

**HIV Health Services Planning Council
Sacramento TGA
Policy and Procedure Manual**

Subject: Emergency Financial Assistance

No.: SSC 16

Date Approved: 05/26/04

Date Revised: 06/22/22

Date Reviewed: 06/22/22

NOTE: Other Critical Needs is not a funded service category under Policy Clarification Notice (PCN) 16-02. Rather, it is a component of Emergency Financial Assistance. As such, the service standard for Other Critical Needs was re-named to Emergency Financial Assistance. Additionally, the TGA's previous Utilities Assistance Service Standard (SSC10) was inactivated and incorporated into the Emergency Financial Assistance Service Standard on May 27, 2020, as it too is a component of Emergency Financial assistance and not a funded service under PCN 16-02.

Consistent with funded Service Priorities established by the Sacramento TGA HIV Health Services Planning Council the following Emergency Financial Assistance will apply to all Ryan White (RW) contracted vendors that provide Other Critical Needs services.

Emergency Financial Assistance provides limited one-time or short-term payments to assist a 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.

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 Ryan White 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.

1. Ryan White CARE Act funding is to be used for HIV/AIDS medical services and for psychosocial and support services, which improves access and adherence to medical care. All such Other Critical Needs services initiated by agencies receiving Ryan White funding will be related to sustaining continuity of healthcare as defined by HRSA.

2. Ryan White CARE Act funding is to be expended in a cost effective, equitable manner that is based upon verified client need. Facilitating self-empowerment of the client's coordination of Other Critical Needs services shall be carried out through case management in accordance with the allocations, priorities and directives adopted by the Sacramento TGA HIV Health Services Planning Council (Planning Council), or through an alternative assessment process administered by a RW agency.
3. To be eligible for Other Critical Needs assistance, the requested service must directly assist the client in overcoming a barrier to accessing medical care or adhering to a medical regimen.

4. **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 a Ryan White-funded provider, 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)
 - 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.

- 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).
- 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.
- 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.
- Medications not covered by ADAP or Local Pharmaceutical Assistance Programs
- Prescription eye wear

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

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
5. Agencies shall ensure that RW CARE Act funded services are provided only to such clients that meet eligible criteria as defined or stipulated within the Eligibility Standards as adopted by the Planning Council.
 6. Standards applied include:
 - a. Assistance that is intended to provide access to a range of services which address needs frequently encountered by People Living with HIV (PLWH) with emphasis on self-care health maintenance.
 - b. All requests for funding will be accompanied by an assessment of the individual's need for the designated service, completed by a representative of the case management agency.
 - c. Assessment findings must be documented in case notes.
 - d. Services must be vendor or voucher based. Direct cash payments to clients are prohibited.
 - e. Case managers will work with clientele to develop a budget that enables the individual to live within their existing resources.
 7. RW Agencies which provide Other Critical Needs assistance shall develop and adhere to budgets that comply with the principles and standards described herein. When funding levels are anticipated to be less than the total need, agencies shall ensure that distribution of remaining funds will maximize number of clients who rely on RW CARE Act funded Other Critical Needs assistance.
 8. Medical Case Managers at RW Agencies may at any time submit to the RW Recipient requests for interpretation and/or exception of these or any other service 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.
 9. RW Agencies shall provide a means by which Medical Case Managers can obtain in-service training and advice related to interpreting client medical needs.

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 the Ryan White CARE Program

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

Staff Orientation and Training

Initial: All Ryan White-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.

10. 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.

Adopted: 
Richard Benavidez, Chair

Date: 06/22/22