



DISABILITY LAW CENTER

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February 8, 2024

by scan and e-mail to House.Health.and.Social.Services@akleg.gov

The Honorable Mike Prax
Chair, House Health and Social Services Committee
State Capitol
120 Fourth St., M/S 3100
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Re: HB 258 and the General Relief Assisted Living Home Program

Dear Chair Prax and Members of the Committee:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present public testimony on this bill, which would reconfigure the services available under the General Relief Program. Our concern has to do with the General Relief Assisted Living Home Program (website description attached).

This program helps people who need to stay in an assisted living home pay for their care there.

HB 258, as introduced, would delete references to "shelter" and to, among other things, "convalescent care," from the statutory definition of [general relief] "assistance," AS 47.25.300(1). Those two terms do not precisely describe assistance with the costs of ALH care, but they come closer to describing it than does anything else in the current General Relief definition. We urge the Committee to think carefully about the effects of deleting these terms before proceeding.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments in advance of public testimony.

Sincerely,

s/ Mark Regan
Legal Director

Enclosure: "General Relief Assisted Living Home Program,"
health.alaska.gov/dsds/pages/aps/apsrelief.aspx

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ATTENTION:

We are updating our webpages to better serve Alaska. There may be some reduced services as we transition our systems.
Thank you for your patience.



General Relief Assisted Living Home Program

The General Relief program provides temporary financial assistance for assisted living home placement to eligible adults who require the protective oversight of an assisted living home. General Relief services include supportive and protective services in the activities of daily living and in the instrumental activities of daily living but does not include nursing or medical care. The financial assistance provided by the General Relief program includes a financial contribution by the participant towards the care provided based on the participant's countable income. Participants in the General Relief program retain \$100 of their countable monthly income as a personal-needs allowance. The remainder of their monthly countable income goes towards their cost of care for General Relief services and is paid directly to the assisted living home by the participant. General Relief participants receive a calculation sheet that contains the participant daily rate and the program daily rate when they move into an assisted living home. The General Relief program is 100% funded by State of Alaska General Funds as appropriated each year by the Alaska State Legislature.

General Relief Eligibility

Eligible adults are Alaska state residents age 18 and older who are at risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation by others. Applicants must meet income and resource limits and must apply for alternative financial assistance, including Medicaid and Adult Public Assistance. They must also meet one of more of the following criteria:

A disability that is attributable to a severe and persistent mental illness, intellectual disability, or developmental disability that includes a significant deficit in the daily living skill necessary to function without supervision or support;

A hearing, speech, visual, orthopedic or other major health impairment that significantly impedes participation in the activities general available to nonimpaired peers in the community;

A significant deficit in adaptive behaviors in the area of self-care, communication of needs, mobility, or independent living.

General Relief Daily Rate Increase

The General Relief/Temporary Assisted Living Home Care program daily rate is changing from \$70/day to \$104.30/day beginning July 1, 2022. General Relief Assisted Living Home providers will receive this increased payment for services provided on and after July 1, 2022. Invoices for GR services provided in July 2022 can be submitted for payment beginning August 1, 2022 and will follow the usual invoice submission process. General Relief Program participants and providers will receive an updated approval letter and calculation sheet with the new daily rate. This rate increase will not impact the amount that program recipients contribute as part of their cost sharing. Please see refer to the 7/7/2022 e-alert and Director's memo for more information.

GR daily rates as of July 1, 2022:

- > Anchorage: \$104.30
- > Southeast: \$104.30
- > Southcentral, not including Anchorage: \$108.47
- > Interior: \$119.95
- > Southwest: \$138.72
- > Northwest: \$143.93

Payment for General Relief Services

The financial assistance provided by the General Relief program includes a financial cost sharing by the participant towards the care provided based on the participant's income. Participants in the General Relief program retain \$100 of their countable monthly income as a personal-needs allowance. The remainder of their monthly countable income goes towards their cost of care for General Relief services and is paid directly to the assisted living home by the participant. General Relief participants receive a calculation sheet that contains the participant daily rate and the program daily rate when they move into an assisted living home. Combined, the cost sharing for the participant and cost sharing for the General Relief program equal the daily rate for the region that the assisted living home is located. For example, an assisted living home providing General Relief services in Anchorage can expect to receive a total of \$104.30 per day, based on payment from both the participant and the General Relief program. General Relief providers may not charge participants in excess of the amount listed on the calculation sheet.

Waitlist Information

(Please note the ranking order on the waitlist is subject to change)

The Alaska Department of Health implemented a waitlist for General Relief Assisted Living Home (GRALH) benefits on March 1, 2019. The waitlist will be in effect indefinitely and will not affect those currently receiving General Relief benefits. Applicants on the waitlist will be selected in priority order based on the guidelines in Alaska Administrative Code 7 AAC 47.465. For questions about the GRALH waitlist contact Jordyn Grant, Unit Manager for the General Relief Program, at Jordyn.grant@alaska.gov.

General Relief Waitlist Placement

Each applicant will receive a letter providing a unique identifier and instruction on how to use that unique identifier to check status on the waitlist. Applicants on the waitlist are drawn starting with Tier 1, then Tier 2 and then Tier 3 per 7 AAC 47.465.

- › Tier 1: individuals who the department has determined are vulnerable and in need of protective placement under AS 47.24.017(d);
- › Tier 2: individuals who will be discharged directly from an institution for mental disease, a facility operated by the Department of Corrections, a hospital, or a long-term care facility;
- › Tier 3: all other individuals.

Being Drawn from the General Relief Waitlist

Once drawn from the waitlist, the applicant, guardian, and referring agency listed on the application will receive a letter indicating that the applicant is now eligible to receive General Relief services. Participants drawn from the waitlist are eligible to begin utilizing GR services starting the date they are drawn from the waitlist. The applicant, or someone on the applicant's behalf, has 20 business days from the date of the waitlist draw letter to respond to Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) General Relief program staff to confirm that they still would like to receive the General Relief Assisted Living Home Care benefit. Interest can be confirmed by phone call, secure email, fax, or letter using the contact information provided in this letter. After confirmation of interest, applicants will be sent a letter confirming their interest in receiving General Relief benefits with instructions for next steps. If there is no response from any contact person on the applicant's behalf by the date listed, or if the applicant declines the benefit, General Relief program staff will remove the applicant from the waitlist and close the application.

Confirming Intent to Utilize General Relief Benefits

After notifying Senior and Disabilities Services General Relief program staff that the applicant is still interested in receiving General Relief benefits, the applicant, legal guardian, and referring agency listed on your application will receive a waitlist acceptance confirmation letter that explains the next steps. Applicants drawn from the waitlist must begin utilizing this General Relief benefit within 60 days of approval or they may lose the benefit. This means applicants must identify and move into an assisted living home that has a General Relief Provider Agreement on or before the date listed on the waitlist acceptance confirmation letter. A list of General Relief assisted living home providers is posted on the General Relief webpage and is updated monthly. Once the applicant has been drawn from the waitlist, confirmed interest, and has moved into an assisted living home, the assisted living home provider must submit to SDS a Client Activity Form (CAF) with the release of information completed. Once the CAF is received by SDS General Relief program staff, both the recipient and the assisted living home will receive an approval letter containing benefit eligibility dates and a calculation sheet showing the recipient's portion of the cost of care. If the applicant does not move into an assisted living home that has a General Relief Provider Agreement by the date listed on the waitlist acceptance confirmation letter, or if they decline the benefit, the General Relief Unit will close the application by noting that they declined benefits or that they failed to utilize benefits.

General Relief Program Policies and Regulations

- > [General Relief Program Policies](#)
- > [General Relief Regulations 7 AAC 47.300-47.900](#)

Forms and Resources

For applicants:

- > [GR-01 Initial Application for General Relief Assisted Living Care](#)
- > [GR-02 Renewal Application for General Relief Assisted Living Care](#)
- > [Find a General Relief Provider, Updated 11/10/2022](#)
- > [Related Programs - Independent Supported Housing](#)

For General Relief Providers:

- > [GR-04 GR for ALC Client Activity Form](#)
- > [GR-02 Renewal Application for General Relief Assisted Living Care](#)
- > [General Relief Sample Invoice](#)
- > [General Relief Provider Orientation 2020 - Powerpoint](#)

General Relief Provider Agreement Information

Qualified licensed assisted living home providers can enter into an agreement with the Department of Health, Division of Disabilities Services to provide eligible adult Alaska residents assisted living home services. Assisted living homes are not eligible to bill for services provided to General Relief recipients until they have an approved Provider Agreement, beginning on the day the Provider Agreement is approved.

You can find the General Relief Provider Agreement Online

The General Relief Provider Agreement must be submitted to DOH Grants and Contracts through Direct Secure Messaging (DSM). Please note, you must enter the DSM Inpriva portal to use this DSM address. You must have a registered DSM account to send the Provider Agreement Application to this address. **To sign up for DSM please visit this website.**

For questions and further information please contact:

Amanda Todeschi

Grants Administrator 3
P.O. Box 110650
Juneau, AK 99811-0650
Phone: 907-465-2835

General Relief Contacts:

General Relief DSM: General.Relief@hss.soa.directak.net

Note: To transfer or email any form of communication using a consumer's name and personal information, you must use Direct Secure Messaging (DSM). **To sign up for DSM please visit this website.**

Once a provider is registered with DSM, we are able to utilize email to exchange protected health information (PHI). It is not HIPAA compliant to use your personal email server for the exchange of PHI using the email listed below.

Kimberlina Lopez, Health Program Manager

Phone: 907-269-6778
Fax: 907-269-3648

John Sutton, General Relief Program Supervisor

Phone: 907-334-0888
Fax: 907-269-3648

Amanda Knapp, Senior Services Technician

Phone: 907-269-3483
Fax: 907-269-3648

Leutogitupaitea Sale, Senior Services Technician

Phone: 907-334-2672
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