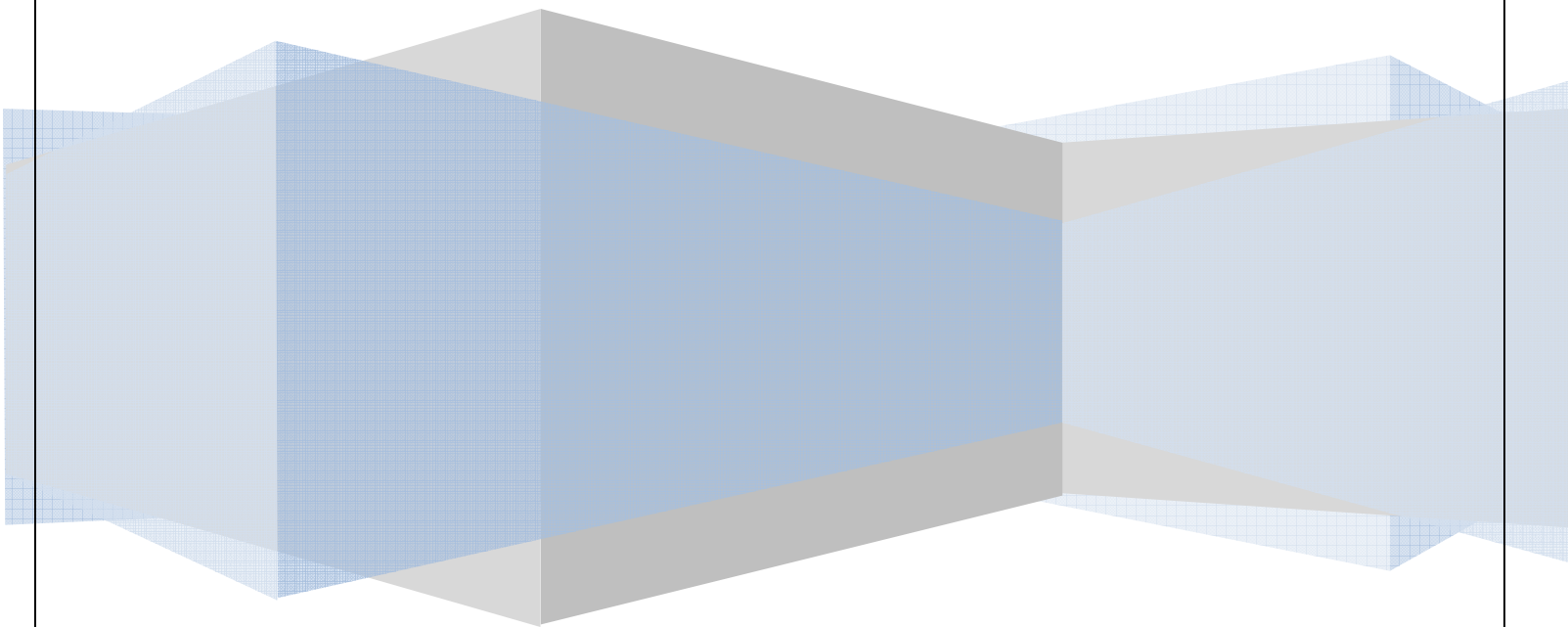


TOWN OF BRISTOL, NH

# **TOWN OF BRISTOL**

# **WELFARE GUIDELINES**

REVISED May 13, 2010



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**1. SEVERABILITY**

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**3. ROLES OF LOCAL GOVERNING BODY AND WELFARE OFFICIAL**

**4. LOCAL WELFARE ADMINISTRATOR AND AVAILABILITY**

## **1. Severability**

If any provision of these guidelines is held at law to be invalid or inapplicable to any person or circumstances, the remaining provisions will continue in full force and effect.

## **2. Confidentiality of Information**

Information given by or about an applicant or recipient of general assistance is confidential and privileged, and is not a public record under the provisions of RSA 91-A. Such information will not be published, released, or discussed with any individual or agency without written permission of the applicant or recipient except when disclosure is required by law, or when necessary to carry out the purposes of RSA 165. RSA 165:2-c.

## **3. Roles of Local Governing Body and Welfare Official**

The responsibility of the day-to-day administration of the general assistance program shall be vested in the elected or appointed Welfare Official . The Welfare Official shall administer the general assistance program in accordance with the written guidelines of the municipality. The local governing body, the Board of Selectmen is responsible for the adoption of the guidelines relative to general assistance. RSA 165:1 (II).

## **4. Local Welfare Administrator and Availability**

The Town may appoint a Welfare Official to carry out the Town's local welfare responsibilities. If there is no Administrator/Director, the duty falls to the Board of Selectmen (RSA 37:6, VIII).

The Welfare Official must be available, or there must be access to the welfare program, five days per week. The Welfare Official without full-time

office hours must post telephone numbers where he/she, or an alternate official, may be reached. In an emergency situation, a person must be able to receive aid for which he or she is eligible within 72 hours of making an application. The governing body should delegate the dual responsibilities of receiving an application and making an emergency aid decision to someone who is available during business hours, such as a single selectman, the administrative assistant, or an appointed welfare administrator.

Under state law, Welfare Official shall have immunity from liability so long as they are acting in good faith. (RSA 31:104 and case law).

Under federal civil rights law, it does not matter whether the official was personally acting in good faith. It is whether a *reasonable person* would have known that actions taken would violate constitutional rights. Under federal law, there is a presumption that the Welfare Official s know what the client's constitutional rights are. RSA 31:106 mandates the municipality to indemnify any official who was acting in good faith, but was held liable under the civil rights laws.

## **1. MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS**

- **Legal Requirement**
- **Case Records**



## **MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS**

### **1. Legal Requirement**

- Each Welfare Official is required by law to keep complete paper and/or electronic records concerning the number of applicants given assistance and the cost for such support. Separate case records shall be established for each individual or family applying for general assistance. The purposes for keeping such records are:
  - To provide a valid basis of accounting for expenditure of the municipality's funds;
  - To support decisions concerning the applicant's eligibility;
  - To assure availability of information if the applicant or recipient seeks administrative or judicial review of the Welfare Official's decision;
  - To provide the Welfare Official with accurate statistical information; and
  - To provide a complete history of an applicant's needs and assistance that might aid the Welfare Official in ongoing case management and in referring the applicant to appropriate agencies.

### **2. Case Records**

The Welfare Official shall maintain case records containing the following information:

- The complete application including any authorizations signed by the applicant allowing the Welfare Official to

obtain or verify any pertinent information in the course of assisting the recipient, to include a signed Authorization to Release Information from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services.

- Written grounds for approval or denial of an application contained in a Notice of Decision.
- A narrative history recording need for assistance, the results of investigations of applicants' circumstances, referrals, changes in status, etc.
- A tally sheet, which has complete data concerning the type, amount, and dates of assistance given which may be kept on paper or electronically.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

- **Right to Apply**
- **Welfare Official 's Responsibilities at Time of Application**
- **Responsibility of Each Applicant and Recipient**
- **Actions on Applications**
- **Temporary Assistance**
- **Withdrawn Applications**
- **Home Visits**

## **Right to Apply**

1. Anyone may apply for general assistance by appearing in person or through an authorized representative and by completing a written or electronic application form. If more than one adult resides in a household, each may be required to appear at the welfare office to apply for assistance, unless one is working or otherwise reasonably unavailable. Unrelated adults in the applicant's residential unit may be required to apply separately if they do not meet the definition of household as defined in these guidelines. Each adult in the household may be requested to sign release of information forms.
2. The Welfare Official shall not be required to accept an application for general assistance from a recipient who is subject to a suspension (RSA 165:1-b, VI) provided that any applicant who contests a determination of continuing non-compliance with the guidelines may request a fair hearing, and provided further that a recipient who has been suspended for at least six months due to non-compliance may file a new application.

## **Welfare Official 's Responsibilities at Time of Application**

When application is made for general assistance, the Welfare Official shall inform the applicant of:

1. The requirement of submitting an application. The Welfare Official shall provide assistance to the applicant in completing the application, if necessary (e.g. applicant is physically or mentally unable, or has a language barrier.)

2. Eligibility requirements, including a general description of the guideline amounts and the eligibility formula.
3. The applicant's right to a fair hearing, and the manner in which a review may be obtained.
4. The applicant's responsibility for reporting all facts necessary to determine eligibility, and for presenting records and documents as requested and as reasonably available to support statements.
5. The joint responsibility of the Welfare Official and applicant for exploring facts concerning eligibility, needs, and resources.
6. The kinds of verifications needed.
7. The fact that an investigation will be conducted in order to verify facts and statements presented by the applicant.
8. The applicant's responsibility to notify the Welfare Official of any change in circumstances that may affect eligibility.
9. Other forms of assistance for which the applicant may be eligible.
10. The availability of the Welfare Official to make home visits by mutually-agreed appointment to take applications and to conduct ongoing case management for applicants who cannot leave their home.
11. The requirement of placing a lien on any real property owned by the recipient, or any civil judgments or property settlements, for any assistance given, except for good cause.
12. The fact that reimbursement from the recipient will be sought if he/she becomes able to repay the amount of assistance given.
13. The applicant's right to review the guidelines.

### **Responsibility of Each Applicant and Recipient**

At the time of initial application, and at all times thereafter, the applicant/recipient has the following responsibilities:

1. To provide accurate, complete, and current information concerning needs and resources and the whereabouts and circumstances of relatives who may be responsible under RSA 165:19.

2. To notify the Welfare Official promptly when there is a change in needs, resources, address or household size.
3. To apply for immediately, but no later than 7 days from initial application, and accept any benefits or resources, public or private, that will reduce or eliminate the need for general assistance. RSA 165:1-b, I(d).
4. To keep all appointments as scheduled.
5. To provide records and other pertinent information and access to said records and information when requested.
6. To provide a doctor's statement if claiming an inability to work due to medical problems.
7. Following a determination of eligibility for assistance, to diligently search for employment and provide verification of work search (the number or work search contacts to be determined by the Welfare Official ), to accept employment when offered (except for documented reasons of good cause – RSA 165:1-d) and to maintain such employment – RSA 165:1-b, I (c).
8. Following a determination of eligibility for assistance, to participate in the workfare program if physically and mentally able. RSA 165:1-b.
9. To reimburse assistance granted if returned to an income status and if such reimbursement can be made without financial hardship. RSA 165:20-b.
10. All income tax refunds will be considered income and must be used for allowable expenses such as rent (including arrears), utilities, medications, medical bills, and child care. A copy of the applicant's Income Tax Return/Refund must be provided. Not doing so will be considered fraud and will be prosecuted accordingly.

An applicant shall be denied assistance if he/she fails to fulfill any of these responsibilities without justification. A recipient's assistance may be terminated or suspended for failure to fulfill any of these responsibilities without reasonable justification.

Any recipient may be denied or terminated from general assistance or may be prosecuted for a criminal offense if he/she, by means of intentionally false statements or intentional misrepresentation, or by impersonation or other willfully fraudulent act or device, obtains or attempts to obtain any assistance to which he/she is not entitled.

### **Actions on Applications**

1. Decision – Unless an application is withdrawn, the Welfare Official shall make a decision concerning the applicant's eligibility immediately in the case of an emergency, or within five working days after submission of the application. A written Notice of Decision shall be given in hand, delivered or mailed on the same day or next working day following the making of the decision. The Notice of Decision shall state that assistance of a specific kind and amount has been given and the time period of aid, or that the application has been denied, in whole or in part, with reasons for denial. A decision may also be made to suspend an application subject to receipt of specified information from the applicant. The Notice of Decision shall contain a first notice of conditions for continued assistance and shall notify the applicant of his/her right to a fair hearing if dissatisfied with the Welfare Official's decision – (RSA 165:I-b, II, III).
2. Emergency Assistance – If, at the time of initial contact, the applicant demonstrates and verifies that an immediate need exists, because of which the applicant may suffer a loss of a basic necessity of living or imminent threat to life or health (such as loss of shelter, utilities, heat, or lack of food or prescriptions), then temporary aid to fill such immediate need shall be given immediately, pending a decision on the application. Such emergency assistance shall not obligate the Welfare Official to provide further assistance after the application process is completed.
3. Temporary Assistance – In circumstances where required records are not available, the Welfare Official may give temporary approval of an application pending receipt of required documents. Temporary status shall

not extend beyond two weeks. The Welfare Official shall not insist on documentary verification if such records are totally unavailable.

4. Withdrawn Applications – An application shall be considered withdrawn if:
  - a) The applicant has refused to complete an application or has refused to make a good faith effort to provide required verifications and sufficient information for the completion of an application. If an application is deemed withdrawn for these reasons, the Welfare Official shall so notify the applicant in a written Notice of Decision.
  - b) The applicant dies before assistance is rendered.
  - c) The applicant avails him/herself of other resources to meet the need in place of assistance.
  - d) The applicant requests that the application be withdrawn (preferably in writing).
  - e) The applicant does not contact the Welfare Official after the initial interview after being requested to do so.

### **HOME VISITS**

A home visit may be made by appointment at the request of any applicant, only when it is impossible for the applicant or representative to apply in person.

The home visit shall be conducted in such a manner as to preserve, to the greatest extent possible, the privacy and dignity of the applicant. To this end, the person conducting the visit shall not be in uniform or travel in a law enforcement vehicle, shall be polite and courteous, and shall not knowingly discuss or mention the application within the listening area of someone who is not a member of the household.



## **VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION**

- **Right to Apply**
- **Required Verifications**
- **Verification Records**
- **Other Sources of Verification**
- **Written Consent of Applicant**
- **Legally Liable Relatives**
- **Refusal to Verify Information**

## **Right to Apply**

Any determination or investigation of need or eligibility shall be conducted in a manner that will not violate the privacy or personal dignity of the individual or harass or violate his or her individual rights.

## **Required Verifications**

Verification will normally be required of the following:

- Applicant's address;
- Facts relevant to the applicant's residence;
- Names of persons in applicant's residential unit;
- Applicant's and household income and assets;
- Applicant's and household's financial obligations;
- The physical and mental condition of household members, only where relevant to their receipt of assistance, such as ability to work, determination of needs, or referrals to other forms of assistance;
- Any special circumstances claimed by applicant;
- Applicant's employment status and availability in the labor market;
- Names, addresses, and employment status of potentially liable relatives;
- Utility costs;
- Housing costs;
- Prescription costs;
- Any other costs that the applicant wishes to claim as a necessity.

### **Verification Records**

Verification may be made through records provided by the applicant (for example, birth and marriage certificates, pay stubs, rent receipts, bankbooks, etc.) as primary sources. The failure of the applicant to bring such records does not affect the Welfare Official's responsibility to process the application promptly. The Welfare Official shall inform the applicant what records are necessary, and the applicant is required to produce records possessed as soon as possible. However, the Welfare Official shall not insist on documentary verification if such records are not available, but should ask the applicant to suggest alternative means of verification.

### **Other Sources of Verification**

Verification may also be made through other sources, such as relatives, employers, former employers, banks, school personnel, and social government agencies. The cashier of a national bank or a treasurer of a savings and trust company is authorized by law to furnish information regarding amounts deposited to the credit of an applicant or recipient. (RSA 165:4)

### **Written Consent of Applicant**

When information is sought from such other sources, the Welfare Official shall explain to the applicant or recipient what information is desired, how it will be used, and the necessity of obtaining it in order to establish eligibility. Before contact is made with any other sources, the Welfare Official shall obtain written consent of the applicant or recipient, unless the Welfare Official has reasonable grounds to suspect fraud. In the case of suspected fraud, the Welfare Official shall carefully record his/her reasons and actions, and before any accusation or confrontation is made, the applicant shall be given an opportunity to explain or clarify the suspicious circumstances.

### **Legally Liable Relatives**

The Welfare Official may seek statements from the applicant's legally liable relatives regarding their ability to help support the applicant.

### **Refusal to Verify Information**

Should the applicant or recipient refuse comment and/or indicate an unwillingness to have the Welfare Official seek further information that is necessary, assistance may be denied for lack of eligibility verifications.

## **DISBURSEMENTS**

The municipality pays in a voucher system – RSA 165:1 (III). Vouchers are payable directly to the vendors (utilities, landlords, stores, etc.) involved.

The amount shown on the voucher is the maximum amount to be used for payment. In accordance with the municipality's accounting practices, a recipient may be required to sign the voucher to insure proper usage. The vendor returns the voucher with the required documentation, for payment, to the welfare director. After the initial transaction, if there is any unspent money, the voucher shall be returned to the municipality for payment of the actual amount listed on an itemized bill or register tape. Vouchers altered by the recipient or vendor may not be honored.

## **DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY AND AMOUNT**

- **Eligibility Formula**
- **Legal Standard and Interpretation**
- **Non-Eligibility Factors**
- **Available Assets**
- **Income**
- **Residents of Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence and Their Children**
- **Ongoing Assistance**
- **Welfare Budget**

## **Eligibility Formula**

An applicant is eligible to receive assistance when:

1. He/She meets the non-financial eligibility factors and
2. The applicant's basic maintenance need exceeds his/her available income plus available liquid assets. If available income and available liquid assets exceed the basic maintenance need (as determined by the guideline amounts), the applicant is not eligible for general assistance. If the need exceeds the available income/assets, the amount of assistance shall be the difference between the two amounts, in the absence of circumstances deemed by the Welfare Official to justify an exception.

## **Legal Standard and Interpretation**

“Whenever a person in any Town is poor and unable to support himself he shall be relieved and maintained by the overseers of public welfare of such Town, whether or not he has residence there.” RSA 165:1.

1. An applicant cannot be denied assistance because he/she is not a resident.
2. “Whenever” means at any or whatever time that person is poor and unable to support him or herself.
  - a. The Welfare Official, or a person authorized to act on his/her behalf, shall be available during normal business hours.
  - b. The eligibility of any applicant for general assistance shall be determined no later than 5 (five) working days after the application is submitted. If the applicant has an emergency need, than assistance for such emergency need shall be immediately.
  - c. Assistance shall begin as soon as the applicant is determined to be eligible.
3. “Poor and unable to support” means that an individual lacks income and available liquid assets to adequately provide for the basic maintenance needs of him/herself or family as determined by the guidelines.

4. "Relieved" means an applicant shall be assisted to meet those basic needs.

### **Non-Financial Eligibility Factors**

1. **Age** – General assistance cannot be denied any applicant because of the applicant's age; age is not a factor in determining whether or not an applicant may receive general assistance. Minor children are assumed to be the responsibility of the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) unless circumstances warrant otherwise.
2. **Support Actions** – No applicant or recipient shall be compelled, as a condition of eligibility or continued receipt of assistance, to take any legal action against any other person. The municipality may pursue recovery against legally liable persons or governmental units.
3. **Eligibility for Other Categorical Assistance** – Recipients who are, or may be, eligible for any other form of public assistance must apply for such assistance immediately, but no later than seven (7) days after being advised to do so by the welfare director. Failure to do so may render the recipient ineligible for assistance. No person receiving Old Age Assistance (OAA) shall at the same time be eligible for general assistance except for emergency medical assistance. As for those persons receiving Aid to the Permanently and Totally Disabled (APTD), a court ruling in 2009 (Megan Smith vs. City of Franklin) has deemed they may be eligible for assistance if they qualify.
4. **Employment** – An applicant who is gainfully employed, but whose income and assets are not sufficient to meet necessary household expenses, may be eligible to receive general assistance. However, recipients who without good cause refuse a job offer or referral to suitable employment, participation in the Workfare program, or who voluntarily leave a job without good cause may be ineligible for continuing general assistance in accordance with the procedures for suspension outlined in the guidelines. The Welfare Official shall first



determine whether there is good cause for such refusal, taking into account the ability and physical and mental capacity of the applicant, transportation problems, working conditions that might involve risks to health or safety, lack of adequate child care, or any other factors that might make refusing a job reasonable. These employment requirements shall extend to all adult members of the household.

5. **Registration with the New Hampshire Department of Employment Security (NHES) and Work Search Requirements** – All unemployed recipients and adult members of their households shall, within seven (7) days after having been granted assistance, register with NHES to find work and must conduct a reasonable, verified job search as determined by the Welfare Official. Each recipient must apply for employment to each employer to whom he/she is referred by the welfare director. These work search requirements apply unless the recipient and each other adult member of the household is:
- a. Gainfully employed full time
  - b. A dependent 18 or under who is regularly attending secondary school
  - c. Unable to work due to illness or mental or physical disability of him/herself or another member of the household, as verified by the Welfare Official or
  - d. Is solely responsible for the care of a child under the age of five (5) – RSA 165:31, III. A recipient responsible for the care of a child aged five (5) to twelve (12) years of age shall not be excused from work search requirements, but shall be deemed to have good cause to refuse a job requiring work during the hours the child is not usually in school, if there is no responsible person available to provide care, and it is verified by the Welfare Official that no other care is available.

The Welfare Official shall give all necessary and reasonable assistance to ensure compliance with registration and work requirements, including the granting of allowances for transportation and work clothes. Failure of a

recipient to comply with these requirements without good cause will be reason for denial of assistance.

**6. Students** – Applicants who are college students not available for or refusing to seek full-time employment are not eligible for general assistance.

**7. Non-Citizens** – The Welfare Official may, in his/her sole discretion, provide limited assistance to non-citizens not otherwise eligible for general assistance.

a. A non-citizen who is not:

- A qualified alien under 8 USCA 1641
- A non-immigrant under the federal Immigration and Nationality Act or
- An alien paroled into the United States for less than one year under 8 USCA 1182(d)(5) is not eligible for general assistance from the municipality. 8 USCA 1621(a).

b. Qualified aliens include aliens who are lawfully admitted for permanent residence under the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 USCA 1101 et seq.), aliens who are granted asylum under that act, certain refugees, and certain battered aliens. 8 USCA 1641

c. A non-citizen who is not eligible for general assistance may be eligible for state assistance with health care items and services that are necessary for the treatment of an emergency medical condition, which is defined as a medical condition (including emergency labor and delivery) manifesting itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity (including severe pain) such that the absence of immediate medical attention could reasonably be expected to result in:

- Placing the patient's health in serious jeopardy
- Serious impairment to bodily functions or
- Serious dysfunction of any bodily organ or part. 8 USCA 1621 (b) and 42 USCA 1396(v)(3).

d. A non-citizen may also be eligible for general assistance for treatment of an emergency medical condition.

e. Non-citizen applicants for general assistance may be required to provide proof of eligibility. (8 USCA 1625).

**8. Property Transfers** – No applicant who is otherwise eligible shall receive such assistance if he/she has made an assignment, transfer, or conveyance of property for the purpose of rendering him/herself eligible for assistance within three (3) years immediately preceding his/her application. (RSA 165:2-b).

**9. Employment of Household Members** – The employment requirements of these guidelines, or participation in the Workfare program, shall be required for all adults aged 18 to 65 years of age residing in the same household, except those regularly attending secondary school or employed on a full-time basis, who are:

- a. Members of the recipient's household
- b. Legally liable to contribute to the support of the recipient and/or children of the household and
- c. Not prevented from maintaining employment and contributing to the support of the household by reason of physical or mental disability or other justifiable cause as verified by the welfare director.

The Welfare Official may waive this requirement where failure of the other household members to comply is not the fault of the recipient and the Welfare Official decides it would be unreasonable for the recipient to establish a separate household. (RSA 165:32)

**10. Disqualification for Voluntary Termination of Employment** – Any applicant eligible for assistance who voluntarily terminated employment shall be ineligible to receive assistance for 90 days from the date of employment termination provided the applicant:

- a. Has received local welfare within the past 365 days and;
- b. Has been given notice that voluntary termination of employment without good cause could result in disqualification and;
- c. Has terminated employment of at least 20 hours per week without good cause within 60 days of an application for local welfare and;

- d. Is not responsible for supporting minor children in his/her household and;
- e. Did not have a mental or physical impairment which caused him/her to be unable to work.

Good cause for terminating employment shall include any of the following: discrimination, unreasonable work demands or unsuitable employment, retirement, leaving a job in order to accept a bona-fide job offer, migrant farm labor or seasonal construction, and lack of transportation or child care. An applicant shall be considered to have voluntarily terminated employment if the applicant fails to report to work without good cause. An applicant who is fired or resigns from a job at the request of the employer due to applicant's inability to maintain the employer's normal work productivity standard shall not be considered to have voluntarily terminated employment. (RSA 165:1-d)

### **Available Assets**

1. **Available Liquid Assets** – Cash on hand, bank deposits, credit union accounts, securities and retirement plans (i.e. IRA's, deferred compensation, Keogh's, etc.) are available liquid assets. Insurance policies with a loan value, and non-essential personal property, may be considered as available liquid assets when they have been converted into cash. The Welfare Official shall allow a reasonable time for such conversion. However, tools of a trade, livestock and farm equipment, and necessary and ordinary household goods are essential items of personal property which shall not be considered as available assets.
2. **Automobile Ownership** – The ownership of an automobile by an applicant/recipient or his/her dependent does not affect eligibility if it is essential for transportation to seek or maintain employment, to procure medical services or rehabilitation services, or if its use is essential to the maintenance of the individual or the family.
3. **Insurance** – The ownership of insurance policies does not affect eligibility. However, when a policy has cash or loan value, the recipient will be

required to obtain and/or borrow all available funds, which shall then be considered available liquid assets.

4. **Real Estate** – The type and amount of real estate owned by an applicant does not affect eligibility, although rent or other such income from property shall be considered as available to meet need. Applicants owning real estate property, other than that occupied as their primary residence, shall be expected to make reasonable efforts to dispose of it at fair market value. Applicants shall be informed that a lien covering the amount of any general assistance they receive shall be placed against any real estate they own. RSA 165:28.

### **Income**

In determining eligibility and the amount of assistance, the standard of need shall be compared to the available income/assets. Computation of income and expenses will be the week or month. The following items will be included in the computation:

1. **Earned Income** – Income in cash or in-kind earned by the applicant or any member of the household through wages, salary, commissions, or profit, whether self-employed or as an employee, is to be included as income. Rental income and profits from items sold are considered earned income. With respect to self-employment, total profit is arrived at by subtracting business expenses from gross income in accordance with standard accounting principles. When income consists of wages, the amount computed should be that available after income taxes, social security and other payroll deductions required by state, federal, or local law, court ordered support payments and child care costs, and work related clothing costs have been deducted from income. Wages that are trusted, or income similarly unavailable to the applicant or applicant's dependents should not be included.
2. **Income or Support from Other Persons** – Contributions from relatives or other household members shall be considered as income only if actually available and received by the applicant or recipient. The

income of non-household members of the applicant's residential unit shall not be counted as income.

**3. Income from Other Assistance or Social Insurance Programs**

- a. State categorical assistance benefits (OASDI payments, Social Security Payments, VA benefits, unemployment insurance benefits and payment from other government sources shall be considered income.
- b. Food Stamps cannot be counted as income pursuant to federal law. 7 USC 2017(b)
- c. Fuel assistance cannot be counted as income pursuant to federal law. 42 USC 8624(f)(1)

**4. Court Ordered Support Payments** – Alimony and child support payments shall be considered income only if actually received by the applicant or recipient.

**5. Income from Other Sources** - Payment from pension, trust funds, and similar programs shall be considered income.

**6. Earnings of a Child** – No inquiry shall be made into the earnings of a child 14 years of age or less unless that child makes a regular and substantial contribution to the family.

**7. Option to Treat a Qualified State Assistance Reduction as Deemed Income.** The Welfare Official may deem as income all or any portion of any qualified state assistance reduction pursuant to RSA 167:82, VIII. The following criteria shall apply to any action to deem income under this section. RSA 165:1-e.

- a. The authority to deem income under this section shall terminate when the Qualified State Assistance Reduction no longer is in effect.
- b. Applicants for general assistance may be required to cooperate in obtaining information from the Department of Health and Human Services as to the existence and amount of any Qualified State Assistance Reduction. No applicant for general assistance may be considered to be subject to a Qualified State Assistance Reduction

unless the existence and amount has been confirmed by the Department of Health and Human Services.

- c. The Welfare Official shall provide the applicant with a written decision which sets forth the amount of any deemed income used to determine eligibility for general assistance.
- d. Whenever necessary to prevent an immediate threat to the health and safety of children in the household, the Welfare Official shall waive that portion, if any, of the Qualified State Assistance Reduction as necessary.

### **Residents of Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence and Their Children**

An applicant residing in a shelter for victims of domestic violence and their children who has income, and owns resources jointly with the abusive member of the applicant's household, shall be required to cooperate with the normal procedures of verification. Such resources and income may be excluded from eligibility determinations unless the applicant has safe access to joint resources at the time of application. The verification process may be completed through an authorized representative of the shelter of residence. The normal procedures taken in accordance with these guidelines to recover assistance granted shall not delay such assistance.

### **Ongoing Assistance**

The local welfare obligation has no limit in time or amount. If an applicant remains eligible, and complies with properly imposed conditions, the duty to assist is indefinite. If an applicant is receiving on-going assistance, an emergency situation may temporarily change the assistance provided. In these instances, it is important to document the change in assistance provided.

### **Welfare Budget**

The local welfare obligation has no limit in time or amount. This means that if a person is eligible for assistance because he/she is found to be "poor and unable

to support him/herself, then he/she must be assisted by the municipality, even if the budget for welfare has been exhausted. The governing body should be kept aware of the balance in the welfare budget, so they can take timely action to transfer additional appropriations into the welfare budget to avoid overspending.



## **STANDARD OF NEED**

The basic financial requirement for general assistance is that an applicant be poor and unable to support him/herself. An applicant shall be considered poor when he/she has insufficient available income/assets to purchase either for him/ herself or dependents any of the following:

### **Shelter**

The amount to be included as “need” for shelter is the actual cost of rent or mortgage necessary to provide shelter in that municipality. That cost shall be determined by the governing body and the welfare director.

- a. Shelter Arrearages – Shelter arrearages will be included in the “need” formula if, and only if, such payment is necessary to prevent eviction or foreclosure or to protect the health and safety of the household. However, if the amount of such mortgage or rental arrearage substantially exceeds the cost of alternative, available housing which complies with local health and housing code standards, or if the payment of arrears will not prevent eviction or foreclosure, the Welfare Official may instead authorize payment of security deposit, rent, and/or reasonable relocation expenses for such alternative housing, if, under the circumstances of the case, it is reasonable to do so and would not cause undue hardship to the applicant household. Alternative housing may include transitional housing as an option. Should alternative housing be the only and immediate means of solving a homeless or near homeless situation and is offered and ultimately refused by the applicant, the Welfare Official shall note said offer and refusal of the means to immediately solve their need and the applicant shall be considered ineligible for further assistance.
- b. An applicant seeking assistance with moving to another dwelling must document that the reason for the move is:

1. Substandard housing – documented by the appropriate public official;
  2. Homelessness as defined as on the street and nowhere to go;
  3. Imminent eviction which was unavoidable by the applicant;
  4. The unavailability of any alternative housing (anywhere in the state);
- c. As the Town of Bristol is a member of the Local Welfare Administrators Association, an affiliate organization of the Municipal Association of the Local Government Center, the Town of Bristol shall not relocate any applicant/s in another community unless the following conditions exist:
1. The applicant/s is gainfully employed or starting a full-time job in that community;
  2. The applicant/s have other services in place and will not be a burden to the new community;
  3. The applicant/s have exhausted all reasonable efforts and have not been able to find a landlord in the Bristol area who will rent to them;
  4. The move will place the applicant/s nearer to their place of employment, medical, or psychological service providers;
  5. There is no available alternative housing open to the applicant/s;

The Town of Bristol shall not relocate an applicant into any dwelling situation that they cannot afford to maintain after the initial relocation assistance, nor continue to keep an applicant in a dwelling unit that is unaffordable to an applicant under normal financial circumstances.

- d. Security Deposits – Security deposits may be included in the “need” formula if, and only if, the applicant is unable to secure alternative shelter for which no security deposit is required or is unable to secure funds, either him/herself or from alternative sources, for payment of the deposit. Any security deposit

provided by the general assistance program which is returned under RSA 540-A:7 shall be returned to the municipality, not the recipient.

- e. Housing Inspections – Rent shall not be paid on any dwelling unit that does not meet the minimum housing criteria as set forth by the Bristol Health Officer (RSA 48:A) and the Bristol Fire Department (Life Safety 101). The Welfare Official shall not pay rent on any dwelling that has not passed an inspection by the Bristol Health Officer and Fire Department within the last 12 months, and for a dwelling to be eligible for rental assistance payments, it must have no unresolved and/or outstanding complaints against it with either the Health Officer or the Fire Department.

If both inspections cannot be done at the same time and the dwelling being considered for rental assistance has passed one of the two inspections, rent will be issued so long as the first inspector feels there are no issues. If the second inspection does uncover issues that are in violation of RSA 48:A or Life Safety 101, rental payments shall cease until such time as the necessary repairs and/or alterations to the dwelling are completed. Verification of such completion shall be accomplished by a second inspection/s.

Should a client continue to be eligible for rental assistance and the landlord/owner are actively addressing the repairs and/or alterations necessary to become compliant with RSA 48:A and Life Safety 101, vouchers may be pended. Said vouchers shall be released for payment only when the dwelling is in compliance with both RSA 48:1 and Life Safety 101. If the landlord/owner refuses to make said repairs and/or alterations for the existing tenant eligible for rental assistance, any rent payments that may have been pended shall be held to be null and void.

If the landlord refuses to make the necessary alterations and/or repairs within the specified length of time (usually 30 days from the receipt of a certified letter sent for the Welfare Official noting the inspection/s and the issues that are not in

compliance) the Welfare Official shall inform the Health Officer and/or the Fire Department and request that they go forward with necessary legal action to insurance compliance and/or take appropriate action to condemn the building until such time as it meets the minimum standards set forth in the statutes.

- f. Relative Landlords – Whenever a relative of an applicant is also the landlord for the applicant, a financial analysis shall be made in accordance with RSA 165:19.

### Utilities

When utility costs are not included in the shelter expense, the most recent outstanding monthly utility bill will be included as part of “need” by the welfare director. Arrearages will not normally be included in “need” except as set for below.

NOTE: The New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has established comprehensive rules governing the provisions of some utility services. Generally speaking, the PUC governs electric, telephone, water, and sewer; it does not govern any municipal utilities, propane tanks, or fuel oil. With the exception of telephone, the rules are consistent across utilities. These rules and regulations cover the initiation of service, payment arrangements, termination of service, the terms of restoration of service, the requirement of deposits, municipal guarantees and guarantees from other third parties. There are special rules as to winter termination. The Welfare Official should be familiar with these rules in order to ensure that needs are properly met at the lowest available cost. The PUC has a toll-free consumer assistance number: 1-800-852-3793.

- a. Arrearages – Arrearages will not be included except when necessary to ensure the health and safety of the applicant household or to prevent termination of utility service where no other resources or referrals can be utilized. In accordance with

the rules of the PUC relating to electric utilities, arrearages for electric service need not be paid if the Welfare Official notifies the electric company that the municipality guarantees payment of current electric bills as long as the recipient remains eligible for general assistance.

- b. Restoration of Service – When utility service has been terminated and the Welfare Official has determined that alternative utility service is not available and alternative shelter is not feasible; arrearages will be included in “need” when restoration of service is necessary to ensure the health and safety of the applicant household. The Welfare Official may negotiate with the utility for payment of less than the full amount of the arrears and/or may attempt to arrange a repayment plan to obtain restoration of service.

When electric service has been terminated and restoration is required, arrearages may either be included as set forth in the above paragraph, or may be paid in accordance with a reasonable payment plan entered into by the applicant and the electric company. The Welfare Official may hold the recipient accountable for the payment arrangement for as long as the recipient continues to request general assistance on a regular basis. Payment of a payment plan may be a required element of a Notice of Decision or case plan.

- c. Deposits – Utility security deposits will be considered as “need” if, and only if, the applicant is unable to secure utility service without a deposit. Such deposits shall, however, be the property of the municipality.

(1) Any utility bill in the name of someone other than the adult applicant/s will not be considered for payment.

(2) The Welfare Official shall require the applicant/s to within 7 days of contact with the office make an appointment with the local CAP office for the electric discount program and/or Fuel Assistance. If the applicant/s fail to attend the original scheduled appointment and/or complete the application process for the electric discount and/or Fuel Assistance, they will be considered non-compliant and shall be sanctioned for 7 days or until such time as they complete the application process.

### **Food**

The amount included as “need” for food purchases will be in accordance with the most recent standard food stamp allotment, as determined under the food stamp program administered by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services. An amount in excess of the standard food allotment may be granted if one or more members of the household need’s a special diet, as verified by the Welfare Official, the documented cost of which is greater than can be purchased with the family’s allotment of food stamps. Food vouchers may not be used for alcohol, tobacco, or pet food.

### **Household Maintenance Allowance**

Applicants may include, in calculating “need”, the cost of providing personal and household necessities in an amount not to exceed these guidelines with subparagraph 11 below. (See Appendix A) Need allowance for diapers shall be calculated based on usage.

### **Telephone**

If the absence of a telephone would create an unreasonable risk to the applicant’s health or safety (as verified by the Welfare Official), or for other good cause as determined by the Welfare Official the lowest available basic monthly rate will be budgeted as “need”. While payments will not be made for telephone

bills, under exceptional circumstances where no other source of assistance is available, payments may be made to maintain basic telephone service.

### **Transportation**

If the Welfare Official determines that transportation is necessary (e.g. for health or medical reasons, to maintain employment, or to comply with conditions of assistance) “need” should include the costs of public transportation, where available. If, and only if, the transportation need cannot be reasonably provided by alternative means, such as public transportation or volunteer drivers, a reasonable amount for car payments and gasoline should be included as part of “need” when determining eligibility or amount of aid.

### **Maintenance of Insurance**

In the event that the Welfare Official determines that the maintenance of medical insurance is essential, an applicant may include as “need” the reasonable cost of such premiums.

### **Emergency and Other Expenses**

In the event that the applicant has the following expenses, the actual cost shall be included as emergency and other expenses to determine eligibility and amount of assistance:

- a. Medical Expenses – The Welfare Official shall not consider including amounts for medical, dental or eye services unless the applicant can verify that all other potential sources have been investigated and that there is no source of assistance other than local welfare. Other sources to be considered shall include state and federal programs, local and area clinics, area service organizations and area hospital indigent programs designed for such needs. When an applicant requests medical service, prescriptions, dental service or eye service, the Welfare Official may require verification from a doctor, dentist, or person licensed to practice optometry in the area, indicating that these services

are absolutely necessary and cannot be postponed without creating a significant risk that the applicant's well-being will be placed in serious jeopardy. To be eligible for assistance for prescription(s), a client must have the Town of Bristol Controlled Substance Statement completed by their Physician before the Welfare Official can authorize payment for said prescription(s). The Town of Bristol shall not replace any "lost or stolen" prescriptions(s) and shall only authorize payment for other than the generic version of a prescription, if one is available. **The Town of Bristol shall not pay for any medical prescriptions for sexual performance drugs (i.e. Viagra, Cialis, etc.).**

### **Legal Expenses**

Except for those specifically required by statute, no legal expenses will be included.

### **Clothing**

If the applicant has an emergency clothing need which cannot be met in a timely fashion by other community resources (i.e. Salvation Army, Red Cross, church groups), the expense of reasonable meeting that emergency clothing need will be included.

1. Unusual Needs Not Otherwise Provided For in These Guidelines – If the Welfare Official determines that the strict application of the standard of need criteria will result in unnecessary or undue hardship (e.g. needed services are inaccessible to the applicant), the director may make minor adjustments in the criteria, or may make allowances using the emergency need standards of these guidelines. Any such determination and the reasons, therefore, shall be stated in writing in the applicant's case record.
2. Shared Expenses – If the applicant/recipient household shares shelter, utility, or other expenses with a non-applicant/recipient (i.e.: is part of a residential unit), then need should be determined on a pro rata share,



based on the total number of adults in the residential unit (e.g.: three adults in residential unit, but only one applies for assistance – shelter need is 1/3 of shelter allowance for household of three adults).

3. Payment Levels for Allowable Expenses – When adopting these guidelines, the municipal governing body shall establish payment levels for various allowable expenses which shall be based on actual local market conditions and costs. The payment levels shall be reviewed by the Welfare Official annually and modifications presented by the municipal governing body where market conditions have changed. (RSA 165:1, II)

## **NON RESIDENTS**

- **Eligibility**
- **Standards**
- **Verification**
- **Temporary or Emergency Aid**
- **Determination of Residence**
- **Return Home Transportation**
- **Recovery**

### **Eligibility**

Applicants who are temporarily in a municipality which is not their municipality of residence and who do not intend to make a residence there are nonetheless eligible to receive general assistance, provided they are poor and unable to support themselves. (RSA 165:1-c) No applicant shall be refused assistance solely on the basis of residence. (RSA 165:1)

### **Standards**

The application procedure, eligibility standards and standard of need shall be the same for non-residents as for residents.

### **Verification**

Verification records shall not be considered unavailable, nor the applicant's responsibility for providing such records relaxed, solely because they are located in the applicant's municipality of residence.

### **Temporary or Emergency Aid**

The standards for the fulfilling of immediate or emergency needs of non-residents and for temporary assistance pending final decision shall be the same as for residents.

### **Determination of Residence**

Determination of residence shall be made if the applicant requests return home transportation, or if the Welfare Official has reason to believe the applicant is a

resident of another New Hampshire municipality from which recovery can be made under RSA 165:20.

1. Minors – The residence of a minor applicant shall be presumed to be the residence of his/her custodial parent or guardian.
2. Adults – For competent adults, the standard for determining residence shall be the overall intent of the applicant, as set forth in the definition of “residence”. The statement of an applicant over 18 years of age as to his/her residence or intent to establish residence shall be accepted in the absence of strongly inconsistent evidence or behavior.

### **Return Home Transportation**

At the request of a non-resident applicant, any aid, temporary or otherwise, to which he/she would be otherwise entitled under the standards set forth in these guidelines, may be used by the Welfare Official to cause the applicant to be returned to his/her municipality of residence. (RSA 165:1-c)

### **Recovery**

Any aid given to a non-resident, including the costs of return home transportation, may be recovered from his/her municipality of residence.

## **MUNICIPAL WORK PROGRAMS (WORKFARE)**

- **Participation**
- **Reimbursement Rate**
- **Continuing Financial Liability**
- **Allowance for Work Search**
- **Workfare Program Attendance**
- **Workfare Hours**
- **Workers Compensation**

### **Participation**

Any recipient of general assistance who is able and not gainfully employed may be required to work for the municipality or an appropriate local human service agency at any available bona fide job this is within his/her capacity (RSA 165:31) for the purpose of reimbursement of benefits received. Participants in the Workfare Program are not considered employees of the municipality, and any work performed by Workfare participants does not give rise to any employee-employer relationship between the recipient /Workfare participant and the municipality.

### **Reimbursement Rate**

The Workfare participant shall be allotted the prevailing municipal wage for work performed, but in no case less than the minimum wage. No cash compensation shall be paid for Workfare participation; the wage value of all hours worked shall be used to reimburse the municipality for assistance given. No Workfare participant shall be required to work more hours than necessary to reimburse aid rendered.

### **Continuing Financial Liability**

If, due to lack of available municipal work or other good cause, a recipient does not work a sufficient number of hours to fully reimburse the municipality for the amount of his/her aid, the amount of aid received less the value of Workfare hours completed shall still be owed to the municipality.

### **Allowance for Work Search**

The municipality shall provide reasonable time during working hours for the Workfare participant to conduct a documented employment search.

## **Workfare Program Attendance**

With prior notice to the Welfare Official, a recipient may be excused from Workfare participant if he/she:

1. Has a conflicting job interview;
2. Has a conflicting interview at a service or welfare agency;
3. Has a medical appointment or illness;
4. As a parent or person "in loco parentis", must care for a child under the age of 5 years of age. A recipient responsible for a child age five (5) but under the age of 12 shall not be required to work during hours the child is not in school, if there is no responsible person available to provide care, and no other care is available;
5. Is unable to work due to mental or physical disability, as verified by the Welfare Official;
6. Must remain home because of illness or disability to another member of the household, as verified by the Welfare Official or;
7. Does not possess the materials or tools required to perform the task and the municipality fails to provide them. However, the Workfare participant should attempt to schedule appointments so as not to conflict with the Workfare Program and must notify his/her supervisor in advance of the appointment. The Welfare Official may require participants to provide documentation of their attendance at a conflicting interview or appointment.

## **Workfare Hours**

Workfare hours are subject to approval of the supervisor and the welfare director. Failure of the participant to adhere to the agreed Workfare hours (except for the reasons listed above) will prompt review of the recipient's eligibility for general assistance, and may result in a suspension or termination of assistance.

## **Workers Compensation**

The municipality shall provide workers compensation coverage to participants in Workfare Programs in the same manner such coverage is provided to other municipal employees, unless the governing body of the municipality has voted to adopt a guideline making the provisions of the workers compensation laws not applicable to Workfare Program participants. (RSA 281-A-2, VII(b))



## **BURIALS AND CREMATIONS**

The Welfare Official shall provide for proper burial or cremation at municipal expense, of persons found in the municipality at time of death, regardless of whether the deceased person ever applied for or received general assistance from any municipality. In such cases, assistance may be applied for on behalf of the deceased person, however, the application should be made before any burial or cremation expenses are incurred. The expense may be recovered from the deceased person's municipality of residence, or from a liable relative pursuant to RSA 165:3, II. If relative, other private persons, the state or other sources are unable to cover the entire burial/cremation expense, the municipality will pay up to \$750 for burial/cremation. (RSA 165:3 and RSA 165:1-b. See also RSA 165:27 and 165:27-a)

## **RIGHT TO NOTICE OF ADVERSE ACTION**

- **Right to a Written Decision**
- **Action Taken for Reasons Other Than Non-compliance with the Guidelines**
- **Suspension for Non-compliance with the Guidelines**

### **Right to a Written Decision**

All persons have a constitutional right to be free of unfair, arbitrary or unreasonable action taken by government. This includes applicants for and recipients of general assistance, whose aid has been determined, terminated or reduced. Every applicant and recipient shall be given a notice of every decision regarding assistance. The Welfare Official will make every effort to ensure that the applicant understands the decision.

### **Action Taken for Reasons Other Than Non-compliance with the Guidelines**

Whenever a decision is made to deny assistance or to refuse to grant the full amount of assistance required, a Notice of Decision shall be given or mailed to the applicant either the same day or next work day following the making of the decision or within five (5) working days from the time the applicant is filled out and submitted, whichever occurs first.

In any case where the Welfare Official decides to terminate or reduce assistance for reasons other than non-compliance with the guidelines, the director shall send notice at least seven (7) days in advance<sup>3</sup> of the effective date of the decision to the recipient stating the intended action.

The notice required by paragraphs 1 and 2 above shall contain:

1. A clear statement of the reasons for the denial or proposed termination or reduction.
2. A statement advising the recipient of his/her right to a fair hearing and that any request for a fair hearing must be made in writing within five (5) working days.
3. A form on which the recipient may request a fair hearing.

4. A statement advising the recipient of the time limits which must be met in order to receive a fair hearing.
5. A statement that assistance may continue, if there was initial eligibility, until the date of hearing, if requested by the claimant. Aid must be repaid if the claimant fails to prevail at the hearing.

### **Suspension for Non-compliance with the Guidelines**

NOTE: This procedure has been developed by the Local Government Center in an effort to set forth a clear process for suspension of assistance for willful non-compliance with guidelines, under RSA 165:1-b. There are differing opinions as to the specific procedures required by the statute. The procedures outlined in this section are not specifically mandated by RSA 165:1-b, but are the Local Government Center's attempt to create a legally sound compromise.

### **Due Process**

Recipients must comply with these guidelines and the reasonable requests of Welfare Official. The Welfare Official must enforce the guidelines while ensuring that all recipients and applicants receive due process. Recipients should be given reasonable notice of the conditions and requirements of eligibility and continuing eligibility and notice that non-compliance may result in termination or suspension.

### **Conditions**

Any applicant/recipient otherwise eligible for assistance shall become ineligible under RSA 165:1-b if he/she willfully and without good cause fails to comply with the requirements of these guidelines relating to the obligation to:

- a. Disclose and provide verification of income, resources, or other material financial data, including any changes in this information:
- b. Participate in the Workfare Program to the extent assigned by the Welfare Official:

- c. Comply with the work search requirements imposed by the Welfare Official and:
- d. Apply for other public assistance, as required by the welfare director.

### **First Notice**

No recipient otherwise eligible shall be suspended for non-compliance with conditions unless he/she has been given a written notice of the actions required in order to remain eligible and a seven-day period within which to comply. The first notice should be given at the time of the Notice of Decision and thereafter as conditions change. Additional notice of actions required should also be given, as eligibility is re-determined, but without an additional seven day period unless new actions are required. (RSA 165:1-b, II)

### **Non-compliance**

If a recipient willfully and without good cause fails to come into compliance during the seven day period, or willfully falls into non-compliance within 30 days from receipt of a first notice, the Welfare Official shall give the recipient a suspension notice.

If a recipient falls into non-compliance for the first time more than 30 days after receipt of a first notice, the Welfare Official shall give the recipient a new first notice with a new seven day period to comply before giving the recipient the suspension notice. (RSA 165:1-b, III)

### **Suspension Notice**

Written notice to a recipient that he/she is suspended from assistance due to failure to comply with the conditions required in a first notice shall include:

- a. A list of the guidelines with which the recipient is not in compliance and a description of those actions necessary for compliance:
- b. The period of suspension (see Paragraph 6 below);

- c. Notice of the right to a fair hearing on the issue of willful non-compliance and that such request must be made in writing within five (5) days of receipt of the suspension notice;
- d. A statement that assistance may continue in accordance with the prior eligibility determination until the fair hearing decision is made if the recipient so requests on the request form for the fair hearing, however, if the recipient fails to prevail at the hearing; 1) the suspension will start after the decision, and 2) such aid must be repaid by the recipient and;
- e. A form on which the individual may request a fair hearing and the continuance of assistance pending the outcome.

### **Suspension Period**

The suspension period for failure to comply with these guidelines shall last:

- a. Either seven (7) days or fourteen (14) days if the recipient has had a prior suspension which ended within the past six months, and
- b. Until the recipient complies with the guidelines if the recipient, upon the expiration of the seven (7) or fourteen (14) day suspension, continues to fail to carry out the specific actions set forth in the notice.
- c. Notwithstanding the above, a recipient who has been suspended for non-compliance for at least six (6) months may file a new application for assistance without coming back into compliance.

### **Fair Hearing on Continuing Non-compliance**

A recipient who has been suspended until he/she complies with the guidelines may request a fair hearing to resolve a dispute over whether or not he/she has satisfactorily complied with the required guidelines; however no assistance shall be available.

### **Compliance After Suspension**

A recipient who has been subject to a suspension and who has come back into compliance shall have his/her assistance resumed, provided he/she is still otherwise eligible. The Notice of Decision stating that assistance has been resumed should again set for the actions required to remain eligible for assistance, but need not provide a seven (7) day period for compliance unless new conditions have been imposed.

## **FAIR HEARINGS**

- **Requests**
- **Time Limits for Hearings**
- **The Fair Hearing Officer(s)**
- **Fair Hearing Procedures**
- **Decisions**



## **Requests**

A request for a fair hearing is a written expression, by the applicant or recipient, or any person acting for him/her, to the effect that he/she wants an opportunity to present his/her case to a higher authority. When a request for assistance is denied or when an applicant desires to challenge a decision made by the Welfare Official relative to the receipt of assistance, the applicant must present a request for a fair hearing to the Welfare Official within five (5) working days of receipt of the Notice of Decision at issue. (RSA 165:1-b, III)

## **Time Limits for Hearings**

Hearings requested by claimants must be held within seven (7) working days of the receipt of the request. The Welfare Official shall give notice to the claimant setting the time and location of the hearing. This notice must be given to the claimant at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the hearing, or mailed to the claimant at least seventy-two (72) hours in advance of the hearing.

## **The Fair Hearing Officer(s)**

The fair hearing officer or officers may be chosen by the administrative assistance of the Board of Selectmen or the chairman of the Board of Board of Selectmen.

The person(s) serving as the fair hearing authority must:

1. Not have participated in the decision causing dissatisfaction;
2. Be impartial;
3. Be sufficiently skilled in interviewing to be able to obtain evidence and facts necessary for a fair determination, and;
4. Be capable of evaluating all evidence fairly and realistically, to explain to the claimant the laws and regulations under which the Welfare Official operated, and to interpret to the Welfare Official any evidence of unsound, unclear, or inequitable policies, practices, or action.

## **Fair Hearing Procedures**

1. All fair hearings shall be conducted in such a manner as to ensure due process of law. Fair hearings shall not be conducted according to strict rules of evidence. The burden of proof shall be on the claimant, who shall be required to establish his/her case by a preponderance of the evidence.
2. The Welfare Official responsible for the disputed decision shall attend the hearing and testify about his/her actions and the reasons therefore.
3. Both parties shall be given the opportunity to offer evidence and explain their positions as fully and completely as they wish. The claimant shall have the opportunity to present his/her case or, at the claimant's option, with the aid of others, and to bring witnesses, to establish all pertinent fact, to advance any arguments without undue interference, to question or refute testimony or evidence, including the opportunity to confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses.
4. A claimant or his/her duly authorized representative has the right to examine, prior to a fair hearing, all records, papers and documents from the claimant's case file which either party may wish to introduce at the fair hearing, as well as any available documents not contained in the case file but relevant to the welfare director's action of which the claimant complains. The claimant may introduce any such documents, papers, or records into evidence. No record, paper or document, which the claimant has requested to review but has not been allowed to examine prior to the hearing, shall be introduced at the hearing or become part of the record.
5. The Welfare Official (or a duly authorized representative) shall have the right to examine at the fair hearing all documents on

which the claimant plans to rely at the fair hearing and may request a 24-hour continuance if such documents contain evidence not previously provided or disclosed by the claimant. Should the applicant have a new documentation relevant to the disputed decision, he/she may reapply for assistance and file a written withdrawal of the fair hearing request.

6. The decision of the fair hearing officer(s) must be based solely on the record, in light of these guidelines. Evidence, both written and oral, which is admitted at the hearing, shall be the sole contents of the record. The fair hearing officer(s) shall not review the case record or other materials prior to introduction at the hearing.
7. The parties may stipulate to any facts.
8. All fair hearings may be tape-recorded and retained for six (6) months.

### **Decisions**

1. Fair Hearing decisions shall be rendered within seven (7) working days of the hearing. Decisions shall be in writing setting forth the reasons for decision and the facts on which the fair hearing officer(s) relied in reaching the decision. A copy of the decision shall be mailed or delivered to the claimant and to the Welfare Official.
2. Fair hearing decisions will be rendered on the basis of the officer(s)'s findings of fact, these guidelines and state and federal law. The fair hearing decision shall set forth appropriate relief.
3. The decision shall be dated. In the case of a hearing to review denial of aid, the decision is retroactive to the date of the action being appealed. If a claimant fails to prevail at the hearing, the assistance given pending the hearing shall be a debt owed by the individual to the municipality.

4. The Welfare Official shall keep all fair hearing decisions on file in chronological order.
5. None of the procedures specified herein shall limit any right of the applicant or recipient to subsequent court action to review or challenge the adverse decision.

## **LIENS**

- **REAL ESTATE**
- **CIVIL JUDGEMENTS – RSA 165:28-a**

## **Real Estate**

The law requires the municipality to place a lien for welfare aid received on any real estate owned by an assisted person in all cases except for just cause. (This section does not authorize the placement of a lien on the real estate of legally liable relatives as defined by RSA 165:19). The Welfare Official with the assistance of the Board of Selectmen shall file a Notice of Lien with the County Registry of Deeds, complete with the owner's name and a description of the property sufficient to identify it. Interest at the rate of 6% per year shall be charged on the amount of money constituting the lien commencing one year after the date the lien is filed, unless waived by the municipality. The lien shall not be enforced so long as the real estate is occupied as the sole residence of the assisted person his/her surviving spouse, or his/her surviving children who are under the age of 18 years or blind or permanently and totally disabled. At such time as the lien may become enforceable, the Welfare Official shall attempt to contact the attorney handling the real estate or estate before enforcing the lien. Upon repayment of a lien, the municipality must file written notice of the discharge of the lien with the County Registry of Deeds. (RSA 165:28)

## **Civil Judgments – RSA 165:28-a**

1. A municipality shall be entitled to a lien upon property passing under the terms of a will or by intestate succession, a property settlement, or a civil judgment for personal injuries (except Workers Compensation) awarded any person granted assistance by the municipality for the amount of assistance granted by the municipality.
2. The municipality shall be entitled to the lien only if the assistance was granted no more than six (6) years before the receipt of the inheritance or the award of the property settlement or civil judgment. When the Welfare Official becomes aware of such a claim against a civil judgment, he/she shall contact the attorney representing the recipient.
3. This lien shall take precedence over all other claims.

## **RECOVERY OF ASSISTANCE**

- **Recovery from Responsible Relatives**
- **Recovery from the Municipality of Residence**
- **Recovery from Former Recipient's Income**
- **Recovery from State and Federal Sources**

The Welfare Official shall seek to recover money expended to assist eligible applicants. There shall be no delay, refusal to assist, reduction or termination of assistance while the Welfare Official is pursuing procedural or statutory avenues to secure reimbursement. Any legal action to recover must be filed in a court within six (6) years after the expenditure. (RSA 165:25)

### **Recovery from Responsible Relatives**

The amount of money spent by a municipality to assist a recipient who has a father, mother, stepfather, stepmother, husband, wife or child (who is no longer a minor) of sufficient ability to also support the recipient, may be recovered from the liable relative. Sufficient ability shall be deemed to exist when the relative's weekly income is more than sufficient to provide a reasonable subsistence compatible with decency and health. The Welfare Official may determine "in kind" assistance or the provision of product/services to the client is acceptable as a relative's response to liability for support. Written notice of money spent in support of a recipient must be given to the liable relative. The Welfare Official shall make reasonable efforts to give such written notice prior to the giving of aid, but aid to which an applicant is entitled under these guidelines, shall not be delayed due to inability to contact possibly liable relatives. (RSA 165:19)

### **Recovery from the Municipality of Residence**

The Welfare Official shall seek to recover from the municipality of residence the amount of money spent by the municipality to assist a recipient who has a residence in another municipality. Written notice of money spent in support of a recipient must be given to the Welfare Official of the municipality of residence. In any civil action for recovery brought under RSA 165:20, the court shall award



costs to the prevailing party. RSA 165:19 and 20. (See RSA 165:20-a providing for arbitration of such disputes between communities). (RSA 165:20)

### **Recovery from Former Recipient's Income**

A former recipient who is returned to an income status after receiving assistance may be required to reimburse the municipality for the assistance provided, if such reimbursement can be made without financial hardship. (RSA 165:20-b)

### **Recovery from State and Federal Sources**

The amount of money spent by a municipality to support a recipient who has made initial application for SSI and has signed HHS FORM 151 "AUTHORIZATION FOR REIMBURSEMENT OF INTERIM ASSISTANCE" shall be recovered through the SSA and the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Service.

Prescription expenses paid by the municipality for applicants who have applied for Medicaid shall be recovered through the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services if and when the applicant is approved for medical coverage.

### **Delayed State Claims**

For those recipients of general assistance deemed eligible for state assistance, New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services shall reimburse a municipality the amount of general assistance as a result of delays in processing within the federally mandated time periods. Any claims for reimbursement shall be held until the end of the fiscal year and may be reimbursed on a pro-rated basis dependent upon the total claims filed per year. RSA 165:20-c. Form 340 "REQUEST FOR STATE REIMBURSEMENT" may be obtained from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services for the purpose.

## **APPLICATION OF RENTS PAID BY THE MUNICIPALITY**

- **Payment Arrears**
- **Order of Priority**
- **Procedure**

Whenever the owner of property rented to a person receiving general assistance from the municipality is in arrears in sewer, water, electricity, or tax payments to the municipality, the municipality may apply the assistance which the property owner would have received in payment of rent on behalf of such assisted person to the property owner's delinquent balances, regardless of whether such delinquent balances are in respect of property occupied by the assisted person. (RSA 165:4-a)

### **Payment Arrears**

A payment shall be considered in arrears if more than thirty (30) days have elapsed since the mailing of the bill, or in the case of real estate taxes, if interest has begun to accrue pursuant to RSA 76:13. (RSA 165:4-a)

### **Order of Priority**

Delinquent balances will be offset in order of the following priority: 1) taxes 2) sewer, and 3) water.

### **Procedure**

1. The Welfare Official will issue a voucher on behalf of the tenant to the landlord for the allowed amount of rent. The voucher will indicate any amount to be applied to a delinquent balance owed by the landlord, specifying which delinquency and referring to the authority of RSA 165:4-a.
2. The Welfare Official will issue a duplicate voucher to the appropriate department (i.e. tax collector, sewer department, water precinct, municipal electric facility) which shall forward the voucher to the treasurer for payment. Upon receipt of payment, the department will issue a receipt of payment to the delinquent landlord.

## **FORMS AND PAYMENT STANDARDS**

The Welfare Official shall determine what forms required to implement these standards and shall attach them as appendages to these guidelines. Forms and current payment standards for all standards of need calculations shall be available in the Human Services/Welfare Office.

## **EFFECTIVE DATES AND AMENDMENTS**

These guidelines shall apply to determinations of General Assistance after their adoption by the Bristol Board of Board of Selectmen. Amendments to these guidelines may be made by the Board of Selectmen at any proper meeting and by the Welfare Official as permitted by these guidelines.

**ADOPTED BY THE BRISTOL BOARD OF BOARD OF SELECTMEN:**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

**Rick Alpers, Chairman**



\_\_\_\_\_

**Jeffrey Shackett, Vice Chairman**



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**Philip Dion, Selectman**



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**Joseph Denning, Selectman**



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**Donald Milbrand, Selectman**

**ADDENDUM TO TOWN OF BRISTOL NH GUIDELINES  
AS OF 8/24/2011 (DATE OF APPROVAL BY THE  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN)**

<b>STYLE</b>	<b>MAXIMUM ALLOTMENT LEVEL</b>	<b>MAXIMUM ALLOTMENT LEVEL WITH UTILITY</b>
Efficiency	\$440	\$625
1 Bedroom	\$420	\$675
2 Bedroom	\$525	\$800
3 Bedroom	\$600	\$940
4 Bedroom	\$700	\$1050
Lot Rent	\$250	\$250

**Basic Phone/Bundle Limits:**

Basic TV - \$23.95

Basic Internet: \$34.95

Basic Phone - \$44.95

Total bundle limit for everything above: \$65.00

Cell phone limit: \$45