



Maine Welfare Directors Association Newsletter

September, 2017

Fall Edition

In This Issue:

- Page 2 President's Message
- Page 3 Frequently Asked Questions
TANF Updates
- Page 4 Heating Assistance
- Page 5 Legislative Updates
MWDA Mission Statement
CAP Agency Contacts

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Upcoming Events and Classes

- 9/14 GA Basics *MMA*
- 12/8 Winter Issues *MMA*
- TBD Advanced GA *TBD*
- April 23/24 Spring Seminar *Bangor*

REMINDER:

New maximums for assistance go into effect October 1st, 2017! Maximums must be approved by your selectmen/council and a copy of your approval must be sent to DHHS.

Maine Welfare Directors' Association

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Linda Fossa, Waterville
Harrison Deah, Westbrook

<http://www.mainewelfaredirectors.org>

A message from our MWDA President, Jay Feyler

Welcome to our first newsletter in many years! Many thanks to Christine Landes, Town Manager of Bethel and MWDA Board members for putting this together.

We have a fantastic group of officers this year and we all are busy planning some very educational and fun training upcoming. We are already working on the annual meeting that will be held in Bangor next spring, and already have terrific sessions planned.

This is your organization so we more than welcome your ideas on training. Please send Randy White, our Professional Development Chair, your suggestions. Many of our sessions are built around what you have requested for training so please give us your input. If you would like to write an article for future newsletters (which are more than welcomed), or share your training story, please send it directly to Christine as I can't be trusted with forwarding it to her.

We all come from various backgrounds, Managers, Clerks, Treasurer's , Selectmen or just lucky employees, but we all have the same job when it comes to General Assistance. In this political and social climate it is hard to just do your job and not be criticized by a variety of political and social zealots. I really no longer know what is politically correct, because it varies from citizen to citizen and group to group, so even just doing our jobs can be difficult.

I admire all of you who dedicate your time and energy and helping your fellow citizens while being sensitive to your taxpayers. We are a unique group of professionals and it is great to have such a network of people to call on when needed, so please use your fellow MWDA members when in need. We will see you all soon at one of our trainings.

Never taking life too seriously,

Jay Feyler
MWDA President

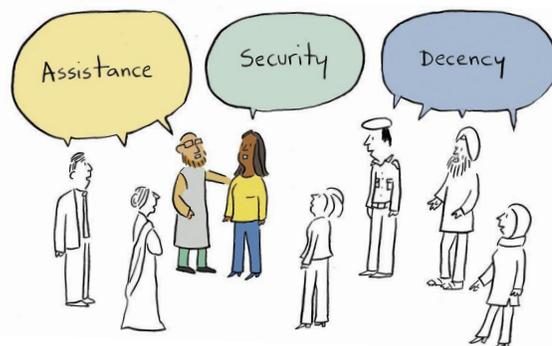


Frequently Asked Questions

with Sara Russell

2nd Vice President, MWDA

Sr. Administrator, City of Augusta



- Q:** Does my office have to be open during specific hours?
- A:** *NO. You do not have to adhere to any specific office hours for taking applications. Some towns are only open for applications by appointment. Some just two days a week. Some are open full time. It depends on the needs of your municipality. You must have a notice posted of the times during which an applicant can apply for assistance (these must be reasonable), as well as the name and contact number of the overseer available to take applications in an emergency at all other times.*
- Q:** If someone calls for assistance and says that they have lost housing in another town, and want to move to my town, do I have to take an application?
- A:** *YES. 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. You might suggest they speak to their local GA office, however you cannot discourage an applicant from applying for assistance in your municipality. If you have concerns about residency, you can always consult your ordinance or call the DHHS hotline at 207-624-4168.*
- Q:** If someone requests an application for assistance but tells me about income that I know will put them over the guidelines, should I tell them not to bother applying?
- A:** *NO. Any one has the right to apply for assistance. You might advise the client of income requirements and the possibility that they may not be eligible. It's also possible the client may be eligible for Emergency Assistance. You never know until you take the application. You should always give them the option and right to apply.*

TANF Updates

from Maine Equal Justice Partners

www.mejp.org

Toll-free: 1-866-626-7059

In October...

Beginning October 1, 2017 TANF families will see a 20% TANF increase.

TANF benefits will be increased annually beginning October 1, 2018 to reflect annual increases in the cost of living.

The TANF "housing special need" will both increase AND become available to more families. This is in addition to the increase to the basic grant described above. In addition, the housing special need will now be available to families with housing costs that equal or exceed 50% of their income. The current rules require housing costs to be at least 75% of their income in order to qualify for this additional benefit.

In November...

Two-parent families will now qualify for TANF under the same rules that apply to single parent families. Previously, a two parent family would only qualify if one parent was incapacitated or unemployed. Now, DHHS will only look at the income of these families to determine TANF eligibility. * See Page 5 for LD336

Heating Assistance Continued

by John (Randy) White

Vice President, MWDA

GA Director, City of Sanford



It's that time of year again; days are getting shorter, nights are getting cooler, and soon we'll be seeing school buses everywhere. It also means General Assistance administrators will be seeing an increase in heating fuel applications and electricity disconnection notices.

It is always wise to include a requirement to apply for LiHEAP (Low income Home Energy Assistance Program) and ELP (Electricity Lifeline Program) regardless of the time of year. However, it is especially important to do so in the late summer/early fall. Too often, we see a client apply for LiHEAP in mid-winter and – as a result of the late application – not receive assistance until March when the worst of the winter is behind us.

Remember also to require as part of conditions for future eligibility that a client secure other items needed in order to complete a LiHEAP application. The most common example is a household member not having a Social Security card. Requiring that a client apply for a replacement card in order to be eligible for General Assistance in the future may be the catalyst needed to get the LiHEAP process started sooner rather than later. There are acceptable substitute documents for a Social Security card, but often a client will not have one of those acceptable items.

The LiHEAP, ELP and the ECIP (Energy Crisis Intervention Program) are all accessed through local Community Access Programs – also known as CAP agencies. Funding for the programs is generated at the federal level and distributed through CAP agencies across the state. Most are done by county, but some of the CAP agencies in Maine serve two or more counties in a region.

LiHEAP is granted to eligible households to provide heating fuel. The fuel is most often heating oil or K-1, but can also assist with pellets, firewood, coal, propane and electricity. Assistance is granted by way of direct payment to a provider in one lump sum. The recipient can then order the fuel from that account. ELP is a program that pays a lump sum benefit to an electricity provider on behalf of an eligible household. It is a separate program from the LiHEAP program and many General Assistance clients are not even aware it exists. It is important to remind a client to specifically ask to apply for the ELP program. This is also a valuable program for renters who have heating included in their rent, but pay their own electric bill.

ECIP (Energy Crisis Intervention Program) is an emergency heating assistance program that is connected to LiHEAP. It is available to a household in a heating crisis that needs to be immediately averted. One requirement is that the household must already have a completed and approved LiHEAP application. It is most often used for LiHEAP recipients in either the early winter when funding has not yet been released or in late winter after the recipient has used all of the LiHEAP benefit.

Please visit your local CAP agency's website for more detailed information regarding the application process, documents needed, etc. Developing a contact person within your CAP agency can also be very helpful in learning more about the process.

NEW LAW(S) UPDATE

* Changes go into effect November 2017

LD518 - An Act to Amend the Laws Governing the Burial or Cremation of Certain Persons

Spouse and domestic partner have been added to the list of legally liable person. Note domestic partner is a registered domestic partner.

LD239 - An Act to Require National Banks to Cooperate in the Administration of the General Assistance Program

National Banks are now required to disclose to GA Administrators, the amount deposited upon receipt of a written request and a notarized affidavit signed by the overseer of the municipality or its agent stating that the named depositor is deceased.

LD221 - An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding the Municipality of Responsibility for General Assistance Applicants Released from a State Correctional Facility or County Jail Facility

This bill repeals a provision of law providing that when a general assistance applicant applies for benefits within 45 days of being released from a correctional facility, the municipality of financial responsibility for a period of 12 months, is the applicant's municipality of residence prior to incarceration.

LD336 - An Act To Amend the Requirements of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program

Two-parent families will now qualify for TANF under the same rules that apply to single parent families. Previously, a two parent family would only qualify if one parent was incapacitated or unemployed. Now, DHHS will only look at the income of these families to determine TANF eligibility.

Just a Little Extra:

Did you know the Maine Welfare Director's Association Administration Guide is available online?

Check out: <https://www.mainewelfaredirectors.org/assoc/AdminGuide.pdf>

Mission Statement for MWDA:

Mission Statement

- **Establish and promote equitable, efficient and standardized administration of General Assistance.**
- **Encourage the professional development, growth, and knowledge base of those who administer General Assistance.**
- **Advocate for the municipalities and citizens that we serve.**
- **Actively promote and present our program needs to the Legislature and citizens by creating a greater public awareness of the importance and the benefits of equitable, efficient and standardized General Assistance administration.**

CCAP Agencies

ACAP/Aroostook 1-800-432-7881
CCI/Androscoggin & Oxford 739-6502
KVCAP/Kennebec & Somerset 859-1553
MMCA/Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox,
Waldo, & Cumberland 1-800-221-2221
Penquis/Piscataquis, Penobscot, & Knox 973-3623
Opportunity Alliance/Cumberland 1-877-429-6884
WCAP/Waldo 1-800-498-3025
WHCA/Hancock 664-2424
WMCA/Franklin 645-3764
YCCAC/York 459-2906