

## HIV Health Services Planning Council Sacramento TGA

### SERVICE STANDARDS

**Subject:** Utilities Assistance

**No.:** SSC 10

**Date Approved:** 7/23/03

**Date Revised:** 1/26/11

**Date Reviewed:** 1/26/11

Consistent with funded Service Priorities established by the Sacramento TGA HIV Health Services Council the following Utilities Assistance Standard will apply to all Ryan White contracted vendors that provide utility assistance services.

1. Ryan White funding is to be used for HIV/AIDS medical services and for psycho-social and support services designed to significantly improve client access and adherence to such resources. Utility Assistance that is provided by agencies and paid for through Ryan White funding will be part of a comprehensive medical care plan that promotes the optimal state of health for the afflicted individual and immediately related to:

- preventing homelessness, OR
- alleviating unhealthy living conditions for clients and their immediate families.

2. Ryan White funding is to be expended in a cost effective, equitable manner which is based upon client need verification. Payment for utility assistance services through Ryan White funding are authorized only in circumstances where client eligibility is validated and no other payment guarantor has been identified.

3. In accordance with the above:

A. In order to preserve a client's access to utilities service in the most cost effective manner, utilities assistance will be granted one (1) time for a client who receives a notice of late payment, or a shut off notice. Other than initial assistance following a notice from the utility company for any particular client, utilities assistance using Ryan White funds shall not be granted to clients unless and until:

- The client has enrolled in a reduced rate or financial assistance program offered by the utility provider (e.g., SMUD Energy Assistance Program Rate [EAPR] or PG&E's California Alternate Rates for Energy [CARE]);
- The client has taken advantage of at least one utility conservation educational program designed for consumers (e.g., programs sponsored by Resources for Independent Living), provided such programs are available in the area where the client resides.

B. The term "utilities" shall be interpreted to include electric power, water and sewer service, natural gas and alternative heat sources such as propane, wood or fuel pellets for

homes which use such fuels as the primary source of heating. Purchase of containerized water may be included for homes lacking either a piped water connection or a well.

C. Any assistance for telephone utilities shall be limited to the monthly fee for Universal Lifeline Service for land-based phones. Ryan White funds shall not be used for pager services nor for wireless phone service except in geographic areas where no cost-effective alternative exists.

D. Medical Case Managers shall ensure that all clients who request housing related assistance of any kind, including utilities assistance, are made aware of and encouraged to access the weatherization subsidy programs available through utilities service providers or government agencies.

4. RW Agencies which provide Medical Case Management services shall develop and adhere to budgets for utilities assistance which reflect the principles referred to above. In addition, if available funding levels are anticipated to be less than the total need, agencies shall ensure that funds are distributed among the maximum possible number of those clients who are most at risk of homelessness or unhealthy living conditions. Agencies shall assure that no client receives any RW funded services unless such client is found to be eligible for services under such Eligibility Standards as may be adopted by the Planning Council and the client is adhering to a budget developed mutually by the program staff and client.

5. Medical Case Managers at RW Agencies may at any time submit to the RW Fiscal Agent requests for interpretation of these or any other Services Standards adopted by the HIV Health Services Planning Council, based on the unique medical needs of a client or on unique barriers to accessing medical care which may be experienced by a client. .

6. RW Agencies shall provide a means by which Medical Case Managers can obtain in-servicing and on-call advice related to interpreting client medical needs.

7. Clients shall have the right to request a review of any service denials under this or any other Services Standards adopted by the HIV Health Services Planning Council. The most recent review / grievance policies and procedures for the RW Agency shall be made available to each client upon intake. Such policies and procedures shall include an explanation of the criteria and process for accessing the Planning Council's Client Advocacy Program,

Adopted   
Kane Ortega, Chair

Date: 1/26/11