



ARIZONA STATE SENATE
Forty-ninth Legislature, First Regular Session

PROGRAM PRESENTATION
General Assistance

Background

General Assistance (GA), which provides interim cash assistance to disabled persons who have applied for federal disability benefits while the Social Security Administration (SSA) is completing the eligibility determination, is funded by the state General Fund and administered by the Department of Economic Security (DES). A person is eligible for GA for a total of 12 months out of each 36 consecutive month period, except that DES must grant up to an additional 6 months of GA if a recipient is currently appealing an adverse decision by the SSA.

An applicant is considered disabled if a registered nurse practitioner or licensed physician verifies in a medical statement that the applicant has a specified medical condition or has a physical or mental impairment that is expected to result in death or has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months. Applicants for GA must meet one of the following requirements:

- 1) The applicant is disabled to the degree that he or she is unemployable and agrees to reimburse DES out of any federal disability benefits received.
- 2) The applicant lives in the same home with a disabled person and provides full-time care to that disabled person. The 12-month time limit related to GA does not apply to caretakers.

There are additional eligibility requirements. The applicant for GA must: 1) be a resident of Arizona and a citizen of the U.S. or a qualified legal resident; 2) not be an inmate of a municipal, county, state or federal institution at the time of receiving assistance, although a person who is receiving medical or surgical care from such an institution is not considered an inmate; and 3) not have transferred property with the intent to become eligible for assistance or to increase the need for assistance within one year prior to application or while a recipient. An applicant is not eligible for GA if the applicant has resources in excess of \$1,000 for the recipient or \$1,400 for the recipient and spouse. However, DES must exclude the equity value of the following resources: a homestead, not to exceed a current equity of \$50,000; household furnishings and personal effects essential to day-to-day living; \$1,500 of the current equity value of a vehicle; funds established in connection with settling liability claims concerning Agent Orange death or disability; and any other resource specifically excluded by law.

Statute prohibits a person who is receiving GA from receiving any other public assistance except by authorization of DES, and upon receipt, denial or termination of federal disability benefits, GA ceases for a recipient.

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Fiscal Information

According to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee (JLBC), the budget provides \$2,060,800 from the state General Fund for GA in FY 2008-2009, which consists of the following estimated components: 1) \$2,740,900 for an average monthly benefit of \$152 paid to 1,504 recipients; 2) \$152,200 to provide recipients with federal disability benefit application assistance; and 3) \$832,300 for federal reimbursement for recipients later granted federal disability benefits. The current caseload as of May 2008 is 1,407 recipients.

Committee Action

The Senate Public Safety and Human Services Committee held one public hearing on January 21, 2009 to hear a presentation from DES regarding GA.

FY 2008-2009 Budget Action

The FY 2008-2009 budget, passed by the Legislature on January 31, 2009, eliminates the GA program.

Prepared by Senate Research

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