

**OTTER TAIL COUNTY EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM POLICY**  
(Effective 7/1/03) approved by county board 7/15/03  
revision's made effective 1/1/2008 are underlined and in italics.

**1. Emergency Assistance Availability**

- ❑ Otter Tail County only will grant Emergency Assistance when funding for the program is available through the designated portion of the MFIP Consolidated Support Services Fund, as established by the county agency.
- ❑ Availability of funding will be at the sole determination and discretion of the county agency.
- ❑ The county agency may establish proportional distribution of Emergency Assistance funding either monthly or quarterly, based on prior historical expenditure patterns.
- ❑ The county agency director may adjust the distributions or eligibility factors dependent upon current expenditure patterns, with the goals of allowing full year funding and expending the monies allocated for Emergency Assistance.
- ❑ The maximum amount of Emergency assistance that may be approved and issued cannot exceed 3 times the transitional cash grant standard under MFIP for household unit size. Supervisor approval is required for all approvals.
- ❑ An exception to the maximum amount limitation may be made for extreme situations or emergencies beyond household unit's control. Supervisor or director must give approval before payment is made.
- ❑ Supervisor approval is required on all approvals.

**2. Eligibility for Emergency Assistance**

- ❑ Otter Tail County will grant emergency assistance to a household unit that meets the eligibility criteria established by this policy.
- ❑ For purposes of this emergency assistance program, a household unit is defined as all individuals who live together in the same location with a pregnant woman or with a child (defined as one who is less than 18 years old OR under the age of 19 and a full-time student in a secondary school or equivalent level of vocational or technical training, designed to fit students for gainful employment) who is living with an eligible caregiver as defined in Minn. Stat. Section 256J.08.
- ❑ Emergency Assistance also may be granted in order to reunite an eligible caregiver with a child under the age of 19 who was living with the caregiver within six months before the date of application as long as the other eligibility criteria in this policy is met.

- ❑ Emergency Assistance is only available to a household unit during one 30-day period in a consecutive 12 - month period from date of approval in Otter Tail County or approval in any other county in Minnesota. This includes any Emergency Assistance received since July 2002.
- ❑ In the past 12 months, no member of the household unit has received any type of Emergency Assistance, not limited to EA, but including EGA and EMSA.
- ❑ The county agency must try to resolve the household unit's emergency situation in the most cost-effective manner.
- ❑ A household unit without resources available to meet emergency needs identified in Section 5 of this policy may be eligible for emergency assistance when the household unit meets ALL of the following conditions:
  1. Household unit income is below 175% of the federal poverty guidelines for current month and the two months prior to month of application.
  2. At least one household unit member must have resided in Minnesota for at least 30 days.
  3. Must currently be a resident of Otter Tail County.
  4. At least one child or pregnant woman in the unit must meet the MFIP citizenship requirements in Minn. Stat. Section 256J.11.
  5. The household unit must not currently be in sanction *or have an "intent to sanction"* or in the two months prior to month of application have been in a disqualification, sanction status or refusal to accept employment or training for employment, voluntary quit or discharge due to employee conduct. The household unit must be unable to resolve the emergency by combining income, liquid assets, assets they can liquidate in time to help, including equity loans on homes and vehicles, recreational vehicles (boats, motorcycles, campers, etc.)
  6. The household unit must have paid 40% of its gross income minus allowable work expenses (mandatory payroll deductions, child care and transportation expense (allowed expense to follow IRS mileage rate of 50.5 cents per mile eff. 1/1/08) verified child support payments) toward shelter costs, utility expenses in the two months prior to month of application, and the current month of application. Count only payments made directly by the household. (Energy assistance/crisis payments are not allowed). Count the gross income of all household unit members, there is no excluded income. The only allowable deductions from self-employment income are self-employment expenses.
  7. In order for emergency assistance to be approved and issued, the assistance must resolve the crisis, not prolong it.
- ❑ If an ongoing cash recipient is approved for EA, their cash assistance payment will be issued in the form of vendor payments for shelter and utilities up to their cash assistance amount for a minimum of 6 months if the client meets the criteria outlined in Combined Manual reference 0024.09.

### **3. Processing Emergency Assistance Applications and Payments**

- ❑ To apply for Emergency Assistance: FOR APPLICANT HOUSEHOLDS: If people are not currently receiving cash assistance, they must complete a CAF. FOR PARTICIPANTS: If people are currently receiving cash assistance, they do not have to complete an entire CAF. However, they must complete page 1 of the CAF plus the appropriate pages of the CAF statement of need (emer. Application packet) IF the unit did not complete an HRF in the past 30 days, they must complete the appropriate pages of the CAF (emer. Appl packet).
- ❑ When page 1 of the CAF lists people in the EA unit who are not currently receiving cash assistance, the unit must complete an entire caf.
  - The processing standard for Emergency Assistance is 30 days from date of application. All requested verifications must be received within the 30 days, or application will be denied.
- ❑ Within 15 days after the county receives the completed application and necessary verifications, the unit will be notified in writing of approval, denial or if still pending.  
**\*\*note\*\***Households that meet the vendor/protective payment criteria outlined in C.M. 0024.09 will have their shelter and utilities vendor paid for a minimum of 6 months.

### **4. Verification Requirements**

- ❑ Required verification of all household unit members may include income, assets, living expenses, living situation (landlord statement), and children who are present in the home.
- ❑ Other documentation will be requested only as necessary to verify validity of need or payment to vendor.
- ❑ Failure to provide requested documentation would be valid grounds for denial of a request for EA.

### **5. Needs Covered under Emergency Assistance**

- ❑ Rent: the county agency may issue emergency assistance for rent to prevent eviction from rented or leased shelter.
  1. Payment of current months rent may be paid only if household unit does not have adequate income/asset's to pay the rent.
  2. Emergency Assistance may be denied if the county determines the family units anticipated income will not cover continued payment for the shelter.
  3. Late fees will not be paid by emergency assistance.
  4. Eviction's must be a legal eviction; must follow eviction terms in lease agreement or when there is no lease, then by proper notice, notice must be give unit one month and one day before eviction takes place.

- Damage deposits
  1. Emergency Assistance may be issued for damage deposits when necessary to alleviate the emergency.
  2. Damage deposit is not to exceed 1 months rent.
  3. Entrance fee limited to damage deposit + one months rent.
  4. Deleted policy of returned damage deposits to align with state law governing tenant and landlord relationships as contained in Minn. Stat. 504B. However, any deposit paid out prior to 7/1/03 could be returned to the county as contained in Minn. Stat. 256J.48.
  
- Mortgage:
  1. Property must be owned and occupied by unit
  2. Unit must be refused refinancing through bank or other lending institution.
  3. EA will only be issued if Mortgage Company will accept assistance payment along with any payment made by unit or other funding source as payment in full.
  4. Property taxes may be paid for back taxes when property is in foreclosure or forfeiture.
  
- Utility Expenses:
 

Emergency Assistance may be paid for unit that has had a termination or threatened termination of water/sewer; electric; gas or heating service (can include garbage; also, wood if that's their heat source)

  1. Utility must be in household unit member's name.
  2. Utility provider confirms that they will continue or restore utility with the amount of EA issuance and any payments made by the unit.
  
- Utility deposits:
  1. Utility deposits may be paid by emergency assistance if needed to reconnect service or if needed when moving to a new residence.
  2. Deleted policy of vendor's returning utility deposits to county when payment was made after 7/1/03. See Damage deposit for specific state law references. Utility deposits paid out prior to 7/1/03 can still be recovered by the county.
  3. Emergency Assistance will not be used for well or sewer repair or replacements.
  
- Moving Expenses:
  1. Move must be cost effective
  2. Moving costs may include moving personal items/utility connections, rent and deposits.
  3. Move must be employment related.
  4. The county agency must authorize expenses before the unit incurs them.