



Memories Start *Here*

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What is General Assistance? General Assistance (GA) is an emergency support program offered by each municipality in Maine to help eligible residents meet their basic needs during times of financial crisis. Assistance may be provided for essential items such as food, clothing, housing, fuel, electricity, potable water, non-elective medical care prescribed by a physician, necessary over-the-counter medications, and basic telephone service when required for medical or employment-related reasons. In some cases, property taxes may also be covered if a tax lien poses an immediate threat to the applicant's residence. Additional goods or services may be considered if deemed essential by the municipality. It's important to note that GA is a **program of last resort**, intended for emergency situations only. It is not designed for ongoing, monthly support. Whenever possible, applicants will be referred to other available resources to resolve their emergency before GA assistance is considered. You must apply for General Assistance in the city or town where you are a resident. A resident is defined as a person who is physically present in Old Orchard Beach with the intention of remaining in Old Orchard Beach to maintain or establish a home and who has no other residence.

How can I apply? Applications are made by appointment only. Call the General Assistance Administrator at 207-937-5637 to schedule an appointment. Office hours for appointments are Monday 12pm-4pm, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9am-4pm. Applications may also be dropped off at the town hall. There is a secure mailbox at the clerk's window where applications or supporting materials can be safely deposited. The Town Hall hours are Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 8am-4pm and Tuesdays 8am-6pm.

What if I have an emergency and it's after hours? If it is on a weekend or after hours and you have a life-threatening emergency, you may contact Old Orchard Beach Police dispatch at 207-934-4911. They can contact the GA Administrator if needed.

How long does it take to apply? Your first visit will require the completion of an application and an interview after the application. The process typically takes between 45 minutes to one hour.

What information will I need when I apply? Your General Assistance budget will be based on the 30-day period following your application. We will also look back to 30 days (potentially longer depending on the assistance sought) before you apply, to see what money you received, and how you spent it. You will need to provide:

Identification for all adults and Social Security cards of all household members

Passport/Visa and Immigration paperwork (I-589, etc.)

DHHS benefit letter

Income and expenses

Receipts for the past 30 days (repeat applicants)- MUST be itemized receipts

Current bank statements

Landlord verification

Is the information I give on my application kept confidential? Yes. Your application and any case records pertaining to it are strictly confidential by law. You, the applicant, your attorney and certain government personnel may review your records. The town will need to know who to pay your GA vouchers to, such as your landlord. Signing the General Assistance application gives the GA Administrator permission to contact people who can verify your income and other necessary information. The general public cannot review your records unless you have given your written permission.

If I receive Food Stamps, TANF, Social Security, Veterans Benefits, Unemployment or Worker's Compensation am I still able to receive General Assistance? Maybe. You would want to apply and if your income is less than your necessary expenses and the program's income maximum, you will be evaluated.

When will I get help? We will issue you a written decision as to your eligibility within 24 hours after you apply and we will promptly furnish any assistance for which you are determined eligible within our guidelines. However, please be aware that if you have not furnished sufficient information, including verification required, to enable us to determine eligibility, we must consider your application incomplete and find you ineligible for any assistance until you reapply with adequate information

How much assistance can I get? The General Assistance Program is regulated by State Law, which has set an overall maximum amount of assistance that a household can receive. In addition, each municipality's GA guidelines contain maximum amounts of assistance allowable for each category of assistance including, rent, food, electricity, etc. We cannot exceed those established maximums even though household expenses for various items may exceed those amounts. To be eligible, your income must fall below the overall maximum level of assistance for a household your size, and your income must also be less than the amount you need to pay for basic necessities using Town guidelines.

If I am eligible will I get cash or a check? General Assistance does not furnish money directly to the eligible person or household. All assistance is issued in the form of Town vouchers payable to vendors who have provided your household with goods or services.

How long can I continue to get help? At the time an applicant receives a decision on their application, the administrator will inform them of their responsibilities for being eligible in the future. The period covered by your application and any assistance given under that application cannot exceed 30 days. However, there is no limitation on how many times a person can reapply and continue to be found eligible for assistance. The General Assistance program budgets your needs for 30 days forward from the date of your application. Upon a repeat application for General Assistance, the client must provide documentation (receipts) of all their spending over the past thirty days. The amount of income from all sources received by the household must be provided. The Applicant must show that they have utilized all potential resources the administrator referred them to on their notice of eligibility.

What would cause me to be ineligible or disqualified from the General Assistance Program? General Assistance is a program that encourages clients to do all they can to prevent needing future assistance. An applicant may be found ineligible to receive general assistance if they: misspend their money on items that are not considered basic necessities (this will count as money available to the household and will affect the amount of eligibility); if a client forfeits a benefit, this benefit will not be replaced; if a client quits or is fired from a job, they are disqualified for a 120 day period; for willfully making a false representation about their eligibility; for not providing or permitting the administrator to gather necessary verification and documentation as required; as well as others.