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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), LA County Homeless Services and Housing (HSH), Justice Care and Opportunities Department (JCOD), the Office of Diversion & Reentry (ODR), and case management services. General Assistance supports the participant’s housing retention and stability.

General Assistance does not include any costs associated with the participant moving into their unit or participant moving out of their unit. The availability of funds from other resources should always be researched before submitting a General Assistance Request.

General Assistance Services

General Assistance includes but is not limited to the following:

- I. **Rental Arrears Assistance**
 - a) GAR may be used to cover tenant-portion rental arrears due to short term hardship only while the participant is active in the program and before the subsidy termination date. If there are repeated requests for rental arrears assistance, a case conference must be held to assess and address underlying issues.
 - i. Federal Voucher recipients are eligible for **one-time** Rental and Utility arrears assistance but do not qualify for ongoing Rental Assistance
- II. **Utility Arrears:** GAR can be used to cover partial or full payment of past-due utility bills, such as gas, electricity, or water.
- III. **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.
- IV. **Unit Damage:** GAR may be used to repair damage to the unit that occurred during the participant’s tenancy.
- V. **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:

- a) Long-term or ongoing financial support (e.g., recurring monthly payments).
- b) The item or service is not essential to the participant's health, safety, or housing habitability/retention.
- c) The item or service can be readily obtained through another available resource.
- d) GARs for rental arrears submitted after the subsidy termination date or when the participant is inactive, except in rare, funder approved cases.

General Assistance Request (GAR) Process

The case manager is responsible for completing the General Assistance Request Form and submitting it to the Brilliant Corners (BC) Housing Coordinator along with all required support documentation listed on the form. If the participant is not enrolled in case management services, the BC Housing Coordinator may complete the form on their behalf. Approval will be based on the following thresholds.

I. **Thresholds:**

- a) 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.
- b) Requests up to **\$250**: Require approval from the Senior Housing Coordinator. Supervisors must approve additional requests made within three months for the same participant.
- c) Requests up to **\$499**: Require the approval of Program Supervisors. Supervisors must also approve additional requests made for the same participant within three months.
- d) 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.
- e) **Urgent Requests (\$500 and Above):**
BC Managers may approve urgent requests totaling \$500 or more **only** when the request addresses an immediate health and safety issue and requires expedited payment. **Funder approval and signature are still required and must be obtained as follow-up.**
- f) Breaking Barriers (BB) program requests totaling **\$1500** or more require Funder approval from JCOD.
- g) Enriched Residential Care (ERC) requires funder approval for **ALL** GAR requests regardless of the amount.

- II. **Funder Approval:** BC will submit the GAR Form for approval to the appropriate funder and will require a funder signature on the 1st page of the form.

- a. (DMH, HSH, ODR) for General Assistance Requests of \$500 or higher.
 - b. All ERC requests require DMH approval.
 - c. BB requests totaling \$1500 or more require JCOD approval.
- III. **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.
- IV. **Programs with Distinct Financial Assistance Requirements**
- a. **Enriched Residential Care (ERC):** 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. All GARs under ERC are subject to funder (DMH) approval.
 - b. **Breaking Barriers (BB):** BB clients are served through a JCOD-funded short-term rental assistance program, with both case management and housing coordination provided by Brilliant Corners. As a result of the program’s funding parameters and distinct operational expectations, the program allows for Brilliant Corners to approve a higher financial assistance threshold and request funder approval of \$1500 and above.
 - c. **Federal Voucher (FV):** Case managers must submit requests for one-time rental and utility arrears assistance for Federal Voucher recipients to Housing Coordinators.
 - i. First, a request must be submitted to CalAim for Move-Assistance (MIA)
 - ii. 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*).