

County of Santa Clara

Social Services Agency

353 West Julian Street
San Jose, California 95110-2335



DATE: June 23, 2020

TO: Board of Supervisors
Jeffrey V. Smith, M.D., J.D., County Executive

FROM: Robert Menicocci, Social Services Agency Director

SUBJECT: Update - Temporary Changes to General Assistance Program

In light of the public health emergency declared by the County of Santa Clara, and the Shelter in Place order issued on March 16, 2020, on March 27, 2020 the General Assistance (GA) program enacted temporary suspension of policies that would cause undue hardship given the shelter in place order and/or would cause applicants and recipients to violate the shelter in place order, thus posing a public health risk. GA 113 Director's Exception allows the Director of the Agency to grant exceptions to the GA policies to alleviate extreme hardship in emergency or unusual situations. The impacts of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) qualify as an emergency within the County of Santa Clara.

With the extended nature of the public health crisis and declared emergency, the Social Services Agency would like to provide an update to the Board on changes to the GA Director's Exception due to COVID-19. These changes supersede the previous GA Director's Exception issued on March 27, 2020 and serve to extend the period of the suspension of certain policies. The changes to the GA Director's Exception due to COVID-19 are intended to ensure continued access to the GA program in light of the extended nature of the public health crisis, minimize hardship to the vulnerable populations served, maximize administrative efficiency, and bring the program in alignment with the emergency protocols and practices of other federal and state public assistance programs.

Continued Temporary Suspension of Policies

The GA program serves vulnerable populations potentially at high risk for COVID-19 including the unhoused, and those with chronic health conditions. The reason for these exceptions is to ensure that applicants are able to practice social distancing and comply with the shelter in place order without the need to procure the required documentation. In light of the shelter in place order, many non-essential businesses are closed posing

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extreme hardship for procuring income, resource, and asset documentation. As well, with the public health emergency the health and hospital system is under extreme stress and obtaining medical verifications for the Interim Assistance Program will pose additional burden on the medical system.

Accordingly, the following verification requirements are temporarily suspended pursuant to GA 113 – Director’s Exception, meaning applicants and recipients may provide verbal information about the following, in lieu of being required to provide hard copies of supportive documentation.

- 104 – Application
- 170 – Real Property
- 180 – Personal Property
- 200 – Income
- 202 – Request to seek for other means of support
- 281 – Shelter payments
- 130 – Agreement to Reimburse (sponsor form)
- 283 – Interim Assistance (requirement to sign the SSP 14 form-for reimbursement)

The updated Director’s Letter extends the period of suspension until after shelter in place orders are lifted.

Do No Harm

Eligibility for applicants with cases that were granted 3 months eligibility under the initial GA Director’s Exception issued on March 27, 2020, will be extended. These cases will comply with reporting requirements as per GA 105 and GA 106.

As of June 2020, reporting requirements as per GA 105 and annual reinvestigation as per GA 106 are being resumed for all recipients.

It is intended that these temporary changes to the GA program will remain in place through the end date of the Health Officer of the County of Santa Clara’s Shelter in Place orders, unless another emergency action or directive supersedes it.

c: Chief Board Aides
Miguel Márquez, Chief Operating Officer
James R. Williams, County Counsel
Megan Doyle, Clerk of the Board