



Applications

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Maine

Applications

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Filing and Processing Applications

All persons have a right to file an application for cash assistance.

Right provided for in statute
Right provided for in regulation

The same application for cash assistance is used throughout the state.

The statewide application is a joint application for:

Food Stamps
Medicaid
Parents as Scholars

State policy sets standards of timeliness for processing applications:

Applications must be acted upon within 30 days.

The agency is required to issue a written decision on applications.

Pre-Application Requirements

The state does not impose requirements that must be met before a family can submit an application for cash assistance.

Pending Application Requirements

The state imposes pending application requirements that a family must meet while its cash assistance application is pending. Failure to meet these requirements results in denial of the application.

The pending application requirements are:

- Sign personal responsibility contract
- Attend orientation session
- Agree to cooperate with child support enforcement

The following applicants are exempt from pending application requirements:

- Domestic violence circumstances prevent safe attendance at orientation in office; individual unable to attend orientation due to circumstances beyond her/his control (application processed and attendance deadline extended)

Personal Responsibility Contracts

Applicants and/or recipients are required to sign a personal responsibility contract.

Applicants must sign a personal responsibility contract:
While the application is pending

The personal responsibility contract is:

- A standard form listing obligations
- The product of individualized assessment or worker discretion

The following people must sign the contract:

- Head of household
- Both parents in "two-parent" families
- Non-parent caretaker relative; non-parent caretaker relative who is seeking assistance

The following applicants and recipients are exempt from developing and signing a contract:

- No exemptions specified

The following obligations can be included in the contract:

- Agreement to participate in work activities
- Immunization or preventative health requirements
- Cooperation with child support enforcement
- Participation in life skills or parenting classes
- Referral to parenting activities and health care services

The contract does not include a state or county agreement to provide services.

A sanction is imposed if an applicant or recipient refuses to sign a contract. The sanction is the same as the sanction for non-compliance with work requirements.

Employability Plans

Applicants must sign an employability plan, i.e. a plan that covers only work requirements, as follows:

The applicant must sign the employability plan either while the application is pending or after eligibility is determined, depending when s/he meets with the ASPIRE worker after orientation.

An individual develops an employability plan with:

A worker at an office separate from the TANF office (ASPIRE-TANF worker)

The following people must sign an employability plan:

Head of household
Both parents in "two-parent" families

The following applicants and recipients are exempt from developing and/or signing an employability plan:

Individual exempt from work requirements

Employability plans include a state or county agreement to provide services, and the services are listed.

A sanction is imposed if an applicant or recipient refuses to sign an employability plan. The sanction is the same as the sanction for non-compliance with work requirements.

Formal Diversion Programs

The state operates a formal diversion program.

Current cash assistance recipients may not participate in the diversion program.

The maximum cash payment is three months' worth of benefits.

The size of the diversion payment is calculated as follows:

Three months of benefits, based on the same rules as for TANF

The income and asset eligibility criteria for the diversion program differ from those applied to applicants for ongoing cash assistance as follows:
Earnings are considered in initial eligibility determination but not in benefit level computation.

Eligibility for a cash diversion payment is decided based upon:

Objective written criteria

A family that receives a diversion payment:

Is permanently ineligible for another diversion payment

If a family receives cash assistance during the period of ineligibility, the diversion cash payment is recouped as follows:

Any overlapping benefits are an overpayment and are treated like other unintentional overpayments. They are subject to 10 percent recoupment from TANF assistance (or up to 30 percent recoupment if household has other income).

A diversion payment does not count as using up any months of time-limited assistance.

When a family receives a diversion payment, its child support rights are not assigned to the state.

Families that receive diversion payments are eligible to receive:

The estimated scale of the diversion program in terms of the proportion of TANF applicants receiving diversion payments is:
Less than one percent

Emergency Assistance

The state provides emergency assistance to families that are receiving TANF cash assistance as follows:

Eviction prevention

Prevent utility shutoff or restore service

Emergency housing assistance

Provide or replace necessary household items destroyed or rendered unusable due to disaster; mortgage payments, when necessary to avoid foreclosure; repair or replace inadequate, broken, or worn wells, chimney, septic system, furnace, heating stove, or other related essential service which infringes on family's ability to cope with the elements; special equipment or clothing necessary because of an individual's inability to perform daily living functions due to mental or physical incapacity for items not covered by Medicaid or Vocational Rehabilitation.

The state provides emergency assistance to families that are eligible for but not receiving TANF cash assistance as follows:

- Eviction prevention
- Prevent utility shutoff or restore service
- Emergency housing assistance
- Temporary shelter for homeless families
- Provide or replace necessary household items destroyed or rendered unusable due to disaster; mortgage payments, when necessary to avoid foreclosure; repair or replace inadequate, broken, or worn wells, chimney, septic system, furnace, heating stove, or other related essential service which infringes on family's ability to cope with the elements; special equipment or clothing necessary because of an individual's inability to perform daily living functions due to mental or physical incapacity for items not covered by Medicaid or Vocational Rehabilitation.

The state provides emergency assistance to families that are not eligible for TANF cash assistance as follows:

- Eviction prevention
- Prevent utility shutoff or restore service
- Emergency housing assistance
- Provide or replace necessary household items destroyed or rendered unusable due to disaster; mortgage payments, when necessary to avoid foreclosure; repair or replace inadequate, broken, or worn wells, chimney, septic system, furnace, heating stove, or other related essential service which infringes on family's ability to cope with the elements; special equipment or clothing necessary because of an individual's inability to perform daily living functions due to mental or physical incapacity for items not covered by Medicaid or Vocational Rehabilitation.

Note: Information on exemptions from work requirements and sanctions for noncompliance with work requirements will be available in the Work and Sanction Provisions sections later this year.