

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH (CDPH) OFFICE OF AIDS (OA)
HIV CARE PROGRAM (HCP) STANDARDS OF CARE

Emergency Financial Assistance

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Working Draft

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Introduction

This document describes the “Emergency Financial Assistance” service category of the California HIV Care Program (HCP), funded through the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) Part B. It serves as a supplement to the Common Standards of Care document also released by HCP.

This document highlights the requirements and standards that apply to Emergency Financial Assistance, and must be followed by any provider receiving HCP (Ryan White Part B) funding for this service category.

How This Document is Organized

Within this document, the Standards of Care are described in terms of (1) Service Definition, and (2) Requirements.

Service Definition

HRSA Definition

Emergency Financial Assistance provides limited one-time or short-term payments to assist an HCP client with an emergent need for paying for essential utilities, housing, food (including groceries and food vouchers), transportation, and medication. Emergency financial assistance can occur as a direct payment to an agency or through a voucher program.

HCP Definition

HCP contractors have access to other Ryan White service categories such as Housing Services, Food Bank / Home Delivered Meals, and Medical Transportation. As such, HCP limits the allowable uses of Emergency Financial Assistance to one-time or short-term payments to assist an HCP client with an emergent need for paying for essential utilities, prescription eye wear and medication not covered under ADAP.

Program Guidance

It is expected that all other sources of funding in the community for emergency financial assistance (i.e., general fund relief, local non-profit services) will be effectively used and that any allocation of HCP funds for these purposes will be as the payer of last resort, and for limited amounts, uses, and periods of time. Continuous provision of an allowable service to a client may not be funded through Emergency Financial Assistance.

Objective

The goal of Emergency Financial Assistance is to prevent negative client outcomes as a result of emergency financial difficulties and to assist the client in securing a financially stable living situation.

Units of Service

A Unit of Service (UOS) is a single transaction on behalf of a client by a provider of Emergency Financial Assistance.

Requirements

Provider Qualifications

Education/Experience/Supervision

There are no specific education or licensing requirements for Emergency Financial Assistance providers. Services must be provided by persons who possess knowledge of:

- Sources of emergency funding in the local community, including those offered by local utilities
- AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP)
- HIV and related issues
- Understanding of HCP and RWHAP Part B

Individual supervision and guidance must be routinely provided to all staff.

Monitoring

Supervision – Routine provision of individual supervision will be monitored via discussion during site visits.

Staff Orientation and Training

Initial: All HCP-funded staff providing Emergency Financial Assistance must complete an initial training session related to their job description and serving those with HIV. HIV training should be completed within 60 days of hire. Topics must include:

- General HIV knowledge such as transmission, care, and prevention
- Privacy requirements and HIPAA regulations
- Navigation of the local system of HIV care including HOPWA and ADAP

Ongoing: Staff must also receive ongoing annual HIV training as appropriate for their position. Training must be clearly documented and tracked for monitoring purposes.

Monitoring

Staff training – Knowledge and training related to HIV care for all staff will be verified through personnel file documentation of hire date, all trainings provided, and dates of trainings; these records must be available for review during site visits or upon request.

Service Characteristics

Emergency Financial Assistance services are intended to provide emergency fiscal support for essential services to eligible clients for a limited time. Key characteristics include:

Orientation

Each new client enrolled in Emergency Financial Assistance must receive an orientation to the services at the first visit; document this orientation in the client file.

Eligibility Screening: If the Emergency Financial Assistance provider is the client's first contact with HCP, the client must be screened for eligibility as described in the Common Standards of Care.

Assessment: The Emergency Financial Assistance provider will determine the need for emergency financial assistance. Clients must submit proof of the need (i.e., a utility shut-off notice). Emergency Financial Assistance funds can only be used as a last resort for payment of services and items for a short period of time (i.e., not indefinitely/ongoing).

Service Provision: Emergency Financial Assistance includes emergency payments for:

- Utilities (water, electricity, gas, and firewood)
 - Funds may not be used for utilities if the client lives in housing through programs that include the cost of utilities (e.g., Section 8 housing).
- Medications not covered by ADAP or Local Pharmaceutical Assistance Programs
- Prescription eye wear

Emergencies are defined as facing an imminent threat of losing basic utilities or access to needed medications. Funds are intended to help a client through a temporary, unplanned crisis to sustain a safe and healthy living environment.

When accessing Emergency Financial Assistance funds, clients must work with case managers or other service providers to develop a plan to avoid similar emergencies in the future. Changes should be made to the client's care plan, when relevant

Fiscal Management: Payments made on behalf of clients need to maintain client confidentiality and should not indicate "HIV" or "AIDS" on the check. If the name of the organization includes "HIV" or "AIDS", generic checks should be used.

Providers must have systems in place to account for disbursed funds under EFA. The systems must track the client's name, the staff person who distributed the funds, the date of the disbursement, the recipient of the funds and the dollar amount. These data elements can be tracked on the ARIES Services screen if no other tracking system is available.

Unallowable Activities

This emergency financial assistance may not be used for:

- Ongoing payments for any services or goods for clients
- Direct cash payments to clients
- Activities that can be paid for under another Ryan White service category including ADAP or another payer source

Documentation: All client contacts and other information pertinent to services must be recorded in the client chart.

Monitoring

Fiscal Management – Management of payments will be monitored through agency submission of written procedures for accounting of disbursed vouchers, desk audit of submitted budgets and invoices related to purchase of specific types of payments and site visit verification.