

General Assistance (GAR) Policy

Purpose

This policy provides General Assistance funding for the Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool (FHSP) housed participants. General Assistance should be requested only when there are no other funding resources from the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Department of Health Services (DHS), and/or the Intensive Case Management Service (ICMS). General Assistance supports the Participant's housing retention and clinical goals.

General Assistance does not include any costs associated with the participant moving into their unit or participant moving out of their unit (see [Move-in Assistance Policy](#) for move ins and the [Damage Mitigation Policy for move-outs](#)). Funding assistance related to reasonable accommodations should follow the [Reasonable Accommodations Policy and Form](#).

The availability of funds from other resources should always be researched before submitting a General Assistance Request.

Policy

General Assistance Services

General Assistance includes but is not limited to the following:

- A. **Rental Arrears Assistance:** GAR may be used to cover all or part of a participant's rental arrears (tenant's portion only) due to a short-term general hardship. If there are repeated requests for rental arrears assistance, a case conference must be held to assess and address underlying issues.
 - a. Federal Voucher recipients are eligible for **one-time** Rental and Utility arrears assistance but do not qualify for ongoing Rental Assistance
- B. **Utility Arrears:** GAR can be used to cover partial or full payment of past-due utility bills, such as gas, electricity, or water.
- C. **Replacement or Repair of Furniture and Appliances:** GAR may cover the repair or replacement of furniture and appliances initially provided at move-in. Replacement items can be sourced from vendors other than CORT, as long as the cost does not exceed the CORT price. For items over \$500, **three competitive bids** are required.
 - a. A bid is defined as three price comparisons offered for the same (or similar) item at which the purchaser will choose the best price out of the three. 3 copies of the item and price must be included with the request.
- E. **Unit Damages:** GAR may be used to repair damage to the unit that occurred during the participant's tenancy.

- F. **Other items:** Other expenses may be approved if deemed necessary to support the participant's health, safety, or housing habitability. All such requests are subject to funder review and approval.

Ineligible Requests

General Assistance Requests will be denied under the following circumstances:

- The request is for long-term or ongoing financial support (e.g., recurring monthly payments).
- The item or service is not essential to the participant's health, safety, or housing habitability/retention.
- The requested item or service can be readily obtained through another available resource.

General Assistance Request (GAR) Process

The ICMS provider is responsible for completing the General Assistance Request Form and submitting it to the Brilliant Corners (BC) Housing Coordinator along with all required supporting documentation listed on the form. If the participant is not enrolled in ICMS, the BC Housing Coordinator may complete the form on their behalf. In cases where the Housing Coordinator initiates the request, it must be submitted to their supervisor for final program approval, based on the thresholds outlined below.

A. Thresholds:

- Requests up to \$75: May be approved by the BC Housing Coordinator. If additional requests are submitted for the same participant within a three-month period, supervisor approval is required.
- Requests up to \$250: Require approval from the Senior Housing Coordinator. Supervisors must approve additional requests made within three months for the same participant.
- Requests up to \$499: Require the approval of Program Supervisors. Supervisors must also approve additional requests made for the same participant within three months.
- Requests exceeding \$500: Require Funder approval. Signature approval from Program Managers is required in specific circumstances (**reference section F above**). Supervisors must approve additional requests made within three months for the same participant. Threshold amounts include shipping costs, taxes, and installation costs.

B. **Unit Damage Requests related to Closeouts:** General assistance requests for unit damages exceeding \$1,000 must be submitted to the Operations Closeout Unit upon a participant's move-out. The Operations team will review the damages and supporting documentation to validate the charges from the property provider.

C. **Funder Approval:** BC will submit the GAR Form for approval to the appropriate funder for General Assistance Requests of \$500 or higher.

D. **Request Review Timeline:** Once a complete and accurately filled out General Assistance Request form, along with all required documents, has been submitted, the review process should be completed within five business days. For urgent requests—such as replacing a refrigerator needed to store a participant's medication—every effort should be made to complete the review within 1 to 3 business days.

E. **Enriched Residential Care:** This policy should be adopted by the Enriched Residential Care (ERC) program to the fullest extent possible. However, because the ERC program operates

differently from other FHSP programs, ERC staff should consult with the ERC Program Manager regarding general assistance requests for participants residing in an ERC.

Federal Voucher (Addendum):

Case managers must submit requests for one-time rental and utility arrears assistance for Federal Voucher recipients to Housing Coordinators.

1. First, a request must be submitted to [CalAim for Move-Assistance \(MIA\)](#)
2. Federal Voucher Recipients who have been denied CalAim Funding will need to coordinate with their Case Managers and Housing Coordinators to submit a GAR, following the required thresholds in the Policy (*see section A below*).