department finds any violation of this chapter after review, it shall notify the municipality that it has 30 days in which to correct that violation and specify what action shall be taken in order to achieve compliance. The municipality shall file a plan with the department setting forth how it will attain compliance. The department shall notify the municipality if the plan is acceptable and that it will review the municipality for compliance within 60 days of accepting the plan. Any municipality which fails to file an acceptable plan with the department or which is in violation of this chapter at the expiration of the 60-day period shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$500. The Department of Health and Human Services shall enforce this section in any court of competent jurisdiction. Every 30-day period that a municipality is in violation of this chapter after review and notification shall constitute a separate offense. In addition to the civil penalty, the

department shall withhold reimbursement to any municipality which is in violation of this chapter until it reaches compliance.

[PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 689, Pt. B, §6 (REV).]

3. Departmental assistance. Whenever the department finds that a person in immediate need of general assistance has not received that assistance as a result of a municipality's failure to comply with the requirements of this chapter, the department shall, within 24 hours of receiving a request to intervene and after notifying the municipality, grant this assistance in accordance with regulations adopted by it. The expense of that assistance granted, including a reasonable proportion of the State's administrative cost that can be attributed to that assistance, shall be billed by the department to the municipality. Should that bill remain unpaid 30 days after presentation to the municipality, the department shall refer the bill to the Treasurer of State for payment from any taxes, revenue, fines or fees due from the State to the municipality.

A municipality may not be held responsible for reimbursing the department for assistance granted under this subsection if the department failed to intervene within 24 hours of receiving the request to intervene or if the department failed to make a good faith effort, prior to the intervention, to notify the municipality of the department's intention to intervene.

[PL 1989, c. 840, §7 (AMD).]

4. Appeal. Any municipality or person who is aggrieved by any decision or action made by the department pursuant to this section shall have the right to appeal pursuant to the Maine Administrative Procedure Act, Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter IV. A request for that appeal shall be in writing and shall be made within 30 days of receiving notification. The appeal shall be held within 30 days of receipt of that request and shall be conducted by one or more fair hearing officers. In no event may an appeal be held before a person or body responsible for the decision or action. Review of any decision under this section shall be pursuant to the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 80 C.

[PL 1985, c. 489, §§11, 14 (AMD).]

5. Emergency contact information. The department shall collect from each municipality emergency contact information for use by municipal residents in applying for assistance under this section. The department shall forward the municipal emergency contact information periodically to the statewide 2-1-1 telephone number designated pursuant to Title 35-A, section 7108.

[PL 2007, c. 600, §1 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1985, c. 489, §§11,14 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 840, §7 (AMD). PL 1993, c. 410, §AAA13 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 689, §B6 (REV). PL 2007, c. 600, §1 (AMD). RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §202 (COR).

§4324. Report to the Legislature

(REPEALED)

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 577, §1 (NEW). PL 1985, c. 489, §§12,14 (RP).

§4325. Municipal guarantee of safe, decent rental housing and residential neighborhoods

(REPEALED)

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1989, c. 484, §5 (NEW).

§4326. Nonlapsing funds

Any balance remaining in the General Assistance - Reimbursement to Cities and Towns program in the Department of Human Services at the end of any fiscal year must be carried forward for the next fiscal year. [PL 2003, c. 673, Pt. DD, §1 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2003, c. 673, §DD1 (NEW).

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