

# Questions and Answers About the Ending of General Assistance (GA)

## 1. Will my cash assistance end?

**It depends.**

- If you are caring for a child who is related to you, your cash assistance should not end. You are not getting General Assistance.
- If you are *not* caring for a child, and your only income is \$205 a month from welfare, you are getting General Assistance. Your cash assistance will end August 1, 2012.

## 2. When will my cash assistance end?

**August 1, 2012.** The Department of Public Welfare will send out notices to General Assistance recipients in the first week of July. The final two GA payments will be issued in July. No GA will be paid in August or after that.

## 3. Is there anything I can do to keep my cash assistance?

A few people who receive General Assistance may be able to qualify for another kind of cash assistance. You should be able to keep your cash assistance if:

- You are pregnant; or
- You are caring for a child; or
- You are blind.

If you are in one of these groups, be sure to *appeal* the cutoff and tell the welfare office why. You should also call Community Legal Services at (215) 227-6485. If you are not in one of these groups, your General Assistance will end on August 1.

## 4. I'm getting GA for a child in my care. Is that GA being cut off too?

**Maybe, but you should appeal and explain why.** A child can still get cash assistance if he or she is living with a relative. You do not need to prove the relationship. Also, a child who was receiving cash assistance who moves in with a non-relative during a family crisis can keep his or her cash assistance.

## 5. Will I lose my food stamps?

**No.** You can still get food stamps. If you have no income, you should get the maximum amount, which is \$200 a month for a single person.

## 6. Will I lose my Medical Assistance?

**No.** Your Medical Assistance should continue just the same. If you are disabled, you will have to ask your doctor to fill out a form about your disability.

**7. What can I do to get some income if I cannot work?**

**Apply for SSI, and stick with it.** If you have a long-term serious disability, apply for SSI with the Social Security Administration. You can start the application by calling (800) 772-1213. If they turn you down, be sure to appeal. This process can take 18 months or more, so start now.

**8. Will I need to work to receive Medical Assistance?**

**No.** People who have disabilities do not need to work to get MA. Some parents of minor children, who do not have disabilities and who have been getting MA without prescription drug coverage, will need to work 25 hours/week to continue to get MA.

**9. Why is my General Assistance ending?**

The Governor and elected officials in Harrisburg say that General Assistance needed to be ended to balance the state’s budget. The GA program cost \$150 million out of the state’s \$27.65 billion budget -- about half of 1%.

**10. What should I do if the welfare office has made a mistake in my case?**

- If you think you should still get cash assistance (because you are pregnant, blind, or living with children, or caring for a child who is not a relative), you should *appeal* the cutoff notice. Appeal right away.
- You should also appeal if you have a problem getting \$200 in food stamps or if your Medical Assistance is cut off. Appeal right away.
- **Appealing is easy.** Fill out the form on the back of the notice. Give it to the welfare office. Keep a copy and get a receipt.

**10. How can I go to the doctor, or get my medicines, if I have no money for my co-pays?** Doctors and pharmacists may not deny you medical care if you cannot afford to pay the Medical Assistance co-payment. They must still treat you or give you your medicines. You will still owe the co-pay money, though. (This rule is at 55 Pa. Code § 1101.63(b)(8).)

**11. Where can I get help?**

You can get help with welfare rights at:

Community Legal Services

or

Philadelphia Legal Assistance

3638 N. Broad St. [at Erie]

42 S. 15<sup>th</sup> St.

In person, Mon., Wed., or Fri.

In person, Mon. or Wed., 9:00 – 11:30

between 9:00 and noon.

By phone, Tues. or Thurs. 9:30 - noon

(215) 227-2400

(215) 981-3800

Or for advice over the phone, call the Welfare Law Line at (215) 227-6485.