

Ringgold County General Assistance Policy and Procedure Manual

**Ringgold County Public Health
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Approved by the Ringgold County BOS: 4/21/14

I. Purpose

The purpose of this manual is to describe the forms of assistance provided by Ringgold County in accordance with Chapter 252, to poor persons and needy persons. This manual establishes criteria, which must be met by an applicant before assistance is approved. Ringgold County may deny a needy person for any reason at any time.

II. Procedure

- a. Individuals applying for assistance must complete the Ringgold County General Assistance application in its entirety. The applicant must also have an interview with general assistance staff prior to approval for any assistance. If the applicant is or appears to be eligible for assistance from any other federal, state, or local source, the Department shall immediately refer the applicant to that source. It shall be the obligation of the applicant to immediately make application to that source and pursue such application with due diligence as a condition to be eligible for further assistance under this Manual.
- b. It shall be the obligation of the applicant to establish his or her eligibility and need for any category of General Assistance. The applicant shall provide all required and requested proof that bears upon the person's eligibility and need for assistance.
- c. Applicants for General Assistance will verify all aspects of eligibility as requested. Failure to provide verification will result in denial or termination of General Assistance benefits. Recipients shall report any and all circumstances that change, such as income, resources, address, etc. Recipients, who fail to report changes within ten days of the change, may be ineligible for any further assistance.
- d. If it becomes apparent that an applicant or recipient has knowingly withheld information or provided false information in order to gain eligibility or to remain eligible for General Assistance, that applicant or recipient will not be eligible for any further assistance. The recipient will be responsible for reimbursing the resident county in full for all assistance granted to them under these circumstances.
- e. Eligibility will be determined and a written Notice of Decision (NOD) mailed within 14 business days from receipt of a completed application according to the guidelines established herein.
- f. Ringgold County is the funder of last resort. All Applicants must apply for and accept any and all other benefits prior to receipt of county funding; including but not limited to: Iowa Department of Human Services, Ringgold County Ministerial Association, Iowa Workforce (unemployment), LIHEAP, Ringgold County Neighborhood Center, or Red Cross. If the applicant refuses or fails to apply for, and maintain eligibility of these benefits, the applicant shall be denied initial or continued eligibility for General Assistance.

III. Definitions

a. A Poor Person is defined as a documented individual who has a Social Security or DHS disability decision or applying for same; or cannot work and has a physician's statement stating such. Individuals with a doctor's statement should be applying for Social Security and/or a DHS disability, and sign an Interim Assistance Reimbursement Agreement. A Poor Person will not have any real property or resource.

b. A Needy Person is a documented individual (18 years or older) who is employed 30 hours or more a week, earning at least minimum wage or has lost their job (due to no fault of their own) within the past 30-90 days. Individuals who have lost their job due to no fault of their own within the past 30-90 days would need to be actively searching for a job, complete a job search and register with the Iowa Workforce. If applicant is a part of the household applying for General Assistance has quit or been involuntarily terminated within the past 90 day, the household will be ineligible. Persons 18 or older who are unable to work due to caring for a medically dependent family member (documentation required – must need significant assistance to meet 2 or more activities of daily living), may be exempt from completing a job search or actively seek employment. Assistance is for one month in a twelve month period.

c. Household is defined as all persons who live in a residence with shared common kitchen, dining, or bedroom facilities, or there are shared utilities or rental payments or lease. All household members are required to meet the eligibility guidelines of either a poor or needy person or be a full time student in order for the household to be eligible for assistance.

IV. Residency

- a) To meet eligibility, all applicants must have residence in Ringgold County. Residency is defined as the county in this state in which, at the time a person applies for or receives services, the person is living and has established an ongoing presence with the declared good faith intention of living in the county for a permanent or indefinite period of time. The county of residence of a person who is a homeless person is the county where the homeless person usually sleeps. A person maintains residency in the county in which the person last resided while the person is present in another county receiving services in a hospital, a correctional facility, a halfway house for community-based corrections or substance-related treatment, a nursing facility, an intermediate care facility for persons with an intellectual disability, or a residential care facility, or for the purpose of attending a college or university. (Residency is fully defined in the administrative rules.)

V. Family Investment Program (FIP)

Persons who are discharged from the Family Investment Program (FIP) due to meeting the sixty-month maximum are ineligible for General Assistance. The Federal Government Welfare Reform Act of 1996 created an expectation that a person receiving welfare would work with their Department of Human Services (DHS) worker to become self-sufficient within five years. Persons/Households currently receiving Family Investment Program (FIP) assistance are also ineligible for General Assistance.

VI. Student

If an applicant is a full-time college student, unemployed, and not seeking employment, they must provide proof that no loans or grants were given for living expenses during the current college year.

VII. Social Security Disability

Persons receiving State Supplemental Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability (SSDI) are not eligible for General Assistance unless they meet the income requirements listed below. An applicant may receive three months of assistance if they have a doctor's verification that states they have a permanent disability, which does not allow them to be substantially gainfully employed, they have applied for Social Security disability, and have completed an Interim Assistance Reimbursement agreement with the county.

VIII. Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

LIHEAP is a program through the federal government that offers assistance to low income families for home heating needs. Applications are accepted on a first come first serve basis through the Ringgold County Neighborhood Center from October 1st through April 30th. If the applicant has received assistance from LIHEAP, the applicant must provide proof that reasonable private payments were made on the utility bill during the months of October through April. If no or limited private payment was made toward the utility bill, assistance will be denied.

IX. Persons on Strike

Persons on strike are not eligible for assistance.

X. Recovery of Assistance

Ringgold County reserves the right of recovery of assistance per Iowa Code section 252.13. "Any county having expended money for the assistance or support of a poor person under this Chapter, may recover the money from any of the following: from the poor person if the person becomes able, or from the person's estate; from relatives by action brought within two years from the payment of the assistance or support, from the poor person by action brought within two years after the person becomes able, and from the person's estate by filing the claim as provided by law. There shall be allowed against the person's estate a claim of the sixth class for that portion of the liability to the county

which exceeds the total amount of all claims of the first through the fifth classes, inclusive, as defined in section 633.425, which are allowed against that estate.”

XI. Income

All applicants must apply for Iowa Medicaid and provide a copy of eligibility determination showing gross earned and unearned income. Income eligibility will be based upon 100% of current federal poverty guidelines.

XII. Resources

Applicants with unobligated resources over \$500 will not be eligible for assistance. Resources include bank accounts, time certificates, life insurance with a cash value, stocks, bonds, non-homestead property, any vehicle over \$5,000 value per National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA), trust funds, or burial trusts (except for irrevocable, pre-paid burial contract).

XIII. Undocumented Residents of the United States

Households with undocumented residents of the United State will not be eligible.

XIV. Scope of Assistance

In cases where eviction notice or disconnection is being issued, the applicant must be able to provide proof of how they will repay the remaining balance on the account. The applicant must be residing at the residence where assistance is being requested. Payment will not be made for deposits, reconnect fees, or first month’s rent.

XV. Categories of Need

a. Burial

Memorial and cremation services will be covered by the county for those individuals meeting eligibility criteria. Only local funeral homes will be funded. Maximum reimbursement is \$750 per service.

b. Referral

Referrals sources are listed in Appendix A.

c. Rent

Rental assistance can only be granted to persons who rent from landlords living in a separate household. Rent must be paid directly to the registered owner of the property unless someone else is designated as the caretaker of that property. Rent shall not be paid to a relative such as parent, grandparent, children, grandchildren, or sibling. Rental assistance will only be granted to applicant households who are listed on the rental agreement. Payment will not be made for deposits or first month’s rent. Maximum reimbursement is \$150 for up to 2 months in a fiscal year.

d. Utilities

Individuals must apply to LIHEAP before application will be approved. If the applicant has received assistance from LIHEAP, the applicant must provide proof that reasonable private payments were made on the utility bill during the months of October through April. If no private payment was made toward the utility bill, assistance will be denied. Payment will not be made for deposit or reconnect fees. Maximum reimbursement is \$150 for up to 2 months in a fiscal year.

XVI. Payment of Claims

As per Iowa Code 252.35, all claims and bills for the care and support of the poor shall be certified to be correct by the general assistance director and presented to the board of supervisors, and, if the board is satisfied that the claims and bills are reasonable and proper, they shall be paid. Claims will be paid only to the provider of service and not directly to the applicant. Exceptions to policy may be granted only by the Ringgold County Board of Supervisors.

XVII. Additional Provisions

The Director may allow, upon application, the additional benefits provided for in Chapter 252 of the Code of Iowa. The provisions of Chapter 252.13 of the Code of Iowa, for repayment of benefits to the County, are applicable and the applicant shall acknowledge the same in writing. Recipients of assistance may further be required to work for the County as a condition to receipt of such benefits as required in Sections 252.27 and 252.42 of the Code of Iowa. Benefits provided a recipient may be a further claim against the homestead of a recipient and a claim in probate, as provided by Section 252.13 of the Code of Iowa.

XVIII. Appeal Process (As per Iowa Code 252.37)

Appeal

Every applicant, whether granted assistance or not, shall be informed in the Director's written decision of the applicant's right to appeal, as well as the time limits, from such decision to the Board of Supervisors. The applicant shall be informed (a) of the method by which an appeal may be taken and (b) that the applicant may represent themselves or be represented by another person.

Upon denial of General Assistance, the applicant shall receive written notice with a copy of the same to the Board of Supervisors, including right to appeal within fifteen (15) working days.

Any written appeal to the Director by or on behalf of an applicant requesting appeal of the Director's determination shall be received by the Director and put immediately upon the Board of Supervisors' agenda, in accordance with Chapter 21 of the Code of Iowa, for the next regular Board meeting, provided that such

appeal shall not be heard sooner than five (5) days after appeal is taken. The written appeal must be made to the Director within ten (10) working days of the Director's determination, provided the applicant's current address, telephone number, and reasons for the appeal are stated. The applicant shall be informed by ordinary mail of the date and time of the hearing before the Board. The applicant and the applicant's attorney or other representative, as designated by the applicant, upon written authorization, shall be granted access by the Director to applicant's assistance case file if request is made. When emergency assistance has been denied, the appeal shall be taken immediately to the Board of Supervisor.

Appeal Hearing

The Board of Supervisors shall hear the applicant's appeal anew at the time scheduled in the agenda unless continuance is requested by the applicant. The applicant shall be permitted to present whatever evidence is desired in support of the appeal, including testifying, having other witnesses testify, offering documentary evidence and reasonable cross examination of other witnesses, if present. The technical rules of evidence shall not apply. The Board may set reasonable times for the parties to present evidence of any appeal. The applicant's file shall be admitted into evidence. The Board may question the applicant, and the Director shall present the Board with the reasons for the determination. The appeal will be tape recorded. The hearing before the Board will not be an open meeting under Chapter 21 of the Code of Iowa, since the confidential files of the applicant will be in evidence. When the Board deliberates on the appeal, no parties shall be present.

The Board shall make a decision on the appeal within five (5) days. The Board's decision shall be only on the basis of the evidence submitted before the Board. The applicant shall be informed immediately by telephone of the decision and within four (4) working days thereafter the Board shall mail to applicant at applicant's last known address, by ordinary mail, its decision in writing. The decision shall state the reasons for the action, together with any statute or ordinance applied. The Board's decision shall also state that an appeal may be made of the Board's determination, as provided below, and the method by which such appeal may be taken.

A person who is aggrieved by a decision of the Board of Supervisors may appeal the decision as if it were a contested case before an agency and as if the person had exhausted administrative remedies in accordance with the procedures and standards in Section 17A.19, Subsections 2 through 8, except paragraphs b and c of Subsection 8, and Section 17A.20 of the Code of Iowa.

Actions of the Board of Supervisors

In the event that the Board of Supervisors, in reviewing the actions of the Director, questions any allowance of assistance benefits allowed by the Director, it shall take no action concerning such allowance until it conducts a hearing. This

hearing, the reasons for it, and notification to the applicant shall be given in the same manner as if the applicant had taken an appeal. This hearing shall proceed in the same manner as an appeal from the Director's determination.

Appendix A

Referral Sources

All referral sources listed below must be exhausted prior to receiving approval for Ringgold County General Assistance.

Red Cross

Will provide emergency housing assistance (ex. due to fire, flood, tornado)

Contact number: 515-240-2876 or 515-243-4054

Neighborhood Center

Will provide food bank, clothing, and LIHEAP application assistance.

Contact: 641-464-2401

Iowa Department of Human Services

Will provide food assistance and medical assistance through Medicaid application

DHS application paper forms will be available or can also be completed online at

<https://secureapp.dhs.state.ia.us/oasis/>

Community Health Centers of Southern Iowa

Will provide dental, medical, and/or behavioral health services based upon sliding fee scale as they are a federally qualified health center. They also have the ability to link with discount medications through their local pharmacies

Contact number: 641-446-2383

Address: 302 NE 14th Street, Leon, Iowa 50144

Ringgold County Ministerial Association

Will provide assistance to those in need of (fill in here once they decide)

Contact Ringgold County Sheriff's Office: 641-464-2911

Southern Iowa Regional Housing Authority (SIRHA)

Will provide rent assistance or rent subsidy to low income individuals, families, elderly or disabled.

Contact number: 641-782-8585

Address: 219 North Pine Street, Creston, Iowa 50801

Veteran's Administration

Will provide services and supports to veterans

Contact: 641-464-2397 Ringgold County Courthouse lower level