

## **Red Lake County Financial Assistance: Emergency General Assistance (EGA)**

### **Legal Authority:**

Department of Human Services Bulletin #11-11-02

### **Red Lake County Emergency General Assistance: Effective September 16, 2015**

Per the above legal authority, effective November 1, 2011, EGA will be limited to applicants who:

- Have an annual net income less than 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines (FPG) for the previous calendar year.
- Have not received emergency aid through the county MFIP Consolidated Fund EA, EMSA, or EGA within a 12 month period.
- Meet other written criteria adopted by the county agency where they are applying.

EGA in Red Lake County is only available to the extent that funding for the program is available via the State's EGA allocation.

Following are the additional criteria for EGA in Red Lake County.

## **EGA Shelter and Utility Needs Defined:**

The EGA unit must have an emergency that immediately threatens the unit members' health or safety.

EGA is limited to the minimum needed to resolve the emergency, not to exceed the maximum of \$500.

EGA may be used to pay for the following shelter and utility needs:

- Damage Deposits – limited to an amount that does not exceed the amount of one month's rent.
- Rent Payments – as required by a written lease or other binding agreement between the landlord and renter.
  - Verification of a landlord—tenant relationship must be provided.
  - The assistance unit must provide verification of pending eviction or unlawful detainer.
- Utility Payments – pending discontinuance of service must be verified, counted utilities include electricity, heat, water, sewer, garbage and cooking fuel.
- Arrearage on contract for deed or mortgage payments when a foreclosure action occurs and prior to Sheriff's sale. In order for payment to prevent foreclosure to be made all of the following conditions must be met:
  - The EGA unit must own, occupy and maintain the home.
  - The EGA unit's anticipated income must be enough to pay housing costs over the next 12 months.
  - The EGA unit must verify that a lending institution denied refinancing.
  - The EGA unit must verify that they've made application with the local Community Action Plan agency for foreclosure prevention (Inter-County Community Council)
  - The creditor must accept EGA and any other payments as full payment of the arrearage.

EGA is not available to pay:

- Damage deposits in excess of one month's rent.
- A portion of a rent payment that is intended to cover an unpaid damage deposit when the tenant is currently residing in the rental unit.
- Garage rental.
- Legal fees and court costs.
- When the landlord would accept a payment plan to alleviate any arrears.
- Food or Special Diets.
- Any other costs determined inconsistent with this plan.

Applicants will be referred to other available resources to assist with emergency needs not covered by EGA.

**\*\*Regarding disconnect, reconnect and late fees – upon approval of assistance the worker will ask if the fees can be waived. If fees are not waived, and are beyond the amount allowed for the emergency assistance application the recipient will have to pay the fees.**

**To be eligible for EGA, an assistance unit (defined as the applicant and all other people that live in the same household) must meet ALL of the following conditions:**

- At least 1 person in the EGA unit must have lived in Minnesota for at least 30 days and intend to make Minnesota his/her home.
- The unit must not currently be receiving MFIP.
- Disqualification from GA or MFIP must not have caused the emergency.
- Any adult household member must not have caused the emergency by non-compliance with any other state, federal or county program requirements or illegal activities.
- Eligibility may not exceed 30 days.
- The unit must be unable to resolve its own emergency by combining:
  - Liquid assets and assets they can liquidate in time to help.
  - Income they will receive in time to help. Examples of income include but are not limited to wages, cash grants, Social Security income, child support, SSI, Unemployment Compensation, lump sum payments, gambling winnings, tax refunds, student loans not earmarked for educational expenses (educational expenses are defined as books, tuition, and mandatory student fees), child support arrears, etc.
  - Other funds for which they are eligible.
- EGA payments, if approved, in combination with other available resources must be able to resolve the emergency, not just delay it.
- The household must have paid a minimum of 30% of their countable income during the application month and three prior months for shelter and utility expenses. Payments made by other agencies or individuals on behalf of the household members are not counted towards the 30% requirement.
  - Countable income is defined as all gross earned and unearned income (including tips and tax refunds as well as all other money) received by all members of the household less the following deductions:
    - Federal, State, and local taxes withheld from wages
    - Child support payments paid to children living outside of the household
    - Health and dental insurance premiums
    - Other mandatory payroll deductions, except garnishments

## **Application Process**

Before applicants can receive EGA, they (or their authorized representative) must complete an application and meet eligibility requirements. "Application" refers to the Combined Application Form (CAF). All adult members in the household must sign the application. The date of application is the date that the signed CAF is received by Red Lake County.

The County must process the application upon receipt of all necessary information and verifications in time to avert the emergency, but no later than 30 days from the date the application is received. The County may take an additional 30 days if necessary to obtain information needed to resolve the emergency, and the delay is not caused by the applicant's refusal to cooperate in

obtaining the information and if the emergency can still be averted during the additional 30-day time frame.

### **Interview Process**

Applicants for EGA, or their authorized representative, are required to complete an interview. This interview should be held face-to-face if possible but if necessary an exception may be made to do a telephone interview. During the interview:

- Applicants will be informed of their responsibilities and rights. See DHS Combined Manual 0003 (Client Responsibilities and Rights)
- Information on the application will be reviewed and checked to make sure it is complete.
- Program eligibility requirements, benefits, processing standards, and payment methods will be explained.
- Available verifications will be reviewed and client consent for third party verifications, as needed, will be obtained.

### **Required Verifications**

An applicant for EGA must provide the following verifications:

- County residence
- All household members' identity
- Social Security Numbers for all household members
- Verify that a unit member is responsible for the shelter and utility expenses (any bills that are not a unit member's legal responsibility are not considered in the calculations and cannot be paid by EGA.)
- The emergency and the cost of alleviating the emergency. Examples of verification include utility shut-off notices, eviction notices, lease agreements and rental statements
- Income for the month of application and prior three months
- Deductions from countable income
- Assets
- Immigration status, if applicable
- Rent and utility payments made in the month of application and prior three months

In the situation that an application is received at or near the end of a month and if for any reason the processing cannot be completed until the next month, applicants will also need to verify any income and expenses that have occurred since the application was filed. In this case there will be a total of 5 months of income and expenses being evaluated (application month, prior three months plus the processing month).

## **Affordability Determination**

Applicants for Emergency Assistance Funding must be able to show that their rent and utility costs are affordable. Affordable is defined as income sufficient to pay monthly shelter, utility, food and transportation costs (including car payments and insurance).

## **Determining the amount of EGA**

1. Determine the minimum amount needed to resolve the unit's emergency.
2. Determine if other public or private aid is available.
3. Determine the amount of countable income and assets the household has or will have that can apply toward the emergency. Count all income and assets; there are no exclusions.
4. Determine the countable income of all household members. Countable income is defined as all gross earned and unearned income received by all members of the household less the following deductions:
  - Federal, state and local taxes withheld from wages
  - Child support payments paid to children living outside of the household
  - Health and dental insurance premiums
  - Other mandatory payroll deductions, except garnishments
5. Count assets the unit can convert to cash in time to resolve the emergency. Do not count personal effects and essential household goods.
6. Add the amounts in steps 2, 4 and 5. Subtract the total from the amount in step 1. The remainder is the maximum eligibility amount, not to exceed \$500 or the amount left in the EGA fund balance, whichever is smaller.
7. Red Lake County will issue EGA for needs that accrue before that 30-day period only when the county agency determines it is necessary in order to resolve emergencies arising or continuing during the 30-day period of eligibility.
8. Red Lake County staff must try to resolve the household's emergency situation in the most cost-effective manner.
9. Red Lake County staff may make the determination that the assistance unit's mismanagement of the money caused the emergency, the County may require the assistance unit to cooperate with vendor or protective payments for up to 12 months, or require attendance at money management classes.