

## **Winnebago County General Assistance/Relief Guidelines**

The Code of Iowa outlines the legal basis for the General Assistance/Relief Program in counties. This section deals basically with Chapter 251 and 252 of the Code. The General Assistance/Relief Program is administered by the General Assistance/Relief Director and that person reports to the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors.

SECTION 1, CATEGORIES. There shall be two (2) categories of general relief. They are:

- A. Emergency relief for needy persons;
- B. Relief for poor person; and

SECTION 2, DEFINITIONS. For use in this guideline, certain terms or words used herein shall be interpreted or defined as follows:

A. "Needy person" is a person or the family unit of that person and is domiciled in Winnebago County, Iowa.

B. "Poor person" is a person of the family unit of that person and is domiciled in Winnebago County, Iowa, and who, because of physical or mental disability, is unable to engage in gainful employment and otherwise cannot make a living.

C. "Relief" also means food, rent, shelter, lights and medical attention. Food does not include cigarettes or alcoholic beverages but does include laundry soap, household cleaners, and other items of non-food nature used for personal hygiene.

D. "Net Worth" includes income or monies from any source, monies due, savings and other deposits, stocks, bonds, real estate, cash value of life insurance policies, jewelry, and the value of all other real and personal property. The following property shall be exempt from consideration; household furniture; tools and equipment used for self-support; one motor vehicle per family unit not to exceed \$4,500.00; a second vehicle can be considered if necessary for employment or medial purpose; burial lots or irrevocable trust fund; homestead used as a place of residence.

E. "Family Unit" or "Household" means the individual applying for relief and all members of his or her immediate family, include spouse, children under 18 years of age, all occupants and children over 18 years of age who are dependent upon the applicant and anyone else who is a dependent of the applicant for federal tax purposes, provided that such person physically reside with the applicant. A person must be 18 years of age to receive General Assistance. The exception of this policy is an emancipated person due to marriage. All minor children under 18 years of age must receive their assistance from their parents unless they can provide a marriage license to determine them to be adults.

F. "Liquid Assets" means cash or any other item of net worth of the family unit that can be readily converted to cash within seven (7) days. Gross income at 100 percent Federal Poverty Guidelines.

G. "Awaiting approval and receipt" means a poor person who has applied for relief under the state or federal law; who has pursued that application with due diligence; and who has not had that application denied. This does not include an appeal of a denial of benefits. It does include a person who has had an application denied and who reapplies after eighteen (18) consecutive months have expired from the date of denial.

SECTION 3. FORM. The relief shall be purchased directly from a vendor.

SECTION 4. ELIGIBILITY OF NEEDY PERSON. Emergency relief is to be provided a needy person who is in need of immediate relief, cannot obtain relief from any other source and whose income or assistance from a state or federal program has been delayed or not actually received

by the person because of reasons not attributable to that person and who does not have liquid assets of the family unit from which to pay for the items of relief that can be provided.

SECTION 5. ELIGIBILITY OF POOR PERSONS. Relief is to be provided poor persons who are in need of immediate relief, cannot obtain relief from any other source, whose family unit net worth is less than Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00), and who are eligible for, and are awaiting approval and receipt of, assistance under programs provided by the state or federal law, or whose actual needs, as defined within the limitations imposed by this guideline, cannot be fully met by the assistance furnished under such programs.

SECTION 6. LEVEL OF BENEFITS. The maximum level of benefits to be provided for each item of relief for each person or that person's family unit shall be:

A. Food

1. Information will be given to individual regarding food banks, SNAP program and local charities.

B. Shelter

1. \$550.00 with utilities; \$550.00 without utilities per month maximum benefit or if other less expensive housing is available as determined by the Director of Relief the amount may be reduced or the Director of Relief may require said persons to rent other available housing at a lesser cost. If said persons do not wish to comply with the request to live in the less expensive housing the Director of Relief may deny benefits.

2. Rent for houses with utilities furnished \$550.00; without utilities \$550.00 month maximum, or if other less expensive housing is available as determined by the Director of Relief may require said person to rent other available housing available at a lesser cost. If said persons do not wish to comply with the request to live in the less expensive house the Director of Relief may deny benefits.

3. Rent will only be paid to the landlord or property owner. House payments will not be paid as it creates an estate. Rent assistance will not continue over two (2) months unless approved by the Board of Supervisors. This is per fiscal year.

C. Utilities-500 max for fiscal year

1. Assistance with utilities cost shall be provided only in the amount of actual cost for current amounts which allow continuance of service and not service provided for prior months. When a person or persons are receiving assistance under the federally assisted energy program the county can pay utilities budget payments for lights and fuel. If the client is able, these budget payments will be paid by the client. If the client fails to comply with the federal program and is removed from the program, then the director may deny relief. If the person refuses to apply for the federal energy assistance programs relief can be denied.

2. Heat, lights, water, sewer and garbage pickup, the amount needed to provide these services and supplies by current bills. Partial payments will be considered.

D. Medical Services

1. Information will be given to individual regarding the rural emergency assistance program for prescriptions.

E. Funeral Services 2,200 cremation only

1. Application for and approval of funeral services must be obtained before services are performed. The original or photocopy of the funeral agreement must be provided. Funeral and burial expenses are:

a. Preparation and embalming of the body.

b. Casket, including oversized casket.

c. Transportation of the body from the place of death to place of interment. However, transportation costs from the place of death to the place where the recipient lived prior to his removal from that place for hospitalization or medical treatment at the time of terminal illness shall not be considered as part of the burial costs.

d. Cremation.

2. All resources and life insurance will be counted as income towards funeral expenses. Living spouse or dependent children will get social security death benefits and they will be counted as income toward funeral. Winnebago County max amount is \$2,200. County will not participate in funeral if there is property.

**SECTION 7: APPLICATION FOR RELIEF**

Application for relief shall be submitted by needy or poor persons to the Director of Assistance/Relief. If, because of undue hardship, a needy or poor person cannot come to the Courthouse, the Director of Relief shall mail such person an application form or deliver to such person an application form. If the applicant or the family unit is or appears to be eligible for relief or assistance from any other federal, state, or local source, the Director shall immediately refer the applicant to that source. It shall be the obligation of the applicant to immediately make application to that source and pursue such application with due diligence as a condition to be eligible for further relief under this guideline. It is the obligation of each person applying to establish his or her eligibility for any category of general relief and need for any item of relief. If requested, the person applying shall provide returns for the past year, medical reports, medical authorization, and anything else requested by the Director that bears upon the person's eligibility and need for relief. The Director may also require, upon approval of the Board, the applicant submit to a physical or mental examination to determine applicant's capacity to labor. The Director shall also receive anything that the person applying desires to submit to establish his or her eligibility or need to include statements or letters, medical reports, and other written documents as well as the verbal statements of the applicant. The Director shall then proceed to conduct a reasonable investigation concerning the applicant's eligibility and needs. The applicant's file and the investigations and findings of the Director shall be made available to the applicant, upon request, or to the applicant's attorney by written authorization.

**SECTION 8: INTIAL DETERMINATION**

A. The Director shall make an initial determination of the eligibility and needs of the applicant within five (5) business days of the receipt of the completed application. Upon the determination and the statutes or guidelines applied, together with the specific benefits and their amounts to which the application is entitled no later than Five (5) days.

**SECTION 9: APPEAL**

A. Every applicant, whether granted relief or not, shall be informed in the Director's written decision of the applicant's right to appeal from such decision to the Board of Supervisors. The applicant shall be informed (1) of the method by which an appeal may be taken, and (2) that he or she may represent him or herself, or may be represented by an attorney.

**SECTION 10: APPEAL HEARING**

A. The Board of Supervisors shall bear applicant's appeal de novo at the time schedule in the agenda unless continuance is requested by applicant. Applicant shall be permitted to present whatever evidence desired in support of the appeal.

These guidelines are effective 07/07/2025, by unanimous vote of the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors on 07/07/2025.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of Board of Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date