

# Discussion Papers

## State General Assistance Programs 1998

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99-01



Assessing  
the New  
Federalism

*An Urban Institute  
Program to Assess  
Changing Social Policies*

# **State General Assistance Programs 1998**

**April 1999**

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*Assessing the New Federalism*

The Urban Institute

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This report is part of the Urban Institute's *Assessing the New Federalism* project, a multi-year effort to monitor and assess the devolution of social programs from the federal to the state and local levels. Alan Weil is the project director. The project analyzes changes in income support, social services, and health programs and their effects. In collaboration with Child Trends, the project studies child and family well-being.

The project has received funding from The Annie E. Casey Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, The Commonwealth Fund, the Stuart Foundation, the Weingart Foundation, The McKnight Foundation, The Fund for New Jersey, and The Rockefeller Foundation. Additional funding is provided by the Joyce Foundation and The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation through a subcontract with the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

The nonpartisan Urban Institute publishes studies, reports, and books on timely topics worthy of public consideration. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.

The authors would like to thank the many state and local officials who participated in the interviews that provided the content for this report. We also thank Pamela Holcomb, Karen Tumlin, Alan Weil, Michael Wiseman, Sheila Zedlewski, and Wendy Zimmerman for their valuable contributions and comments on earlier drafts.

## **Assessing the New Federalism**

*Assessing the New Federalism* is a multi-year Urban Institute project designed to analyze the devolution of responsibility for social programs from the federal government to the states, focusing primarily on health care, income security, employment and training programs, and social services. Researchers monitor program changes and fiscal developments. In collaboration with Child Trends, Inc., the project studies changes in family well-being. The project aims to provide timely, nonpartisan information to inform public debate and to help state and local decisionmakers carry out their new responsibilities more effectively.

Key components of the project include a household survey, studies of policies in 13 states, and a database with information on all states and the District of Columbia, available at the Urban Institute's Web site. This paper is one in a series of occasional papers analyzing information from these and other sources.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

General Assistance (GA) programs are cash and in-kind assistance programs financed and administered entirely by the state, county, or locality in which they operate. They are designed to meet the short-term or ongoing needs of low-income persons ineligible for (or awaiting approval for) federally funded cash assistance such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

This report, based on a survey of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, provides an overview of states' GA programs as of the summer of 1998. Tables throughout the report describe policy choices made by states and counties in providing assistance for those ineligible for federal assistance. In addition, this report provides caseload and expenditure data where available and addresses major changes in GA programs since the last survey of GA programs, which coincided with the passage of federal welfare reform in the summer of 1996. Major dimensions of the program are summarized by state in Table 1. Key findings are as follows.

**Thirty-five states, including the District of Columbia, have state General Assistance programs.<sup>1</sup>**

Thirty-five states, including the District of Columbia, have state GA programs; that is, they have GA programs in which the state government has at least some involvement. Twenty-four of the 35 states with GA programs have statewide General Assistance programs with uniform eligibility rules. In most of these states, the benefit schedule is also uniform, although some states adjust their benefit schedules to reflect the cost of living in various regions of the state. Nine of

the 35 states with GA programs do not have uniform state GA programs, but require all counties to provide General Assistance. As a result, eligibility rules and benefit schedules may vary substantially from county to county in these states. The two remaining states (Wisconsin and Virginia) with GA programs do not provide statewide assistance, but do provide supervision and funding for counties that choose to have a program.

**States without state government involvement in the provision of General Assistance are unlikely to have counties with General Assistance programs.**

Of the 16 states without state General Assistance programs, only 6 have at least one county that has chosen to provide General Assistance without state involvement.<sup>2</sup> These county programs provide lower average benefits than state GA programs and are more likely than state programs to limit the duration of assistance and to provide in-kind assistance rather than cash. In addition, county GA programs are less likely than state programs to provide medical benefits to GA recipients. In the remaining 10 states, we were unable to identify either a state GA program or a local GA program.<sup>3</sup> These states are almost all southern states, with most located in the Southeast.

**Able-bodied adults without children (the population most often associated with General Assistance) are, in fact, the least likely to be eligible for such assistance.**

Although the two most populous states, California and New York, provide General Assistance to able-bodied adults without children, few others do the same. Only 13 states provide GA to this population, down from 15 states in 1996. In addition, many states that provide

assistance to able-bodied adults without children limit the duration of assistance to this group and/or provide in-kind assistance rather than cash.

**General Assistance programs are more likely to serve disabled, elderly, and otherwise unemployable individuals, and children or families with children.**

Thirty-four states provide General Assistance to disabled, elderly, or otherwise unemployable individuals not eligible for (or awaiting approval for) SSI. Twenty-four states provide assistance to children or families with children not eligible for TANF, such as children living with an unrelated adult.

**Most states limit eligibility for General Assistance to the severely poor.**

Although income eligibility limits vary considerably across states, a majority of state GA programs limit assistance to only the “severely poor,” that is, those with income less than one-half the poverty level (\$335 per month for an individual, \$569 for a family of three). Among the 35 state GA programs, income eligibility limits range from \$0 per month in New Hampshire to \$1,674 per month for a couple in Hawaii, although most states set income eligibility limits between \$100 and \$400 per month for an individual and between \$300 and \$600 for a family of three. Most states set resource limits between \$1,000 and \$2,000, regardless of family size. However, states generally disregard some earned income and certain resources, such as a home and a car, in determining eligibility.

**Nearly all states that provide assistance to able-bodied adults require recipients to work in order to maintain benefits.**

Eighteen states extend GA eligibility to able-bodied adults without children or able-bodied adults with children. Fifteen require participation in work or training programs. Although 10 of these states provide some opportunities for job training, counseling, or education, the emphasis in most states is on finding private sector employment or "working off" the benefit amount through public sector employment. Recipients who fail to comply with the work requirements are sanctioned in most states, usually losing their entire benefit for a specific period of time ranging from seven days in one state to one year in another state.

**General Assistance benefits are low and falling.**

The maximum monthly benefits available to General Assistance recipients are generally set far below the federal poverty level. Among the 27 state GA programs that provide cash benefits to individuals (8 states provide in-kind assistance or a combination of cash and in-kind assistance), the average monthly benefit maximum for an individual is only 37 percent of the federal poverty level (\$249). GA benefits are also lower than benefits in comparable federal assistance programs. On average, GA monthly cash benefit maximums for disabled individuals are less than 50 percent of state SSI monthly cash benefit maximums, and GA monthly cash benefit maximums for families are less than 90 percent of state TANF monthly cash benefit maximums. Moreover, few states have adjusted their benefit maximums since 1996, with the result that benefits in most states have decreased in real terms over the past two years. Only 7 states increased benefit maximums, and 2 states reduced benefit maximums.

**Most states that provide General Assistance also provide medical assistance for GA recipients, although medical benefits are usually less extensive than Medicaid.**

In 5 of the 35 state GA programs, all GA recipients are eligible for medical assistance under that state's Medicaid program or Medicaid waiver program. Of the remaining 30 state programs, 26 provide medical assistance to some or all GA recipients, either through a formal state or county GA medical program, or by providing benefits to cover certain medical expenses. The medical benefits of such programs vary widely in the types of services covered, but most provide more limited benefits than Medicaid.

**General Assistance caseloads are small compared with the caseloads of the major federal assistance programs.**

Most of the states with General Assistance programs provide GA benefits to less than 15 percent of the number of persons served by TANF assistance in their state. In New York, which has the most extensive GA program, about 8 percent of those living in poverty receive General Assistance—approximately 232,000 recipients per month. This is less than one-quarter of the number of TANF recipients in New York and about one-third of the number of SSI recipients in New York.

**Many states made changes to their GA programs within the past two years, many of which continued the trend of tightening nonfinancial eligibility requirements.**

Connecticut eliminated eligibility for a category of employable persons without children, although it did create an additional category for persons with an impairment that interrupts

employment. The District of Columbia eliminated its General Public Assistance program for persons awaiting SSI. Two states, Hawaii and Connecticut, lengthened the time a person must be disabled in order to qualify for General Assistance as temporarily disabled. Four of the 35 state GA programs established or increased time limits, raising the total number of states with time limits to 10, and 3 states increased or established durational residency requirements, raising the total number of states with durational residency requirements to 7. Two states (Hawaii and Michigan), however, removed time limits for persons with a disability.

**Changes to immigrant eligibility for federal assistance programs as a result of PRWORA have had a significant impact on General Assistance policies.**

Following the federal lead, 19 of the 35 state GA programs tightened restrictions on assistance to immigrants. However, some states, such as New York and Washington, have explicitly enabled immigrants no longer eligible for federal benefits as a result of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) to qualify for GA.

**Changes to family assistance as a result of PRWORA enabled states to shift some of the burden of providing assistance to the federal government.**

Nine states transferred the responsibility for providing assistance to pregnant women in their first two trimesters and/or two-parent families with little or no work history from their GA program to their TANF program since the enactment of PRWORA. Both of these groups were ineligible for federal assistance under the prior law.

**Administrative structures of General Assistance programs remained stable between 1996 and 1998.**

Despite speculation since the passage of PRWORA that states would engage in “second-order devolution,” that is, devolution of administrative and policy control of safety net programs from states to counties, we found no evidence that states are devolving more authority to their counties in the area of General Assistance. One state, in fact, made changes in the opposite direction. Connecticut, the only state to make a major change in the administration of its GA program, is now moving from a county-administered system to a state-administered system.

**Table 1: Summary of General Assistance (GA) Programs, by State, Summer 1998**

	GA Program Availability and Variability	Categorical Eligibility <sup>b</sup>			Maximum Individual Cash Benefit as a Percentage of Poverty <sup>c</sup>	Time Limits <sup>d</sup>	Medical Assistance <sup>e</sup>
		Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable	Children and Families with Children	Employable Adults Without Children			
<b>States with State GA Programs<sup>a</sup></b>							
Alaska	Uniform Statewide	X	X	X	33		X
Arizona	Uniform Statewide	X			26	All	
California (Los Angeles County)	Statewide/County Variability	X	X	X	33	Some	X
Colorado	Uniform Statewide	X			34	Some	
Connecticut	Uniform Statewide	X	X		52		X
Delaware	Uniform Statewide	X	X		18		X*
District of Columbia	Uniform Statewide		X		36		X*
Hawaii	Uniform Statewide	X			44		X*
Idaho (Ada County)	Statewide/County Variability	X			vp/v		X
Illinois (City of Chicago)	Statewide/County Variability	X	X		32		X
Indiana (Center Township of Marion County)	Statewide/County Variability	X	X	X	vp/v		
Iowa (Polk County)	Statewide/County Variability	X	X	X	vp/v		
Kansas	Uniform Statewide	X			29		X
Maine	Uniform Statewide	X	X	X	vp/v		X
Maryland	Uniform Statewide	X			17	Some	X
Massachusetts	Uniform Statewide	X	X		51		X*
Michigan	Uniform Statewide	X			37		X
Minnesota	Uniform Statewide	X	X		30		X
Missouri	Uniform Statewide	X	X		12		X
Nebraska <sup>f</sup>	Uniform Statewide	X	X	X	96		X
Nevada (Clark County)	Statewide/County Variability	X	X	X	41		X
New Hampshire (City of Manchester)	Statewide/County Variability	X	X	X	vp/v		X
New Jersey	Uniform Statewide	X	X	X	31	All	X
New Mexico	Uniform Statewide	X	X		34		
New York	Uniform Statewide	X	X	X	52	Some	X*
Ohio	Uniform Statewide	X	X		17		X
Oregon	Uniform Statewide	X			44		X*
Pennsylvania	Uniform Statewide	X	X		32	Some	X
Rhode Island	Uniform Statewide	X			30		X
South Dakota (Minnehaha County)	Statewide/County Variability	X	X	X	vp/v		X
Utah	Uniform Statewide	X		X	46	Some	X
Vermont	Uniform Statewide	X	X	X	vp/v	Some	X
Virginia (Fairfax County)	Some Counties	X	X		33	Some	X
Washington	Uniform Statewide	X	X		52		X
Wisconsin (Dane County)	Some Counties	X			37		X
<b>Total</b>		<b>34</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>States without State GA Programs<sup>a</sup></b>							
Alabama	No Program						
Arkansas	No Program						
Florida (Dade County)	Some Counties	X	X		33	All	
Georgia (Fulton County)	Some Counties	X			34		
Kentucky (Jefferson County)	Some Counties	X	X		vp/v	All	
Louisiana	No Program						
Mississippi	No Program						
Montana (Yellowstone County)	Some Counties	X			vp/v		X
North Carolina (Durham County)	Some Counties	X			vp/v	All	X
North Dakota (Cass County)	Some Counties	X			vp/v	All	
Oklahoma	No Program						
South Carolina	No Program						
Tennessee	No Program						
Texas	No Program						
West Virginia	No Program						
Wyoming	No Program						
<b>Total</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>

Source: Urban Institute 1998

<sup>a</sup> Information for states in which eligibility rules vary by county reflects the rules in effect for the county specified in parentheses.

<sup>b</sup> States indicated as covering persons in a specific category may cover one or more of its subcategories.

<sup>c</sup> Figures were determined by using Poverty Guidelines for 1998 (\$8,050 for one person in the 48 contiguous states).  
vp/v=most benefits are in the form of vendor payments or vouchers

<sup>d</sup> All = All recipients are subject to the time limit. Some = only some categories of recipients are subject to the time limits. Note: states may limit the duration of General Assistance receipt in ways other than time limits. See "General Assistance Program Benefits and Duration."

<sup>e</sup> X\* = Medical Assistance is provided through the state's Medicaid program.

<sup>f</sup> Nebraska has a statewide GA program for disabled persons; GA programs for other persons may vary by county. Information in table reflects state guidelines.

## INTRODUCTION

Ever since the inception of the federal safety net for low-income individuals and families, some populations have remained outside the scope of the major federal cash assistance programs. Currently, the two major federal cash assistance programs are Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF—formerly the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program), which serves needy children and their families, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), which serves the low-income elderly and the severely disabled. State programs that provide benefits to populations not covered by TANF or SSI, such as able-bodied individuals without children, are collectively known as General Assistance (GA) programs.

Despite the importance of General Assistance as the only source of cash assistance for some low-income populations, GA often fails to receive the attention received by the larger assistance programs. However, the rise in state variation in the provision of cash assistance as a result of recent changes to the federal safety net has increasingly focused attention on safety net programs at the state level. As researchers assess the generosity and effectiveness of new and more complex state safety nets, state level information on General Assistance policies will be a vital component in understanding the overall welfare systems in the various states.

This report provides an overview of states' General Assistance programs as of the summer of 1998. Tables throughout the report describe the availability of GA, eligibility rules, and benefit amounts in order to document the policy choices made by states and counties in providing assistance for those ineligible for federal assistance. This information reveals the considerable variety of state programs and policies and provides a basis for comparing the relative generosity

of states in providing benefits to populations not covered by SSI and TANF, especially able-bodied adults without children and individuals awaiting SSI determination.<sup>4</sup> In addition, this report provides caseload and expenditure data to gauge the extent of support these assistance programs provide.

Finally, this report addresses major changes in General Assistance programs since the last survey of GA programs, which coincided with passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in the summer of 1996 (Uccello, McCallum, and Gallagher 1996). Although PRWORA did not address GA, eligibility changes to federal safety net programs as a result of PRWORA necessarily affect GA programs, because GA eligibility is often conditioned upon not being eligible for federal cash assistance. Where evident, this report notes the relationship between provisions of PRWORA and the recent changes in GA programs.

There is no uniform definition of General Assistance, a rubric that covers a wide range of state programs. In this paper, a General Assistance program is defined as a cash or in-kind assistance program that is financed and administered entirely by the state, county, or locality in which it operates and is designed to meet the short-term or ongoing needs of low-income persons ineligible for (or awaiting approval for) federally funded cash assistance. The population eligible for general assistance varies considerably by state, but usually consists of those individuals ineligible or not yet qualified for SSI (e.g., an able-bodied individual or an individual with a disability not severe enough to qualify for SSI) and/or families and children categorically ineligible for TANF (e.g., a child living with an unrelated caretaker). A few states, however, provide General Assistance to all persons categorically ineligible for SSI or TANF.

To distinguish General Assistance programs from emergency assistance programs, only

those programs that allow assistance to be provided for at least two consecutive months are included in this definition. Our definition of General Assistance programs also includes “interim assistance,” that is, financial assistance for persons waiting to become eligible for SSI or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). While interim assistance is sometimes administered separately from other forms of General Assistance, most states provide assistance to persons awaiting SSI or SSDI determination as a part of a larger General Assistance program.

Our definition of General Assistance programs does not include state programs generally referred to as state-segregated or state-separate TANF programs (i.e., state programs that expend funds that count toward TANF state Maintenance of Effort [MOE] requirements), despite the fact that such programs are entirely state funded. While some states provide General Assistance benefits that count toward the TANF MOE requirements, programs in which 100 percent of funds count toward the MOE are not included in this report. In addition, optional SSI state supplement programs and state food stamp replacement programs—both state-funded programs—are generally not considered General Assistance programs and are not included in this report.

The information for this report was obtained through a variety of sources, including state websites, state regulations, and caseworker manuals. However, the primary source was a telephone survey conducted during the months of June, July, and August 1998. State and county officials from all 50 states and the District of Columbia were interviewed to verify existing information, fill in missing information, and provide information on recent changes to their General Assistance programs. To ensure the accuracy of the information, survey results were sent to states and counties for verification.

For those states with state General Assistance programs that vary by county and those

states with only county General Assistance programs, we obtained information from state officials about rules that did not vary and then collected information on rules in the region or county with the largest population, either from the state or county office. If the largest county did not have a General Assistance program, but a smaller county did have a program, then the program information from the smaller county was included in the report. These counties served as the focal counties and are noted as such throughout the tables. While rules from one county are often used to represent the state for throughout the report, readers should be cautioned when generalizing information from the focal county to the entire state. In many of the states in which a focal county is used, the degree to which programs vary across the state is unknown.

The last comprehensive survey of General Assistance programs was conducted in the summer of 1996 by the Urban Institute.<sup>5</sup> This report follows the same methodology, although the format is slightly different. Most important, the tables in this report separate information obtained on state GA programs from information obtained on county GA programs. In addition, counts of state GA program features that appear in the text, such as the number of states with work requirements, are tallied separately for states with state GA programs and county programs. This differs from the 1996 survey, which included information on county GA programs along with state GA program information in the tables and the counts in that appear in the text.

Information on General Assistance programs by state, not separated into cross-state tables as in this report, is available in the *Supplement to State General Assistance Programs, 1998: State Summaries* on the web at: <http://www.urban.org/>.

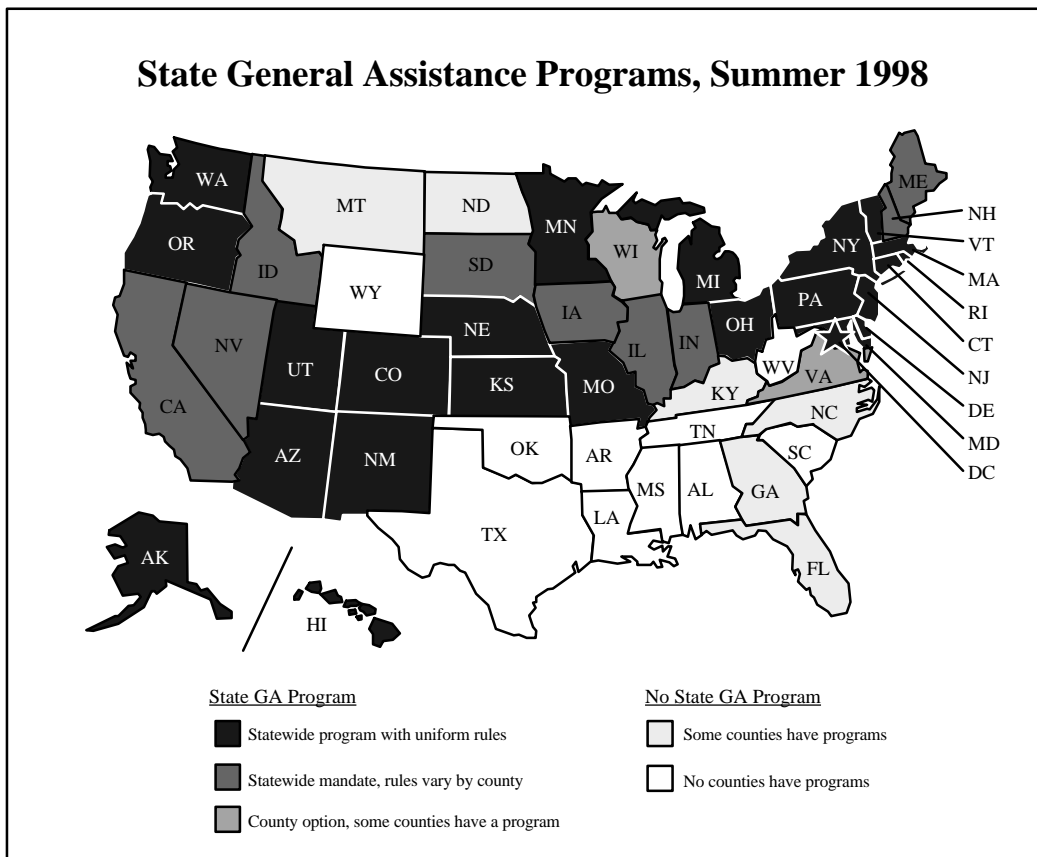
## **GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AVAILABILITY, REQUIREMENTS, ADMINISTRATION, AND FUNDING SOURCES**

No national law requires state governments to provide General Assistance or to establish uniform rules across the state if GA is provided. Consequently, the provision of General Assistance varies considerably across the states and often within states. This chapter provides an overview of the availability of General Assistance and the extent to which General Assistance rules vary within each state. Also discussed is the involvement of the state and local governments in creating, regulating, administering, and funding these programs. Table 2 provides detailed cross-state comparisons of this information.

### **States with State GA Programs**

As illustrated in figure 1, 35 states (including the District of Columbia) have state GA programs. This includes states in which the state government has at least some involvement in General Assistance, through either the creation of a uniform statewide General Assistance program, requiring lower governmental units to provide General Assistance, or the supervision and funding of optional county GA programs.

Twenty-four of the 35 states with state GA programs have statewide General Assistance programs with uniform eligibility rules. In most of these states, the benefit schedule is also uniform, although some have benefit schedules that vary by the cost of living in different areas of the state. These 24 states are more likely than states without uniform eligibility rules to have a GA program that is administered in local field offices by the state government and are also more likely to fund their programs with state dollars. In 18 of these states, the GA program is



**Figure 1**

administered by the state, while in the remaining 6 states, the GA program is administered by counties or localities. In 20 of the states, the GA program is funded with state dollars; in the remaining 4 states, the state shares funding with a lower level of government.

Nine of the 35 states with state GA programs require all counties or municipalities to provide General Assistance to low-income residents, but do not have uniform state GA programs.<sup>6</sup> In these states, eligibility rules, benefit schedules, administration, and funding are left mainly to the counties or municipalities required to provide the assistance. However, the requirements placed on these county or local programs vary by state, and state governments have considerable involvement in some states. While the GA programs in all nine of these states are administered by the counties or municipalities, the programs in two states (Illinois and Maine)

receive some state funding. In addition, some of these states, such as California and New Hampshire, require the counties or municipalities to follow broad state guidelines or meet basic requirements in designing their General Assistance programs.

The 2 remaining states of the 35 with state GA programs do not provide assistance statewide, but do provide supervision and funding for counties that choose to have a program. Wisconsin provides block grant funding for counties to provide cash and medical General Assistance programs. Virginia also provides funding to localities that choose to offer a General Assistance program, but the localities must operate the program within state guidelines. In both states, the counties and localities that offer General Assistance also administer the program and provide funding in addition to the state funding. In Wisconsin, almost half of all counties offer cash General Assistance; in Virginia, over three-fourths of all localities offer General Assistance.

### **States without State GA Programs**

In 16 states, there are neither state GA programs nor requirements on counties to provide General Assistance. In 6 of these states and 1 of the states with a state General Assistance program, we identified at least one county or municipality that provides some form of county-based General Assistance.<sup>7</sup> GA programs in these seven counties are solely county funded and are generally not subject to state constraints. In the remaining 10 states, we did not identify General Assistance programs in any of the states' counties.<sup>8</sup> As indicated in figure 1, most of these states are located in the South.

**Program Names**

Many General Assistance programs are officially called “General Assistance.” However, some programs have different official names such as General Relief, General Public Assistance, Poor Relief, City Welfare, and Safety Net Assistance. Some program names specify who is eligible for assistance, such as Aid to the Needy Disabled, Disability Assistance, and Family and Children Assistance. Other program names specify the purpose of the assistance—for example, Transitional Assistance; Transitional Emergency, Medical, and Housing Assistance; and GA Self Sufficiency. In this report, we use the generic term General Assistance to include all of these programs.

**Table 2: General Assistance Program Requirements, Administration, and Funding**  
(Summer 1998)

**State GA Programs**

State	State Program Name	State Program Description/Requirements	Administration	Funding Source
Alabama	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			
Alaska	1. General Relief 2. Interim Assistance	1. Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules. 2. Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
Arizona	General Assistance	Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
Arkansas	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			
California	General Relief	State requires all counties to provide General Relief programs. The benefit schedule and eligibility rules vary across the state. The state maintains policy control, decides program scope, and sets minimum benefit levels. The counties set specific benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State supervised, County administered	County
Colorado	Aid to the Needy Disabled	Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State supervised, County administered	State/County
Connecticut	State Administered General Assistance (SAGA)	Statewide GA program. The eligibility rules are uniform throughout the state except in the city of Norwich. The benefit schedule for families varies according to living costs in three regions of the state.	State <sup>a</sup>	State <sup>b</sup>
Delaware	General Assistance	Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
District of Columbia	General Public Assistance for Children (GAC)	Districtwide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	District	District
Florida	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)			
Georgia	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)			

State	State Program Name	State Program Description/Requirements	Administration	Funding Source
Hawaii	General Assistance	Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
Idaho	General Assistance	State code mandates that all counties operate a General Assistance program to provide for the necessities of life and necessary medical services for the poor. The benefit schedule and eligibility rules vary across the state.	County	County
Illinois	1. Transitional Assistance 2. Family and Children Assistance	The state requires all local units to operate General Assistance programs. <sup>c</sup> The benefit schedule and eligibility rules vary across the state. The city of Chicago and all other local units that receive state funds (approximately 60 localities) must follow the benefit schedule and eligibility rules established by the Illinois Department of Public Aid. The remaining localities, which do not receive state funds (approximately 1,400 localities), establish their standards and policies locally.	City of Chicago: State  All other localities: State supervised, Locally administered	City of Chicago and approx. 60 other localities: State/Local  All other localities: Local
Indiana	Poor Relief	State requires all township trustees to provide a Poor Relief program for persons in need. The benefit schedule and eligibility rules vary across the state's 1,009 townships.	Local	Local
Iowa	General Assistance	State law requires all counties to operate a GA program to serve the poor. The program design, benefit schedule, and eligibility rules are determined by each county and vary across the state.	County	County
Kansas	General Assistance	Statewide program with uniform eligibility rules. The benefit schedule varies across the state. Each county determines benefits based on one of four schedules depending on the cost of living in each county.	State	State
Kentucky	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)			
Louisiana	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			

State	State Program Name	State Program Description/Requirements	Administration	Funding Source
Maine	General Assistance	Statewide program. State law requires that municipalities provide general assistance programs and 95% of towns have adopted a standard ordinance developed by the Maine Municipal Association. Eligibility rules are similar in most localities, but benefit schedules vary according to local housing costs in each community.	State supervised, Locally administered <sup>d</sup>	State/Local
Maryland	Transitional Emergency Medical and Housing Assistance (TEMHA)	Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State supervised, County administered	State
Massachusetts	Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC)	Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
Michigan	State Disability Assistance	Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
Minnesota	General Assistance	Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State supervised, County administered	State
Mississippi	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			
Missouri	General Relief	Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
Montana	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)			
Nebraska	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. State Disability Program (SDP)</li> <li>2. County General Assistance</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.</li> <li>2. State requires all counties to provide General Assistance to meet the needs of persons not eligible for other assistance programs. 56 counties contract with the state Department of Social Services (DSS) for administration of their GA programs. For these counties, DSS sets benefit schedule and eligibility rules according to uniform guidelines. The remaining 37 counties retain administrative responsibility and set their own benefit schedule and eligibility rules.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. State</li> <li>2. State supervised, State/County administered</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. State</li> <li>2. County</li> </ol>

<b>State</b>	<b>State Program Name</b>	<b>State Program Description/Requirements</b>	<b>Administration</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Nevada	Direct Assistance Service (DAS)	State requires all counties to provide Direct Assistance Services. The benefit schedule and eligibility rules are determined by each county and vary across the state.	County	County
New Hampshire	City Welfare	State law mandates that localities care for the poor. The state also sets broad eligibility criteria. Specific eligibility rules and benefit schedules are determined locally.	State supervised, Locally administered	Local
New Jersey	Work First New Jersey/ General Assistance	Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State supervised, County/Locally administered	State/County/ Local
New Mexico	General Assistance	Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
New York	Safety Net Assistance (SNA)	Statewide program with uniform eligibility rules. The benefit schedule varies across counties, based on shelter and heating costs.	State supervised, County administered	State/County
North Carolina	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)			
North Dakota	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)			
Ohio	Disability Assistance	Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State supervised, County administered	State/County
Oklahoma	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			
Oregon	1. General Assistance 2. Temporary Assistance Program	1. Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules. 2. Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
Pennsylvania	General Assistance	Statewide program with uniform eligibility rules. The benefit schedule varies according to shelter costs in four categories of counties.	State	State

<b>State</b>	<b>State Program Name</b>	<b>State Program Description/Requirements</b>	<b>Administration</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Rhode Island	General Public Assistance-Bridge Fund	Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
South Carolina	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			
South Dakota	Poor Relief	The state requires all counties to pay for indigent hospital care and to provide relief for the poor and indigent. The benefit schedule and eligibility rules are determined by each county and vary across the state.	County	County
Tennessee	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			
Texas	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			
Utah	1. GA-Self-Sufficiency (GA-SS)  2. GA-Working Toward Employment Program (GA-WTE)	1. Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.  2. Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
Vermont	General Assistance	Statewide program with uniform eligibility rules. The benefit schedule is uniform across the state except for Chittenden County, which calculates benefits using a higher housing maximum.	State	State
Virginia	General Relief	The state provides guidelines for an optional General Relief (GR) program. Localities may choose to provide a General Relief program, and those that do so must operate it within state guidelines. Assistance is not provided across the state, although 88% of localities (107) participate in the GR program. The benefit schedule and eligibility rules vary across the participating counties. The state guidelines offer a range of options from which the localities may fashion a GR program that suits local needs.	State supervised, Locally administered	State/Local
Washington	General Assistance	Statewide program with uniform benefit schedule and eligibility rules.	State	State
West Virginia	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			

State	State Program Name	State Program Description/Requirements	Administration	Funding Source
Wisconsin	Relief Block Grant Program	The Relief Block Grant Program is an optional block grant that provides state funds to counties for medical and nonmedical (cash) General Relief programs. Counties may choose whether or not to operate a General Relief program, but counties that choose to have a nonmedical program must also have a medical program. Of the 72 total counties in Wisconsin, 31 counties have both a nonmedical program and a medical program, and 9 counties have only a medical program. The benefit schedule and eligibility rules vary across participating counties. <sup>e</sup>	State supervised, County administered	State/County
Wyoming	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			

#### County GA Programs

State (Focal County)	County Program Name	County Program Description/Requirements	Administration	Funding Source
Colorado (City and County of Denver)	General Assistance	No state requirements. Only six counties have GA programs in addition to the state Aid to the Needy Disabled program.	County	County
Florida (Miami Dade County)	Direct Financial Assistance	No state General Assistance program or requirements. Most counties do not have a GA program.	County	County
Georgia (Fulton County)	General Assistance	No state General Assistance program or requirements. Most counties do not have a GA program.	County	County
Kentucky (Jefferson County)	Emergency Financial Assistance	No state General Assistance program or requirements. Only two counties have programs. The benefit schedule and eligibility rules are determined by each county.	County	County
Montana (Yellowstone County)	General Relief	No state General Assistance program or requirements. Most counties do not have a GA program.	County	County

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>County Program Name</b>	<b>County Program Description/Requirements</b>	<b>Administration</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
North Carolina (Durham County)	County Emergency Assistance	No state General Assistance program or requirements. Some counties have GA programs.	County	County
North Dakota (Cass County)	General Assistance	No state General Assistance programs or requirements. <sup>f</sup> Some counties have GA programs.	County	County

*Source:* Urban Institute 1998

- a. Connecticut. The state administers SAGA in local offices with the exception of the city of Norwich, which administers its own GA program.
- b. Connecticut. In the city of Norwich, the state funds 100 percent of program costs and Norwich pays for administrative costs.
- c. Illinois. In addition to Chicago, there are 1,455 local governmental units, of which 2 are cities, 17 are counties, and the remaining 1,436 are townships.
- d. Maine. The state administers the program in unorganized territories of the state.
- e. Wisconsin. Counties with a population of 500,000 or more (currently only Milwaukee County) are prohibited by state statute from having a non-medical program but they may have a medical program.
- f. North Dakota (Cass County). The state mandates that counties provide the funds for indigent burials and for indigent health care. Although Cass County does not have a general assistance medical program, indigent persons are referred to federally funded sliding-fee clinics.

## **GENERAL ASSISTANCE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

States and counties set General Assistance eligibility criteria to target the specific populations considered most in need or deserving of assistance. Generally, these populations are low-income persons or families who are categorically ineligible for or are awaiting determination for federally funded cash assistance. Program requirements are created for other purposes, such as transitioning recipients to work through work requirements and reducing fraud through fingerprinting requirements. Although some GA programs have flexible eligibility and program requirements, most programs have a fixed set of rules. This section summarizes the various eligibility criteria and program requirements and describes how they vary across state GA programs and county programs. In states where program rules vary by county or locality, information was obtained from a focal county as described in the introduction.

Eligibility and program requirements are classified here into six categories: (1) categorical eligibility requirements, which limit benefits to certain types of persons or families; (2) financial eligibility requirements, which define financial need; (3) residency requirements; (4) citizenship requirements; (5) drug screening and treatment requirements; and (6) work requirements. In addition, many states have various other requirements such as requiring recipients to have a social security number, to be fingerprinted, or to apply for all federally funded assistance for which they are eligible.

### **Categorical Eligibility Requirements**

Categorical eligibility requirements restrict eligibility to specific categories of individuals

or families. While some programs provide assistance to all persons and families who do not meet the categorical eligibility requirements for federal cash assistance or who are awaiting eligibility for a federal assistance program, such as SSI, most states are more restrictive in the populations they serve. Of the 35 state General Assistance programs, 25 have categorical eligibility requirements. The remaining 10 states provide assistance to all categories of financially needy persons who do not qualify for, or are not receiving, federally funded cash assistance programs.<sup>9</sup> Of the seven county programs, six have categorical eligibility requirements and one county provides assistance to all financially needy persons and families.

Categorical eligibility requirements are generally based on the family status and/or employability of the recipient. Table 3 provides detailed state-by-state descriptions of categorical eligibility requirements divided into three broad categories of eligibility: (1) disabled, elderly, and other unemployable adults; (2) children and families with children; and (3) employable adults without children. General descriptions of the various categories are presented below.

#### *Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons*

Persons with disabilities, elderly persons, and other unemployable persons are the most likely to be eligible for General Assistance. Thirty-four of the 35 state GA programs provide assistance to at least a portion of the disabled, elderly, or otherwise unemployable population ineligible for federal assistance, including 24 states with categorical eligibility requirements and the 10 states without categorical eligibility requirements. Additionally, each of the seven county GA programs provides assistance to at least a portion of this population. However, most states and counties differ with respect to the specific categories of disabled, elderly, and other

unemployable persons served. For example, Massachusetts provides assistance to persons who are disabled at least 60 days, while Ohio provides assistance to persons who are disabled at least nine months. In addition, states may have contrasting definitions of “unemployable” persons. For instance, although both Connecticut and Vermont provide assistance to persons over age 55, Connecticut considers all such persons elderly and unemployable while Vermont considers some of them employable and subjects them to work requirements. Specific categories of disabled, elderly, and other unemployable persons generally include:

- *Persons with a permanent disability.* This category includes persons who meet the Social Security Administration's definition of disabled (i.e., persons with a medically verified disability—physical or mental—that is expected to last for at least 12 months or to result in death and that is severe enough to prevent the individual from engaging in “substantial gainful activity”). It includes persons who may be eligible for SSI and are awaiting SSI eligibility determination.<sup>10</sup> Because it sometimes takes 12 or more months to determine eligibility, states provide GA to SSI applicants during the interim and typically refer to this assistance as “interim assistance.” Once these persons are accepted for SSI, they receive a lump-sum payment retroactive to the application date. States may require that this payment be used to repay the state for any interim assistance received. Some states end assistance once all SSI appeals have been exhausted. In addition to persons awaiting SSI determination, states provide assistance to those who have a permanent disability as defined by the state but who do not qualify for SSI. For instance, Oregon provides assistance to persons with a permanent disability who are ineligible for SSI because of their immigrant status.<sup>11</sup>
- *Persons with a temporary disability.* This category includes persons who have a disability but are unable to collect SSI benefits because the disability is temporary (i.e., expected to last less than 12 months). States vary, however, as to the minimum expected duration of the disability required to be eligible for benefits. Requirements range from 30 days to 9 months.
- *Elderly persons.* SSI also awards benefits to persons age 65 or older who meet the income eligibility criteria. A number of states, however, provide GA to elderly persons who, for whatever reason, do not meet the SSI criteria or are awaiting SSI determination. Some of these states have a less restrictive definition of “elderly” and award benefits to persons over 55 or 60 until they become eligible for SSI at age 65. In some other states, persons 55 to 65 may still be eligible, but are classified as “employable” persons and are subject to work requirements. As a result, they would be included in the employable adult category

in table 3.

- *Caretakers of an incapacitated spouse or child.* This category includes persons who are unable to engage in work activity because of the time commitments of caring for an incapacitated spouse or child.
- *Persons in a drug or alcohol abuse treatment program.* A few states provide GA to persons considered “unemployable” because they are currently enrolled in a drug or alcohol abuse treatment program, usually a state-approved or -licensed facility. Rigid time limits and additional requirements are often imposed on persons in this category.

### *Children and Families with Children*

Twenty-four of the 35 state GA programs provide assistance to low-income children or families with children, including 14 states with categorical eligibility requirements and 10 states without categorical eligibility requirements. Only two of the seven county programs provide assistance to low-income families with children, including one county with categorical eligibility requirements and one county without categorical eligibility requirements. Specific categories of eligible children and families with children include:

- *Families with children.* Under the former Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, two-parent families who were recently unemployed or had limited work histories were ineligible for assistance. Some states, therefore, chose to cover these families through their General Assistance programs. Although states may now choose to assist all two-parent families under TANF, some states continue to assist these families through their GA program. Other categories of families that may also be ineligible for TANF assistance include families with a child who is not related to the principal caretaker; immigrant families who arrived after August 22, 1996, or who arrived earlier but are considered unqualified; and families who reached the 60-month federal TANF time limit.<sup>12</sup>
- *Pregnant women in their first two trimesters.* Under the former AFDC program, states had the option of defining AFDC eligibility to include women pregnant with their first child, but only after the pregnancy had reached the final trimester. Some states, therefore, chose to provide GA during the first two trimesters until they were eligible for AFDC. Although states may now choose to provide assistance to pregnant women in the first two trimesters under TANF, some states continue to provide assistance to these persons through their GA program.

- *Unattached children.* This category includes children, sometimes referred to as unrelated children, who are ineligible for TANF because they live with an adult caretaker who is not a parent or relative. Some states provide assistance only to the child, while other states provide assistance to the caretaker in addition to the unrelated child, as noted above in the families with children category.
- *Emancipated minors.* This category includes minors, generally between the ages of 16 and 18, who no longer live with a caretaker and thus are not eligible for TANF.

While the above list covers most of the categories of assistance that include families with children, it is necessary to advise caution when attempting to compare states on the generosity of their programs with respect to providing assistance to children or families with children. Some of the categories of families with children listed above are technically eligible to receive federal TANF assistance, including all two-parent families and all pregnant women.

Some states, therefore, no longer provide assistance to these populations through their GA program. Instead, these states have moved these families to their state TANF programs, which generally provide higher benefits. Other states have continued to exclude these families from their TANF programs and either provide no assistance for these families or provide these families with assistance through their GA program. In addition, other categories of families with children, including families that reach the 60-month federal time limit and immigrant families, are eligible for assistance that counts toward the state TANF Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirement. While some states provide assistance to these families through their GA program and count GA funding to these families toward the TANF MOE requirement, other states either have created separate programs for these families that are not included in this report or have integrated these families into their TANF program. As a result, only a comprehensive survey of state TANF programs, TANF MOE programs, and GA programs would allow accurate comparisons of

eligibility for these families across states.

### *Employable Adults without Children*

Employable adults without children are the least likely population to be eligible for GA. Only 13 of the 35 state GA programs provide assistance to employable adults without children, including 3 states with categorical eligibility requirements and 10 states without categorical eligibility requirements. Additionally, only one of the seven county programs—the only county program without categorical eligibility requirements—provides assistance to employable adults without children. Specific categories of able-bodied adults without children include:

- *All employable adults without children.* This category generally includes able-bodied adults between 18 and 65 who are deemed able to find employment. Many of these recipients are subject to work requirements.
- *Able-bodied adults with some barriers to employment.* This category consists of able-bodied persons who have some barriers to employment, such as lack of education or inability to speak English. Recipients in this category are also often required to participate in work or training programs.

### **Financial Eligibility Requirements**

All states and counties consider the financial situation of GA applicants when determining eligibility for benefits. Most set specific income and resource eligibility limits along with exemptions from these limits, while a few determine income or resource limits on a case-by-case basis. Table 4 provides a detailed state-by-state listing of these financial eligibility requirements.

In states where couples and families may apply for benefits, income limits usually vary according to family size. To a lesser extent, states vary income limits by living arrangements, eligibility category, applicant or recipient status, and location of residence. In states that vary

income limits according to these criteria, higher income limits are usually associated with persons who pay shelter costs, persons who are eligible due to a permanent disability, persons who are already receiving assistance, and persons who live in areas with a high cost of living. In contrast to income limits, resource limits are less likely to vary by family size, eligibility category, or residence.

Across state and county programs, income and resource eligibility limits vary considerably, but a majority limit assistance to only the “severely poor,” that is, those with incomes less than one-half of the federal poverty level (\$335 per month for an individual, \$569 for a family of three). In one state with a state GA program (New Hampshire) and in two county programs (Dade County, Florida, and Jefferson County, Kentucky), only those who have no income at all are eligible for benefits. In contrast, Hawaii’s program has the most generous income limits, awarding financial eligibility to individuals who have a monthly income up to \$1,239 and to couples with a monthly income up to \$1,674. Overall, most states set income eligibility limits between \$100 and \$400 per month for an individual and between \$300 and \$600 for a family of three. Several state GA programs and most county programs set resource limits at zero or count resources against the income limits. The majority of states, however, model their resource limits after the SSI program, the former AFDC program, or their current TANF programs, usually allowing \$1,000 to \$2,000 in resources.

States and counties usually exempt certain types of income and resources when determining eligibility, and states often model both income and resource exemption rules after their SSI and TANF programs. Income exemptions may include all or certain types of unearned income, a portion of earned income, or some combination of the two. Exempted unearned income

generally includes a wide range of federally provided financial benefits including Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) payments, benefits from the supplemental food program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and income from tribal land settlements. By providing earned income exemptions, states and counties create incentives for work by allowing recipients to gain employment without immediately losing their benefits. Resource exemptions typically include a home, an auto, property, and smaller items.

### **Residency Requirements**

Nearly all of the GA programs have residency requirements. All but one of the state GA programs and all of the county GA programs require recipients to reside in the state, county, or municipality where they apply for benefits. Only New Hampshire does not have a residency requirement. In addition, 7 of the 35 state GA programs and 3 of the 7 county programs require applicants to prove residency for a specified period of time before they become eligible for full benefits.<sup>13</sup> These durational residency requirements range from 15 days to 12 months. Most durational residency requirements apply to all applicants and deny all benefits until the durational residency requirements are met, although there are two exceptions. In Connecticut, only immigrants are subject to the durational residency requirement. In New York, recipients subject to the durational residency requirement receive 50 percent of New York's benefit or the benefit amount from their previous state, whichever is greater.

### **Citizenship Requirements**

In the 1996 Urban Institute survey of General Assistance programs, most states reported

providing GA benefits to citizens and legal immigrants, while a few states reported providing benefits regardless of citizenship or immigration status. The passage of PRWORA dramatically changed immigrant eligibility for financial assistance. While PRWORA focused primarily on immigrant eligibility for federal benefits, it also permitted states to exclude certain immigrants for the purpose of determining GA eligibility. In response, many states now distinguish immigrants according to classifications created under PRWORA.

Fourteen of the 35 state programs, but none of the county programs, restrict benefits to citizens and qualified immigrants only.<sup>14</sup> In addition, eight of these states distinguish between qualified immigrants who arrived on or before August 22, 1996 (the date PRWORA was signed into law), and qualified immigrants who arrived after August 22, 1996. These states either completely deny eligibility to immigrants arriving after August 22, 1996, or allow immigrants who arrived after that date to become eligible only after five years in the country. Twenty state GA programs and 6 county programs provide benefits to citizens and most legal immigrants, although 2 of these states restrict some benefits to only citizens and qualified immigrants, and one of these states does not provide benefits to legal immigrants who arrived after August 22, 1996. Only one of the 35 state GA programs and one of the 7 county GA programs provide benefits to illegal immigrants in addition to legal immigrants and citizens. Six of the states with state GA programs, but none of the county programs, also require that eligible immigrants take steps to become citizens in order to remain eligible for benefits.<sup>15</sup>

### **Drug Screening Requirements**

As shown in table 5, 3 of the 35 state GA programs include drug screening as a

requirement for eligibility, while none of the county programs include such requirements. In each of the three states, recipients testing positive for drug use are required to participate in a treatment program as a condition of eligibility, usually in a state-sponsored or state-licensed treatment facility. In addition, 18 of the 35 state GA programs and 2 of the 7 county programs require drug or alcohol abuse treatment if an applicant or recipient is found to be dependent on drugs or alcohol. Rather than screening all applicants for drugs, most of these programs refer persons suspected of or known to be chemically dependent to an appropriate facility for assessment. Payments to recipients participating in a substance abuse treatment program are often only made through vendors for specific services provided, or through protective payees.

### **Work Requirements**

In addition to requirements that must be met at the time of initial application, many states impose requirements necessary to maintain benefits. Participation in work or training programs is perhaps the most common of these. Work requirements are found in those states that provide assistance to employable adults with and without children, although not all of these states impose work requirements. As shown in table 5, 15 of the 18 state programs that extend eligibility to employable adults with or without children require participation in work or training programs. The one county program that provides assistance to employable adults does not require participation in a work or training program.

The work requirements and training programs vary considerably by state, as shown in table 6. Those required to meet work requirements or participate in work programs generally include all able-bodied recipients, with some exemptions for caretakers, mothers with small

children, elderly persons, students, and persons already employed. Although 10 states provide some opportunities for job training, counseling, or education, the emphasis in most states is on finding private sector employment or "working off" the benefit amount through public sector employment. Recipients who fail to comply with the work requirements are sanctioned in most states, usually losing their entire benefit for a specified period of time. In some states, each instance of noncompliance results in sanctions of progressively longer duration. The duration of sanctions ranges from seven days to one year. Many GA recipients are also receiving Food Stamp benefits and thus are subject to Food Stamp work requirements. However, only 10 of the programs with work requirements coordinate their requirements with Food Stamp employment and training programs.

**Table 3: General Assistance Categories of Eligibility**  
(Summer 1998)

**State GA Programs**

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Children and Families with Children</b>	<b>Employable Adults without Children</b>
Alabama	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		
Alaska 1. General Relief Assistance  2. Interim Assistance	1. All categories of financially needy persons who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.  2. Elderly, blind, or disabled persons awaiting SSI determination.	1. All categories of financially needy persons who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.  2. Not eligible	1. All categories of financially needy persons who do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.  2. Not eligible
Arizona	Persons who are disabled at least 12 months; caretakers of disabled individuals; and married couples if both meet eligibility criteria and have no children.	Not eligible	Not eligible
Arkansas	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		
California (Los Angeles County)	All categories of financially needy persons who are not receiving or do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.		
Colorado Aid to the Needy Disabled	Persons ages 18–59 who are disabled at least six months.	Not eligible	Not eligible

State (Focal County)	Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons <sup>a</sup>	Children and Families with Children	Employable Adults without Children
Connecticut	<p>Unemployable individuals who are unable to work for six months or more, full-time high school students 18 and over, over age 65, over age 55 with a history of chronic unemployment, caretakers of an incapacitated spouse or child, awaiting SSI determination, or VISTA volunteers.</p> <p>Transitional individuals who are persons with a disability lasting at least six months, or persons with a recent connection to the labor force with a disability lasting from two to six months.</p>	Families who are categorically ineligible for Connecticut's TANF program (e.g., families with unattached children); emancipated minors under age 16 or ages 16 to 17 and in high school (emancipated minors are categorized as "unemployable" for the benefit calculation).	Not eligible
Delaware	Persons who are temporarily or permanently disabled, elderly (55 and over), caretakers of disabled persons, or expecting to graduate from high school within two years.	Unattached children; emancipated minors who will graduate from high school within two years. <sup>b</sup>	Not eligible
District of Columbia	Not eligible	Unattached children	Not eligible
Florida	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)		
Georgia	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)		
Hawaii	Single persons or couples between the ages of 18 and 65 who have a disability that precludes gainful employment for at least 60 days.	Not eligible	Not eligible
Idaho (Ada County)	Disabled persons <sup>c</sup>	Not eligible	Not eligible

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Children and Families with Children</b>	<b>Employable Adults without Children</b>
Illinois (City of Chicago) 1. Transitional Assistance  2. Family and Children Assistance	1. Unemployable persons: disabled, unless disability based solely on substance abuse; over 55 with limited work history; caretakers for disabled; homeless as a result of a court order, domestic violence, or natural disaster; full-time high school or vocational student under age 20; persons required to take certain prescription medicines.  2. Not eligible	1. Not eligible  2. Families with unattached children under age 18. Families with unattached 18-year-old, full-time high school student expected to graduate before age 19.	1. Not eligible  2. Not eligible
Indiana (Center Township of Marion County)	All categories of financially needy persons.		
Iowa (Polk County)	All categories of financially needy persons who are not receiving or do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance.		
Kansas	Disabled persons awaiting SSI determination and caretakers of disabled persons; couples who meet eligibility criteria.	Not eligible	Not eligible
Kentucky	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)		
Louisiana	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		
Maine	All categories of financially needy persons.		
Maryland	Persons with a medical disability that precludes employment for at least three months.	Not eligible	Not eligible

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Children and Families with Children</b>	<b>Employable Adults without Children</b>
Massachusetts	Persons disabled at least 60 days who are ineligible for SSI or awaiting SSI determination; elderly persons over age 65 waiting to become eligible for SSI; students under age 21 in a school or training program; caretakers of disabled persons; participants in the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Program.	Families categorically ineligible for Massachusetts's TANF program (e.g., families with unattached children, two-parent families without sufficient work histories).	Not eligible
Michigan	Individuals or couples who are disabled or 65 and older receiving SSI; awaiting SSI determination; temporarily disabled for at least 90 days; Special Education students under age 26; caretakers of disabled persons; in a residential substance abuse treatment center, adult foster care, home for the aged, or county infirmary.	Not eligible	Not eligible
Minnesota	Elderly (over age 55), persons with a mental or physical disability that is permanent or temporary; caretakers of disabled persons; women in battered women's shelters; persons residing in a group residential home; persons with excessive travel time to job; persons unemployable as determined by a vocational specialist; persons performing court-ordered services; full-time students eligible for displaced homemaker services; high school students over age 18 whose primary language is not English; persons with a learning disability; persons with a drug or alcohol addiction.	Unattached children; emancipated minors.	Not eligible

State (Focal County)	Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons <sup>a</sup>	Children and Families with Children	Employable Adults without Children
Mississippi	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		
Missouri	Persons with temporary disabilities lasting at least 90 days; persons with a permanent disability waiting to become eligible for SSI; caretakers of disabled persons.	Emancipated minors <sup>d</sup>	Not eligible
Montana	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)		
Nebraska 1. State Disability Program  2. County General Assistance <sup>e</sup>	1. Persons ages 21–64 with disabilities lasting at least six months, including those awaiting SSI determination.  2. All categories of financially needy persons who are not receiving or do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance.	1. Not eligible  2. All categories of financially needy persons who are not receiving or do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance.	1. Not eligible  2. All categories of financially needy persons who are not receiving or do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance.
Nevada (Clark County)	All categories of financially needy persons who are not receiving or do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance.		
New Hampshire (City of Manchester)	All categories of financially needy persons who are not receiving or do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance.		
New Jersey	Individuals at least 18 years old who are unemployable due to temporary or permanent disability.	Emancipated minors 16 or older.	Employable individuals at least 18 years old.
New Mexico	Persons with a temporary disability lasting at least 30 days; persons with a permanent disability.	Unattached children; immigrant families ineligible for TANF.	Not eligible
New York	All categories of financially needy persons who are not receiving or do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance.		
North Carolina	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)		

State (Focal County)	Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons <sup>a</sup>	Children and Families with Children	Employable Adults without Children
North Dakota	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)		
Ohio	Persons disabled for at least nine months, elderly (60 years or older), persons actively participating in a treatment program certified by the Ohio Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services.	Unattached children; pregnant women in first two trimesters.	Not eligible
Oklahoma	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		
Oregon 1. General Assistance  2. Temporary Assistance Program	1. Persons disabled for at least 12 months and awaiting SSI determination; persons with a disability needing long-term care services.  2. Disabled persons who are ineligible for SSI because of their alien status.	1. Not eligible  2. Not eligible	1. Not eligible  2. Not eligible
Pennsylvania	Persons with a temporary or permanent disability; persons with active participation in a drug or alcohol program that precludes employment; caretaker of disabled person; victims of domestic violence; full-time students ages 18 to 20 in a secondary school or equivalent program.	Pregnant women ineligible for TANF; children who are ineligible for TANF (including unattached children, emancipated minors, children in two-parent families ineligible for TANF); parents in a two-parent family caring for a GA-eligible child under age 13, caretakers of a GA-eligible, unattached child under age 13.	Not eligible
Rhode Island	Disabled persons awaiting SSI determination. <sup>f</sup>	Not eligible	Not eligible
South Carolina	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		
South Dakota (Minnehaha County)	All categories of financially needy persons in emergency need.		
Tennessee	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		

State (Focal County)	Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons <sup>a</sup>	Children and Families with Children	Employable Adults without Children
Texas	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		
Utah 1. GA-Self-Sufficiency  2. GA-Working Toward Employment	1. Single adults or married couples without children who face barriers to employment for at least 30 days as determined by a medical exam.  2. Not eligible	1. Not eligible  2. Not eligible	1. Not eligible  2. Able-bodied single adults or married couples with no children who lack skills for employment.
Vermont	Elderly age 65 or older; persons disabled for at least 30 days.	Families with children (pending TANF assistance).	Able-bodied adults with two of the following barriers to employment: age 55 or older, eighth-grade education or below, illiterate, employed less than 6 months in the past 5 years and has been a full-time student less than 6 months in the past 5 years, released from a mental institution in the past 6 months, or currently in a drug treatment program for no more than 36 months.
Virginia (Fairfax County)	Persons awaiting SSI determination; persons ineligible for SSI or TANF and unemployable for at least 30 days due to disability, age, lack of training, illness in the family, or home responsibilities; persons in institutional care.	Unattached children; emancipated minors.	Not eligible

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Children and Families with Children</b>	<b>Employable Adults without Children</b>
Washington	General Assistance-Unemployable (GA-U): persons who are unemployable due to a disability (physical or mental) lasting at least 90 days.	General Assistance for Pregnant Women (GA-S): pregnant women in first two trimesters. General Assistance for children living with a court-appointed legal guardian (GA-H): unattached children.	Not eligible
West Virginia	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		
Wisconsin (Dane County)	Persons under age 65 who are unemployable due to a temporary or permanent disability (including drug or alcohol addiction).	Not eligible	Not eligible
Wyoming	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		

#### County GA Programs

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Children and Families with Children</b>	<b>Employable Adults without Children</b>
Colorado GA (City and County of Denver)	All categories of financially needy persons who are not receiving or do not qualify for federally funded cash assistance programs.		
Florida (Miami-Dade County)	Persons who were gainfully employed 12 out of past 18 months before being diagnosed with a short-term disability and whose income has been interrupted within the past 60 days; disabled persons awaiting SSI determination; couples without children in which both are disabled, or one is disabled and the other is unable to work because of extraordinary circumstances.	Families in which both parents are disabled, or one is disabled and the other is unable to work because of extraordinary circumstances.	Not eligible

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Disabled, Elderly, and Other Unemployable Persons<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Children and Families with Children</b>	<b>Employable Adults without Children</b>
Georgia (Fulton County)	Disabled persons	Not eligible	Not eligible
Kentucky (Jefferson County)	Persons with a temporary disability and persons with a permanent disability awaiting SSI determination. <sup>g</sup>	Not eligible	Not eligible
Montana (Yellowstone County)	Elderly and persons with a permanent disability awaiting SSI determination; persons with a temporary disability ineligible for SSI.	Not eligible <sup>h</sup>	Not eligible
North Carolina (Durham County)	Persons disabled for at least 30 days. <sup>i</sup>	Not eligible	Not eligible
North Dakota (Cass County)	Disabled and elderly persons awaiting SSI determination. <sup>j</sup>	Not eligible <sup>j</sup>	Not eligible

Source: Urban Institute 1998

- a. Unless otherwise specified, “Elderly” refers to persons who are 65 years old or older.
- b. Delaware. Two-parent families with children are technically eligible for GA, but this category of assistance is not currently used because they also qualify for TANF. Caretakers of unattached children are eligible for assistance only if they meet the criteria for unemployable recipients.
- c. Idaho (Ada County). All categories of financially needy persons are eligible for General Assistance benefits. However, able-bodied adults and families of able-bodied adults are only eligible for one month of assistance per year.
- d. Missouri. Although families of three ineligible for TANF are technically eligible for General Relief, no family has met the eligibility requirements in the past four years.
- e. Nebraska. Information represents the guidelines developed by the Nebraska Association of County Officials and the state Department of Social Services used in the administration of the General Assistance programs for the 56 of 93 counties that elect to contract with the state.

- f. Rhode Island. Persons with a temporary disability (lasting at least 30 days) are eligible for medical assistance and may receive an assistance grant for one to two months. Cash assistance for those with a temporary disability is made on a case-by-case basis dependent on the applicant's hardship and statement of need. It is not an entitlement and no appeals are accepted. Disabled couples can also receive benefits, but they are assessed separately as two individuals.
- g. Kentucky (Jefferson County). All categories of financially needy persons and families are eligible for financial assistance, but only those recipients who are ill or disabled may receive assistance for more than one month out of the year.
- h. Montana (Yellowstone County). Families are technically eligible if at least one parent is disabled. In the past four years, however, no families have received General Relief because they receive TANF.
- i. North Carolina (Durham County). Elderly persons age 62 and over and families with minor children in the home are also eligible for assistance, but only for one month out of the year.
- j. North Dakota (Cass County). Families with or without children who are homeless due to fire or other natural disaster are eligible for one month's rent. Homeless persons can receive one week's motel charges if YWCA is full. Persons who are unemployed due to a temporary disability and have a 12-month work history and a doctor's verification are eligible for assistance one month out of every year.

**Table 4: General Assistance Financial Eligibility Criteria**  
(Summer 1998)

**State GA programs**

State (Focal County)	Monthly Income Eligibility Limits <sup>a</sup>				Asset Limits	
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons	Income Exemptions <sup>b</sup>	Asset Limit	Asset Exemptions <sup>c</sup>
Alabama	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					
Alaska 1. General Relief Assistance  2. Interim Assistance	1. \$300  2. Applicants: \$494 Recipients: \$917	1. \$400  2. Applicants: \$741 (or \$494 each) Recipients: \$1,359 (or \$917 each)	1. \$500  2. Not applicable	1. Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend <sup>d</sup>  2. First \$20 of income, \$65 of earned income plus half of remaining earnings, the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend.	1. \$500  2. Individual: \$2,000 Couple: \$3,000	1. Home, one auto, property up for sale or producing income  2. Home, \$4,500 auto, income-producing property
Arizona	\$173 <sup>e</sup>	\$233	Not applicable	\$24 for employment-related expenses	\$1,000	\$50,000 home, \$1,200 auto, property if living on it
Arkansas	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					
California (Los Angeles County)	Applicants: \$221 Recipients: \$611 of earned income, \$221 of unearned income <sup>f</sup>	Applicants: \$375 Recipients: \$775 of earned income, \$375 of unearned income	Applicants: \$450 Recipients: \$831 of earned income, \$450 of unearned income	None	Individual applicant: \$50 Couple applicants: \$100 Family of three applicants: \$100 Recipients: \$1,500	\$4,500 auto, \$34,000 real property, \$1,500 personal property
Colorado Aid to the Needy Disabled	\$229	\$458 (\$229 each)	Not applicable	None	Individual: \$2,000 Couple: \$3,000	Home; one auto, if used for employment or for medical appointments; real property in use

State (Focal County)	Monthly Income Eligibility Limits <sup>a</sup>				Asset Limits	
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons	Income Exemptions <sup>b</sup>	Asset Limit	Asset Exemptions <sup>c</sup>
Connecticut	Unemployable: \$350  Transitional: \$200	\$407	\$500 <sup>g</sup>	\$150 in gross wages	\$250 individual; \$500 couple; \$750 family of three	Home, \$4,500 auto, property for nine months if making an effort to sell
Delaware	\$123	\$166	\$224	\$50 earned income; \$160/month dependent care expenses for each child who resides in the home and receives GA	\$1,000	Home, \$1,500 auto, property for six months
District of Columbia <sup>h</sup>	\$239	\$298	\$379	None	\$1,000	Home and \$1,500 auto
Florida	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)					
Georgia	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)					
Hawaii	\$1,239	\$1,674	Not applicable	20% of earned income, \$200 of the remainder, and then 36% of the remainder	\$5,000	Home, auto, and daily living property
Idaho (Ada County)	Determined on a case-by-case basis. <sup>i</sup>			None	\$0	Home and one auto

State (Focal County)	Monthly Income Eligibility Limits <sup>a</sup>				Asset Limits	
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons	Income Exemptions <sup>b</sup>	Asset Limit	Asset Exemptions <sup>c</sup>
Illinois (City of Chicago) 1. Transitional Assistance  2. Family and Children Assistance	1. \$100  2. \$212	1. Not applicable  2. \$278	1. Not applicable  2. \$377	1. \$322 of earned income for 3 months out of a 12-month period; \$75 of earned income for employment expenses  2. \$90 of earned income for employment expenses	\$2,000 for one person, \$3,000 for two persons and an additional \$50 for each additional person.	Home, one auto
Indiana (Center Township of Marion County)	\$369 <sup>j</sup>	\$497	\$626	None. However, trustee has discretion to exempt income.	Resources count against income limits.	Home, \$1,200 auto, income-producing property
Iowa (Polk County)	\$343	\$361	\$426	Granted on a case-by-case basis	Determined on a case-by-case basis; only liquid assets are considered.	
Kansas <sup>k</sup>	\$196	\$268	Not applicable	\$90 for work expenses; 40% of earned income	\$2,000	Home, one auto, income-producing property or property essential for employment
Kentucky	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)					
Louisiana	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					
Maine	Varies by county. Average: \$387	Varies by county. Average: \$453	Varies by county. Average: \$580	Travel and child care expenses for work or job search	Available resources count against income limits	Home, \$5,000 auto, income-producing property

State (Focal County)	Monthly Income Eligibility Limits <sup>a</sup>				Asset Limits	
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons	Income Exemptions <sup>b</sup>	Asset Limit	Asset Exemptions <sup>c</sup>
Maryland	\$0 earned income; \$157 unearned income	Not applicable	Not applicable	None	\$1,500	Home, auto
Massachusetts	\$339 <sup>l</sup>	\$430	\$522	\$90 for work expenses; \$30 of earnings.	\$250 individual; \$500 two or more <sup>m</sup>	Home, \$1,500 auto
Michigan	\$246 <sup>n</sup>	\$401	Not applicable	\$200 and 20% of remaining earnings.	\$3,000 in cash resources	Home, one auto, property
Minnesota	\$203	\$260	Not applicable	None	\$1,000	Home, auto for self-employment
Mississippi	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					
Missouri	\$181 (of which no more than \$80 can be earned income)	\$256 (of which no more than \$160 can be earned income)	Not applicable	Irregular or unpredictable income.	\$1,000 individual; \$2,000 couple	Home
Montana	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)					
Nebraska 1. State Disability Program 2. County General Assistance <sup>o</sup>	1. \$645 2. \$225	1. Not applicable 2. \$280	1. Not applicable 2. \$350	1. \$20 of income, \$65 of earned income plus half of remaining earnings. 2. Reasonable self-employment expenses; \$40 work transportation allowance.	1. \$2,000 2. All available resources count against income limits.	1. Home, \$4,500 auto, income-producing property for 6 months 2. \$5,000 home, \$1,500 auto

State (Focal County)	Monthly Income Eligibility Limits <sup>a</sup>				Asset Limits	
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons	Income Exemptions <sup>b</sup>	Asset Limit	Asset Exemptions <sup>c</sup>
Nevada (Clark County)	\$277	\$372	\$466	Determined on a case-by-case basis.	\$0	Home; one auto; second auto for employment or medical needs; up to five acres of attached property for individuals who live in rural areas.
New Hampshire (City of Manchester)	\$0	\$0	\$0	None	\$0	Home if living in it; one auto for medical needs or employment.
New Jersey	Employable: \$140 Unemployable: \$210	Employable: \$193 Unemployable: \$289	Not applicable	100% of earned income for one month; 50% of earned income thereafter.	\$2,000	Home, \$9,500 auto <sup>p</sup>
New Mexico	\$231	\$310	\$389	Earnings from working over 24 hours a week; \$150 and half of remainder; child care costs; self-employment costs.	\$2,000 noncash, \$1,500 cash resource	Home; auto, if public transportation not available; an additional auto for each work-ready person; savings in individual development accounts.
New York	\$352 <sup>q</sup>	\$468	\$577	\$90 work expenses; earned income tax credit (EITC). For families with dependent children, 45% of gross income up to the poverty level.	\$2,000 in cash or \$3,000 if a household member is over age 60	Home; \$4,500 auto; personal property necessary for business or employment; savings in Individual Development Accounts.
North Carolina	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)					
North Dakota	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)					

State (Focal County)	Monthly Income Eligibility Limits <sup>a</sup>				Asset Limits	
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons	Income Exemptions <sup>b</sup>	Asset Limit	Asset Exemptions <sup>c</sup>
Ohio	\$115	\$159	\$193	\$250 plus one-half the remainder of earned income.	\$1,000	Home, \$4,650 auto, property if living on it.
Oklahoma	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					
Oregon 1. General Assistance 2. Temporary Assistance Program	1. \$298 2. \$275	1. \$596 2. \$550	1. Not applicable 2. Not applicable	14% of earned income	\$1,500 in total resources of which no more than \$50 can be in cash or other liquid assets	Home, \$1,500 auto, property
Pennsylvania	\$215 <sup>r</sup>	\$330	\$421	None	\$250 for an individual; \$1,000 couple and family of three	Home, one auto
Rhode Island	\$327	Not applicable	Not applicable	First \$20 of income, \$65 of earned income plus half of remaining earnings.	\$400	Home, \$1,500 auto
South Carolina	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					
South Dakota (Minnehaha County)	\$658	\$884	\$1,111	None	\$0 in liquid resources. \$2,000 in nonliquid resources for an individual; \$4,000 in nonliquid resources for a couple or family of three	\$30,000 home
Tennessee	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					
Texas	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					

State (Focal County)	Monthly Income Eligibility Limits <sup>a</sup>				Asset Limits	
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons	Income Exemptions <sup>b</sup>	Asset Limit	Asset Exemptions <sup>c</sup>
Utah	\$261	\$362	Not applicable	\$100 of earned income; 50% of the remainder	\$2,000	Home if living in it, \$8,000 auto
Vermont	\$449 in Chittenden County; \$404 rest of state	\$554 in Chittenden County; \$508 rest of state	\$656 in Chittenden County; \$636 rest of state	None	\$1,500 for elderly or disabled persons; \$2,250 for elderly or disabled couples; for all others, resources count against income limits.	Home, auto, real personal property
Virginia (Fairfax County)	\$220	\$294	\$354	None	\$1,000	Home if residing in it, one auto, income- producing property.
Washington	GA-U: \$339 GA-S: \$349 GA-H: \$349	GA-U: \$428 GA-H: \$440	GA-H: \$546	20% of earnings, plus \$85, plus half the remainder	\$1,000	Home; \$5,000 auto or any auto used to transport a disabled member; property; \$3,000 in an individual development account.
West Virginia	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					
Wisconsin (Dane County)	\$247	Not applicable	Not applicable	None	\$300	Home, one auto
Wyoming	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					

**County GA Programs**

State (Focal County)	Monthly Income Eligibility Limits				Asset Limits	
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons	Income Exemptions	Asset Limit	Asset Exemptions
Colorado GA (City and County of Denver)	\$839 <sup>s</sup>	\$1,130	\$1,422	None	\$0	One auto
Florida (Dade County)	\$0	\$0	\$0	None	\$0	Home, one auto
Georgia (Fulton County)	\$225	\$337	Not applicable	None	\$400	\$1,000 auto
Kentucky (Jefferson County)	\$0	\$0	Not applicable	None	Determined on a case-by-case basis.	
Montana (Yellowstone County)	\$272	\$366	Not applicable	None	Resources count against income eligibility limits.	Home, \$1,500 auto
North Carolina (Durham County)	\$724	\$974	Not applicable	15% percent of earned income	Resources count against income eligibility limits.	Determined on a case- by-case basis.
North Dakota (Cass County)	\$337 <sup>t</sup>	Not applicable	Not applicable	None	\$300	Home

Source: Urban Institute 1998

- a. In some states, income limits may differ depending upon whether the recipients pay their own shelter costs. All of the income limits listed assume the recipients pay their own shelter costs.
- b. Only major income exemptions (such as earned income and child care exemptions) are listed. In addition to these exemptions, states may exempt other income, including certain federally provided income benefits such as WIC benefits, LIHEAP payments, payments to VISTA workers, student loans, etc.
- c. In addition to the equity value of the applicant's home and auto, other items that do not count against the asset limit may include personal belongings, insurance, income producing property, tools used for employment, and burial plots.

- d. Alaska. The Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend is a share of the state's oil profits that are distributed annually to state residents.
- e. Arizona. The income limit for individuals not paying rent is \$108, and the income limit for couples not paying rent is \$145.
- f. California (Los Angeles County). Income limits for recipients may be lower depending on living arrangements.
- g. Connecticut. Income limits for families of three vary according to living costs in three regions of the state. The information shown here is for Region B, which includes approximately 90 percent of the caseload.
- h. District of Columbia. The income, assets, and resources of the caretaker of the eligible child are not considered in determining the eligibility of the child.
- i. Idaho (Ada County). Eligibility is determined by comparing income with expenses for necessities of life. Applicants are expected to use all current and potential resources before seeking county assistance.
- j. Indiana (Center Township of Marion County). Income limits are 55 percent of the federal poverty level.
- k. Kansas. There are four different income limit and benefit schedules throughout the state, which are based on the cost of living in each county. The majority of recipients are in counties with the income limits listed here.
- l. Massachusetts. Caretakers are eligible only if the disabled person's monthly income is less than \$1,500.
- m. Massachusetts. Caretakers are eligible only if the disabled person's assets are less than \$2,000.
- n. Michigan. For individuals living in residential substance abuse treatment centers, income may not exceed \$44/month. For individuals living in adult foster care or county infirmary, income may not exceed \$652/month for personal care and \$581/month for domiciliary. For individuals living in a home for the aged, income may not exceed \$427/month.
- o. Nebraska. Information represents the guidelines developed by the Nebraska Association of County Officials and the state Department of Social Services used in the administration of the General Assistance programs for the 56 of 93 counties that elect to contract with the state.
- p. New Jersey. A second vehicle may be exempt up to \$4,650 if the assistance unit consists of two adults or if the vehicle is essential to commute to work or training or to transport a handicapped individual.
- q. New York. Values shown are for New York City. Income eligibility limits vary by county based on shelter and heating costs.
- r. Pennsylvania. Monthly income eligibility limits and benefit levels listed are for those counties with the highest benefit level.

- s. Colorado (City and County of Denver). The income eligibility limits reflect 125 percent of the federal poverty level.
- t. North Dakota (Cass County). If rent does not include heat, income may not exceed \$287 per month.

**Table 5: Other General Assistance Eligibility Criteria**  
(Summer 1998)

**State GA Programs**

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Residency Requirement</b>	<b>Citizenship Requirement<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Drug Screening/Treatment</b>	<b>Work Requirement</b>	<b>Other Requirements</b>
Alabama	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.				
Alaska 1. General Relief Assistance  2. Interim Assistance	1. State resident. No durational residency requirement.  2. State resident. No durational residency requirement.	1. Citizen or legal immigrant  2. Citizen or qualified immigrant who arrived before 8/23/96.	1. None  2. None	1. Yes  2. No	1. Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.  2. Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
Arizona	State resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or qualified immigrant (current and new).	None	No	Applicants must be fingerprinted.  Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
Arkansas	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.				
California (Los Angeles County)	County resident for at least 15 days.	Citizen or legal immigrant	All applicants are screened for drug use. If applicant fails the screening, they are referred for assessment and must go into treatment.	Yes	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible. Recipients must seek out any resources. Applicants, but not recipients, may not be fully employed.

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Residency Requirement</b>	<b>Citizenship Requirement<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Drug Screening/Treatment</b>	<b>Work Requirement</b>	<b>Other Requirements</b>
Colorado Aid to the Needy Disabled	State resident. No durational residency requirements.	Citizen or legal immigrant	Applicants are tested for drug use and recipients are periodically tested. If drug or alcohol addiction is a recipient's primary disability, the recipient is required to participate in a treatment program.	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible. Recipients cannot be prison inmate. Recipients cannot be diagnosed with a mental disease.
Connecticut	State resident. No durational residency requirement, except for qualified aliens entering the United States on or after 8/22/96, who must reside in the state for six months before becoming eligible for assistance.	Citizen or qualified immigrant (current and new). Immigrants must apply for citizenship to remain eligible for assistance.	No screening. However, suspected drug users are referred for evaluation. Drug-addicted recipients must be in a treatment program or on a waiting list to remain eligible.	No	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible. Recipients must be fingerprinted through a Digital Imaging process.
Delaware	State resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or qualified immigrant. Qualified immigrants arriving after 8/22/96 are barred from assistance for the first five years.	None	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible and access all potential resources.
District of Columbia	District resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or qualified immigrant (current and new).	None	None	None
Florida	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)				
Georgia	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)				

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Residency Requirement</b>	<b>Citizenship Requirement<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Drug Screening/Treatment</b>	<b>Work Requirement</b>	<b>Other Requirements</b>
Hawaii	State resident. No durational requirement.	Citizen or legal immigrant	No screening. However, if recipients are eligible for GA due to their substance abuse, they are required to participate in a drug treatment program.	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
Idaho (Ada County)	County resident for 30 days.	No citizenship requirement	No screening. However, those found to be substance abusers are referred for treatment.	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible. Disabled persons awaiting SSI determination must appeal if denied.
Illinois (City of Chicago)	State resident. No durational requirement.	Citizen or qualified immigrant.	None	Yes	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible. Caretakers must provide proof of relationship to child or proof that they have legal guardianship.
Indiana (Center Township of Marion County)	Township resident for 30 days. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis.	Citizen or qualified immigrant. Qualified immigrants arriving after 8/22/96 are ineligible for first five years. Eligible immigrants must apply for citizenship.	No screening. However, if recipients do have a drug problem, they are required to seek and maintain medical treatment.	Yes	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible. Recipients must file charges if there is spousal abuse. Recipients must file for child support.

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Residency Requirement</b>	<b>Citizenship Requirement<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Drug Screening/Treatment</b>	<b>Work Requirement</b>	<b>Other Requirements</b>
Iowa (Polk County)	State resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or legal immigrant	None	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
Kansas	State resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or qualified immigrant who applied for GA before 8/22/96. Qualified immigrants who applied after 8/22/96 are eligible after five years.	None	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
Kentucky	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)				
Louisiana	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.				
Maine	Resident of municipality where receiving benefits. No durational residency requirements.	Citizen or legal immigrant	No screening. However, no cost treatment is required if an addiction prevents work.	Yes (at town option)	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
Maryland	State resident. No durational residency requirements.	Citizen or legal immigrant	No screening. However, if found to be drug addicted, recipients must participate in treatment program and have payments made to a protective payee.	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Residency Requirement</b>	<b>Citizenship Requirement<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Drug Screening/Treatment</b>	<b>Work Requirement</b>	<b>Other Requirements</b>
Massachusetts	State resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or legal immigrant. Legal immigrants who applied for EAEDC after 7/1/97 must apply for citizenship.	No	Yes	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
Michigan	State resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or qualified immigrant who arrived before 8/23/96.	No screening. However, if a medical evaluation shows that substance abuse is the primary reason for the disability, the person is ineligible for assistance. If substance abuse is only a contributing factor to the disability the person is eligible for assistance but must seek treatment.	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible. Recipients may be required to follow a treatment plan to resolve their disability.
Minnesota	State resident for at least 30 days. <sup>b</sup>	Citizen or qualified immigrant (current and new). Immigrants must make effort to become a citizen. <sup>c</sup>	No screening. However, recipients suspected of drug dependency must participate in a chemical use assessment.	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible. All recipients must have a Social Security number.
Mississippi	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.				
Missouri	State resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or legal immigrant	None	None <sup>d</sup>	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible. Applicants cannot transfer property in order to become eligible.

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Residency Requirement</b>	<b>Citizenship Requirement<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Drug Screening/Treatment</b>	<b>Work Requirement</b>	<b>Other Requirements</b>
Montana	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)				
Nebraska 1. State Disability Program  2. County General Assistance <sup>c</sup>	1. State resident. No durational residency requirement.  2. County resident. No durational residency requirements.	1. Citizen or qualified immigrant (current and new)  2. Citizen or legal immigrant	1. None  2. No screening. However, if drug or alcohol addiction prevents applicants from working, they will be required to participate in any no-cost treatment program.	1. None  2. Yes	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
Nevada (Clark County)	County resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or legal immigrant	No screening. However, recipients who are found to have drug or alcohol addiction may be referred to treatment centers.	Yes	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
New Hampshire (City of Manchester)	No residency requirements.	Citizen or qualified immigrant (current and new). However, Manchester will not deny aid to someone in need.	None	Yes	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
New Jersey	Resident of municipality where receiving benefits. No durational residency requirements.	Citizen or legal immigrant who arrived before 8/23/96.	None <sup>f</sup>	Yes	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible. Applicants must have a Social Security card.

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Residency Requirement</b>	<b>Citizenship Requirement<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Drug Screening/Treatment</b>	<b>Work Requirement</b>	<b>Other Requirements</b>
New Mexico	State resident with intent to reside. No durational residency requirements.	Citizen or legal immigrant	No screening. However, if substance abuse is the cause of recipient's need for assistance, the recipient may be required to participate in a drug treatment program.	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
New York	Must be a state resident for 12 months to receive the full amount of assistance. New state residents are entitled to 50% of New York's benefit or the benefit of their previous state, whichever is greater. <sup>g</sup>	Citizen or legal immigrant	All applicants and recipients are screened for alcohol and drug abuse. Those assessed with an alcohol or drug abuse problem that makes them unable to work will be referred to an appropriate treatment program.	Yes	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible. All applicants are fingerprinted as a condition of receiving benefits.
North Carolina	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)				
North Dakota	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)				
Ohio	State resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or qualified immigrant who arrived before 8/23/96.	None	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
Oklahoma	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.				

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Residency Requirement</b>	<b>Citizenship Requirement<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Drug Screening/Treatment</b>	<b>Work Requirement</b>	<b>Other Requirements</b>
Oregon 1. General Assistance  2. Temporary Assistance Program	1. State resident. No durational residency requirement.  2. State resident. No durational residency requirement.	1. Citizen and qualified immigrants arriving before 8/23/96.  2. Qualified immigrants arriving after 8/22/96. Immigrants must pursue citizenship through the Naturalization Services Program.	1. and 2. No screening. However, if medical information states that a recipient has a substance abuse problem, the recipient will be required to participate in a treatment program.	None	1. Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.  2. Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
Pennsylvania	State resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or legal immigrant	No screening. However, substance abusers must participate in a treatment program.	Yes	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
Rhode Island	State resident. No durational residency requirements.	Citizen or qualified immigrant who arrived before 8/23/96.	None	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
South Carolina	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.				
South Dakota (Minnehaha County)	County resident or intent to remain in county. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or legal immigrant	No screening. However, recipients unable to work because of chemical dependency must participate in a treatment program.	Yes	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
Tennessee	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.				
Texas	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.				

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Residency Requirement</b>	<b>Citizenship Requirement<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Drug Screening/Treatment</b>	<b>Work Requirement</b>	<b>Other Requirements</b>
Utah 1. GA—Self Sufficiency  2. GA—Working Toward Employment	State resident or intent to become state resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or qualified immigrant who arrived before 8/23/96. Eligible immigrants must apply for citizenship.	No screening. If substance abuse is the only condition that incapacitates the applicant, they will not qualify for GA. If substance abuse is in addition to a qualifying condition, treatment is required as the work requirement.	Yes	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
Vermont	State resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or legal immigrant	No screening. However, recipients receiving treatment must show that they are participating and making progress to continue to receive benefits.	Yes	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
Virginia (Fairfax County)	County resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or legal immigrant	No screening. However, if unemployable and treatment would make employable, then recipients are required to participate in treatment.	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
Washington	State resident with intent to remain. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or legal immigrant	No screening. However, if recipient is drug or alcohol dependent, the recipient must participate in treatment.	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
West Virginia	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.				

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Residency Requirement</b>	<b>Citizenship Requirement<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Drug Screening/Treatment</b>	<b>Work Requirement</b>	<b>Other Requirements</b>
Wisconsin (Dane County)	County resident for at least six months.	Citizen or legal immigrant	None	None	Must apply for federally funded assistance if eligible.
Wyoming	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.				

**County GA Programs**

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Residency Requirement</b>	<b>Citizenship Requirement</b>	<b>Drug Screening/Treatment</b>	<b>Work Requirement</b>	<b>Other Requirements</b>
Colorado GA (City and County of Denver)	County resident for at least 30 days. <sup>h</sup>	Citizen or legal immigrant	None	None	None
Florida (Dade County)	County resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or legal immigrant	No screening. However, suspected substance abusers are required to seek treatment.	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible. Recipients must show proof of housing.
Georgia (Fulton County)	County resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or legal immigrant	No screening. However, if a doctor indicates that a recipient is drug addicted, the recipient must go into treatment.	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
Kentucky (Jefferson County)	County resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or legal immigrant	None	None	Disabled applicants must provide physician's statement verifying disability.

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Residency Requirement</b>	<b>Citizenship Requirement</b>	<b>Drug Screening/Treatment</b>	<b>Work Requirement</b>	<b>Other Requirements</b>
Montana (Yellowstone County)	County resident for 30 days.	Citizen or legal immigrant	None	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.
North Carolina (Durham County)	County resident for three months.	None	None	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible. Crisis must exist that will result in loss or lack of essential shelter, utilities, medical needs, or food.
North Dakota (Cass County)	County resident. No durational residency requirement.	Citizen or legal immigrant	None	None	Recipients must apply for federal assistance if eligible.

Source: Urban Institute 1998

- a. See the text for definitions of the various immigrant categories.
- b. Minnesota. Current law states that persons must be residents for 12 months or will receive the GA benefit level of their previous state, but this has been struck down by the courts and is in process of appeal.
- c. Minnesota. Exceptions are made for people who are unable to understand the rights and responsibilities of becoming a citizen or those who would be unable to pass the test.
- d. Missouri. There are no work requirements. Recipients are referred to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), but their General Relief eligibility is not contingent upon their participation in VR.
- e. Nebraska. Information represents the guidelines developed by the Nebraska Association of County Officials and the state Department of Social Services used in the administration of the General Assistance programs for the 56 of 93 counties that elect to contract with the state.

- f. New Jersey. Persons who have been found guilty of drug distribution are ineligible for assistance. Persons who have been found guilty of drug possession or drug use must complete a treatment program and be drug-free for 60 days.
- g. New York. For the first 12 months, refugees, asylees, and Cuban/Haitian entrants receive New York's full grant if they are within their first 36 months in the United States.
- h. Colorado (City and County of Denver). The 30-day residency requirement is not always enforced. To prevent homelessness, persons are provided with temporary lodging in motels for 4 days, even if they have been a resident for less than 30 days.

**Table 6: General Assistance Work Requirements**  
(Summer 1998)

**State GA Programs**

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Work Program Participants</b>	<b>Work Program Components</b>	<b>Sanctions for Noncompliance with Work Requirements</b>	<b>Coordination with Food Stamp Employment and Training Program</b>
Alabama	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			
Alaska 1. General Relief Assistance  2. Interim Assistance	1. Able-bodied recipients ages 18 to 59 unless they are incapacitated, caretakers of incapacitated persons, or full-time high school students.  2. No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).	1. Registration with the Department of Labor and acceptance of any legitimate offer of employment  2. Not applicable	1. None  2. Not applicable	1. No  2. Not applicable
Arizona	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
Arkansas	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			

State (Focal County)	Work Program Participants	Work Program Components	Sanctions for Noncompliance with Work Requirements	Coordination with Food Stamp Employment and Training Program
California (Los Angeles County)	Any recipient not physically or mentally disabled	Job Search and Workfare. Applicants must have sought work at 24 job sites in the eight weeks prior to their application for benefits. Recipients must register with the Employment Development Department. Recipients must also work off their grant for four days a month at the minimum wage. As an alternative to Workfare, recipients may enroll in a Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) training program, an educational program, or other certified program for at least 20 hours per week, or participate in the county Job Skills program.	If recipient fails to comply with the work requirement, assistance is terminated until compliance. For second instance of noncompliance, assistance is terminated for at least 30 days. For third instance of noncompliance, assistance is terminated for at least 60 days.  If recipient is involved with the Job Skills program and fails to comply, they must participate in the Job Search/Workfare program.	Yes
Colorado Aid to the Needy Disabled	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
Connecticut	No work requirement			
Delaware	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
District of Columbia	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
Florida	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)			
Georgia	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)			
Hawaii	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
Idaho (Ada County)	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			

State (Focal County)	Work Program Participants	Work Program Components	Sanctions for Noncompliance with Work Requirements	Coordination with Food Stamp Employment and Training Program
Illinois (City of Chicago)	All nonexempt able-bodied persons are required to participate in a work program. Exempt persons include persons ages 18 to 20 in full-time high school or vocational training, medically disabled persons, caretakers, VISTA volunteers, homeless persons, persons who are employed full-time, persons 60 years of age or older, persons with a child under one year of age, any child under age 18 who is not a parent.	Job search, work relief, job training and experience, and Workfare.	If the recipient fails to comply with work requirements, the recipient will lose GA benefits for two months. Sanctions may end early if client complies with work requirement.	Yes
Indiana (Center Township of Marion County)	Unemployed able-bodied adults except those who are under age 18 or over age 65, who have a child under age 3, or who are caretakers of an incapacitated person.	Job search, job training and experience, job readiness counseling, educational services, and Workfare. Recipients work off the amount of their assistance at a rate of \$8/hr.	If the recipient fails to comply with work requirements, the recipient will lose benefits immediately.	Yes
Iowa (Polk County)	No work requirement			
Kansas	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
Kentucky	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)			

State (Focal County)	Work Program Participants	Work Program Components	Sanctions for Noncompliance with Work Requirements	Coordination with Food Stamp Employment and Training Program
Louisiana	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			
Maine	Able-bodied recipients over 16 years of age and not in school or work for 40 hrs/week., unless they are needed in the home to care for a child or disabled person.	Registration with Maine Job Service, Workfare (in some towns), school, GED preparation classes, rehabilitation program, or Food Stamp/TANF work program.	If the recipient fails to comply with work requirements, the recipient will lose benefits for 120 days.	Yes
Maryland	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
Massachusetts	One parent in a two-parent household, a single parent who cares for a child age 15 or older, unrelated adult caretaker of a child age 15 or older. (Participants must be between the ages of 18 and 59.)	Recipients must meet the Transitional Employment for Massachusetts Parents (TEMP) requirements, register at the Department of Employment and Training (DET), actively seek employment, maintain his or her registration with DET, report the results of any job referral to the Department, and accept any offer of suitable employment.	If recipients fail to comply with the work requirements, they will lose their eligibility and must work for two consecutive weeks to regain benefits.	No
Michigan	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
Minnesota	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
Mississippi	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			
Missouri	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
Montana	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)			

State (Focal County)	Work Program Participants	Work Program Components	Sanctions for Noncompliance with Work Requirements	Coordination with Food Stamp Employment and Training Program
Nebraska 1. State Disability Program  2. County General Assistance <sup>a</sup>	1. No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).  2. All applicants except those who are incapacitated or working 30 hours per week.	1. Not applicable  2. Registration with the Department of Labor JPTA program in the area. Counties have the option to require participation in other programs, such as community service. If the participant is receiving food stamps and GA, Food Stamp employment and training activities will fulfill the requirements.	1. Not applicable.  2. Failure to comply with work requirements results in termination of benefits.	1. Not applicable  2. Yes
Nevada (Clark County)	Able-bodied recipients	Participation in the General Assistance Temporary Employment Program (GATE), which includes working two days a week at the minimum wage rate, or participation in job search, which includes seeking work at 40 establishments per month.	For the first instance of noncompliance with work requirements, the recipient loses one day's worth of assistance for every day he or she is absent from work for up to two days. For the second instance of noncompliance, the recipient may be denied assistance for 30 days. After three instances of noncompliance, the recipient may be denied assistance for one year. Exceptions to these sanctions may be granted on a case-by-case basis.	Yes

State (Focal County)	Work Program Participants	Work Program Components	Sanctions for Noncompliance with Work Requirements	Coordination with Food Stamp Employment and Training Program
New Hampshire (City of Manchester)	Able-bodied recipients not needed in the home to care for a person who is elderly, disabled, or a child under age six.	Job search, job training and experience, job readiness counseling, and Workfare (two–three days/week at \$5/hr in city departments, nonprofits, food banks, and shelters). Other work programs available to WC recipients include VR (Vocational Rehabilitation), JPTA, New Hampshire Works (on-line resume service).	Failure to comply with the work requirements results in a seven-day notice to comply. If noncompliance continues after seven days, the recipient will be suspended for seven days. If the noncompliance continues, the recipient will be suspended until compliance.	Yes
New Jersey	Employable recipients (those without a temporary or permanent disability)	Community work experience program (CWEP), vocational training, Alternative Work Experience Program (AWEP—GED and ESL educational services), on-the-job-training, FSET (Food Stamp Employment and Training Program).	Noncompliance with work activities results in the termination of the grant for one month. Continued noncompliance after the first month results in the termination of the grant for an additional month. Continued noncompliance after the second month results in the termination of the grant for a third month. Continued noncompliance at the end of the third month results in case closure and ineligibility for assistance. To regain benefits, recipients must participate in work activities for two consecutive weeks.	Yes
New Mexico	No work requirement			

State (Focal County)	Work Program Participants	Work Program Components	Sanctions for Noncompliance with Work Requirements	Coordination with Food Stamp Employment and Training Program
New York	All recipients are required to participate unless exempt. Exemptions include disability; age 60 or older; under the age of 16 or under the age of 19 attending a full-time secondary vocational or technical school; ill or injured for up to 3 months; caretaker of disabled persons or children under 12 months of age; pregnant and within 30 days of the birth of the child.	Thirty-five hours per week in work activities in which 30 hours are spent in employment (unsubsidized or subsidized); work experience; or on-the- job-training. The remaining hours may be spent in the any of the above activities or job search, community service, vocational education, or job skills training activities.	For the first instance of noncompliance with the work requirements, the recipient's grant is suspended for three months. For the second instance of noncompliance with the work requirements, the recipient's grant is suspended for five months. For the third instance of noncompliance with the work requirements, the recipient's grant is suspended for six months.	No
North Carolina	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)			
North Dakota	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)			
Ohio	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
Oklahoma	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			
Oregon	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			

State (Focal County)	Work Program Participants	Work Program Components	Sanctions for Noncompliance with Work Requirements	Coordination with Food Stamp Employment and Training Program
Pennsylvania	Able-bodied recipients	Recipients must participate in job search followed by participation in work, education, or training activities for up to 12 months during the first 24 months of assistance. After 24 months of assistance, participation is limited to unsubsidized or subsidized employment, work experience, on-the-job training, Workfare, or community experience.	During the first 24 months: the first instance of noncompliance with work requirements results in a loss of benefit for the adult for 30 days, 60 days for the second instance, and permanently for the third instance. After 24 months: the first instance of noncompliance with work requirements results in a loss of benefit for the entire family for 30 days, 60 days for the second instance, and permanently for the third instance.	Yes
Rhode Island	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
South Carolina	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			
South Dakota (Minnehaha County)	Able-bodied recipients not in a drug treatment program	All recipients are expected to have jobs. Unemployed recipients are given informal job search help and are required to make three job contacts per day.	Recipients who quit their job are ineligible for benefits for 30 days.	No
Tennessee	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			
Texas	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			

State (Focal County)	Work Program Participants	Work Program Components	Sanctions for Noncompliance with Work Requirements	Coordination with Food Stamp Employment and Training Program
Utah 1. GA—Self Sufficiency  2. GA—Working Toward Employment	All GA recipients. Participation is based on ability.	1. All recipients must participate in an initial assessment to determine activities to help them become self-supporting or to increase their income. This may result in requirements for medical or mental health treatment or adult basic education courses.  2. All recipients must participate in 32 hours per week of work at a community work site and 8 hours of job search.	Noncompliance with work requirement results in termination of benefit.	Yes
Vermont	Able-bodied employable persons in recipient households except those gainfully employed.	Participants must make three job contacts per week, document progress to the district office, and maintain contact with the Department of Employment and Training (DET). Recipients with only an eighth- grade education or below and those who are illiterate must participate in an adult basic education program. Recipients ages 55 to 64 must participate in work-related activities under the Older Americans Act.	Noncompliance with work requirements results in termination of benefits.	No
Virginia (Fairfax County)	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
Washington	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
West Virginia	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			
Wisconsin (Dane County)	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Work Program Participants</b>	<b>Work Program Components</b>	<b>Sanctions for Noncompliance with Work Requirements</b>	<b>Coordination with Food Stamp Employment and Training Program</b>
Wyoming	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.			

**County GA Programs**

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Work Program Participants</b>	<b>Work Program Components</b>	<b>Sanctions for Noncompliance with Work Requirements</b>	<b>Coordination with Food Stamp Employment and Training Program</b>
Colorado GA (City and County of Denver)	No work program requirements			
Florida (Dade County)	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
Georgia (Fulton County)	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
Kentucky (Jefferson County)	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
Montana (Yellowstone County)	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
North Carolina (Durham County)	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			
North Dakota (Cass County)	No work requirement (employable persons are not eligible for assistance).			

*Source:* Urban Institute 1998

- a. Nebraska. Information represents the guidelines developed by the Nebraska Association of County Officials and the state Department of Social Services used in the administration of the General Assistance programs for the 56 of 93 counties that elect to contract with the state.

## **GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BENEFITS AND DURATION**

Low-income persons and families who meet the eligibility criteria for General Assistance programs receive a monthly financial benefit meant to help cover basic needs such as rent, food, and clothing. The form, amount, and duration of GA benefits vary considerably across state and county programs. In addition, medical assistance is available through some GA programs. This section describes how GA financial and medical benefits vary across states. Detailed state-by-state comparisons of this information are provided in tables 7 and 8.

### **Form of Benefits**

General Assistance financial benefits may be in the form of cash, in-kind benefits such as vouchers or vendor payments, or a combination of these. The most common form of GA benefits is cash, which may come either as a check payable to the recipient or through electronic benefit transfer (EBT). EBT allows recipients to access their benefits through ATMs or point-of-sale (POS) machines in commercial outlets. Due in part to a federal mandate on states to switch from coupons to EBT for the Food Stamp program, EBT is increasingly becoming the method of transferring benefits to GA recipients.<sup>16</sup> Vendor payments, another form of financial assistance, are payments made by the GA agency to a person or business such as a landlord or utility company in exchange for services provided to the GA recipient. Similarly, vouchers are used to pay for specific items such as food or transportation. The recipient presents a voucher to the service provider, and the GA agency later pays the provider directly.

Twenty-four of the 35 state GA programs provide cash benefits to nearly all recipients, 6

through the use of EBT. Fourteen of these states provide benefits as vendor payments or vouchers rather than cash in certain circumstances. For example, recipients may request vendor payments or vouchers as a cash management tool. In other cases, the state requires that certain recipients receive benefits in the form of vouchers or vendor payments, especially if the recipient is in a substance abuse treatment program.

Six of the 35 state GA programs provide only vendor payments or vouchers for all recipients. In many cases, the vouchers and vendor payments are limited to certain items such as rent or utilities. Of the five remaining state GA programs, two provide a combination of cash and in-kind assistance and three provide cash to some recipient categories and in-kind assistance to others.

County programs are more likely than state programs to provide in-kind benefits. Only two of the seven county programs provide cash benefits, both of which provide vendor payments in some circumstances. The remaining five county programs provide only vendor payments or vouchers.

### **Benefit Maximums**

As with GA income eligibility limits, GA benefit schedules often vary by family size, living arrangement, eligibility category, and county or region of residence. Nearly all GA programs, whether cash or in-kind programs, limit the benefits provided to each recipient to a maximum monthly dollar amount. Only 3 of the 35 state GA programs and 1 of the 7 county GA programs do not have maximum dollar amounts; instead, each provides benefits in the form of voucher or vendor payments that cover the specific costs of goods or services provided. In

addition, one state GA program does not have a monthly maximum dollar amount but does have a yearly maximum.

Among the 27 state GA programs that provide cash benefits, the average benefit maximum for an individual is only 37 percent of the federal poverty level (\$248 per month).<sup>17</sup> Missouri has the lowest cash benefit maximum for individual recipients at \$80, or 12 percent of the poverty level. Except for Nebraska, whose benefit maximum for disabled individuals is \$645, or 96 percent of poverty, all states set benefit maximums for individuals below 55 percent of poverty. Among the 22 states that provide cash benefits for couples, the average benefit maximum for a couple is 38 percent of poverty (\$340), with benefit maximums ranging from 18 percent of poverty (\$159) in Ohio to 68 percent of poverty (\$596) in Oregon. Among the 12 states that provide cash benefits for families of three, the average benefit maximum for a family of three is 39 percent of poverty (\$411), with benefit maximums ranging from 18 percent of poverty (\$193) in Ohio to 54 percent of poverty (\$577) in New York. Only two of the seven county programs provide cash benefits to individuals, couples, or families of three. In both programs, benefit maximums are less than 40 percent of poverty.

GA benefit maximums are generally lower than benefit maximums for comparable federal assistance programs, especially for unemployable individuals. All but one of the state GA programs that provide cash benefits to unemployable individuals set GA benefit maximums lower than the combined SSI and state supplement benefit maximums in their state. On average, state GA benefit maximums for unemployable individuals were less than 50 percent of combined SSI and state supplement benefit maximums in each state. For families of three, GA benefit maximums were either the same as or lower than TANF benefit maximums in each state. Of the 12 state GA

programs that provide cash benefits to families of three, 7 set benefit maximums equal to the TANF benefit maximum in that state, with the remaining 5 state GA programs setting benefit maximums lower than the TANF benefit maximum. On average, state GA benefit maximums for a family of three were less than 90 percent of TANF benefit maximums in each state.<sup>18</sup>

Importantly, not all GA recipients receive the maximum monthly benefit. Most programs determine a recipient's monthly benefit by subtracting the amount of the recipient's net income (income after exemptions) from the maximum benefit level. Thus, for every dollar of nonexempt income added, recipients lose an offsetting dollar of GA benefits. Some other programs, especially those that provide in-kind benefits, determine monthly benefit amounts by covering the costs of specific needs of the recipient, such as rent.

### **Duration of Assistance<sup>19</sup>**

The duration of General Assistance benefits varies by program. Twenty-five of the 35 state GA programs and 3 of the 7 county programs provide assistance without time limits as long as recipients continue to meet the eligibility requirements. Eight of the 35 state GA programs, but none of the 7 county programs, impose time limits on only a portion of recipients, such as employable individuals and chemically dependent recipients, but provide benefits to all other recipients without time limits. Two of the 35 state GA programs and 4 of the 7 county GA programs impose time limits on all recipients.

Time limits may be either periodic, limiting assistance to a certain number of months within a given time period, or absolute, specifying the total number of months of assistance allowed. For instance, Utah subjects employable recipients to a periodic time limit that limits

assistance to 7 months in an 18-month period. New Jersey, however, has an absolute time limit that limits assistance to a total of 60 months in a recipient's lifetime. Time limits may also differ by the degree to which recipients' benefits are reduced. All but one of the GA time limits are "termination" time limits, which terminate the entire benefit once they are reached by the recipient. The exception is New York, whose time limit does not terminate or reduce recipients' benefits, but instead requires that recipients who reach the time limit receive vouchers or vendor payments in place of a cash benefit.

States may also limit the duration of benefits in ways other than time limits. For instance, some states that provide assistance for disabled persons awaiting SSI determination terminate benefits once the final SSI determination is made. Those who are not awarded SSI must qualify for GA according to some other criteria or face losing benefits. All state and county programs also periodically review each case or require that recipients reapply every one, three, or six months, regardless of whether they have time limits. In some states, the duration of assistance may be limited based on the discretion of administrators in renewing benefits. In Indiana (Center Township of Marion County), for instance, renewals for assistance after six months are up to the discretion of the township trustee. In New Hampshire (city of Manchester), assistance is generally provided on a short-term basis even though there is no set time limit. Some programs, such as Iowa's, require persons to apply for vouchers for each separate need, and assistance is only provided as each new need arises.

## **Medical Assistance**

In addition to receiving financial assistance, many General Assistance recipients receive medical assistance. While GA recipients in some states are eligible for Medicaid or a Medicaid waiver program, most GA recipients who receive medical assistance are covered by GA medical assistance—a state-funded medical assistance program for persons not covered by Medicaid. In some states, these state medical assistance programs provide assistance for persons in addition to GA recipients, by setting less restrictive categorical or financial eligibility requirements. Table 8 provides detailed state-by-state information on GA medical assistance programs.

In 5 of the 35 state GA programs, all GA recipients are eligible for medical assistance under that state’s Medicaid program or Medicaid waiver program. Of the remaining 30 states, 26 provide medical assistance to some or all GA recipients, either through a formal state or county GA medical program or by providing benefits to cover certain medical expenses. Only 2 of the 7 county programs, however, provide medical assistance to GA recipients. In some states and counties, eligibility requirements for GA medical assistance are less stringent than the eligibility requirements for GA financial assistance. In these states, therefore, medical assistance coverage is available to needy persons not receiving GA financial assistance. In a few states and counties, medical coverage is limited to life-threatening conditions. Among the 26 state and 2 county programs that provide medical assistance other than Medicaid, benefits are usually less comprehensive than Medicaid and vary widely in the types of services covered.

Most of the states and counties in which GA programs do not include medical assistance components have alternative medical assistance available to some or all GA recipients. For example, some states and counties have indigent health care programs or charity hospital systems

that are independent of their GA programs, but for which some GA recipients are eligible. States without GA programs may also have alternative medical care programs for some or all of their residents. For instance, Tennessee operates a Medicaid waiver program that provides medical assistance to a wide range of eligible recipients.

**Table 7: General Assistance Monthly Benefits and Duration of Assistance**  
(Summer 1998)

**State GA Programs**

State (Focal County)	Maximum Monthly Benefits			Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form <sup>a</sup>	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons			
Alabama	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					
Alaska 1. General Relief Assistance  2. Interim Assistance	1. \$120  2. \$280 <sup>b</sup>	1. \$240  2. \$560 (\$280 each)	1. \$360  2. Not applicable	1. 1985  2. 1982	1. Voucher/Vendor. Payments are made for food, fuel, clothing, home repair, transportation, and burial expenses.  2. Cash	1. No time limit. Assistance provided for 30 days (unlimited renewals).  2. No time limit. Assistance provided until final SSI determination.
Arizona	\$173 <sup>c</sup>	\$233 <sup>c</sup>	Not applicable	1994	Cash	12 months in a 36-month period. Assistance is renewable only if second- and third-level appeal with SSI is in process, in which case a 6-month extension may be granted.
Arkansas	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					
California (Los Angeles County)	\$221	\$375	\$450	February 1998	Cash. If recipient requests, payments may be made to vendors.	Employables: 5 months out of a 12-month period.  Unemployables: no time limit.

State (Focal County)	Maximum Monthly Benefits			Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form <sup>a</sup>	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons			
Colorado Aid to the Needy Disabled	\$229	\$458 (\$229 each)	Not applicable	1985	Cash	Assistance provided until SSI is granted. If primary disability is substance abuse, however, recipients are limited to a total of 12 months of benefits for their lifetime.
Connecticut	Unemployable: \$350 Transitional: \$200	\$407	\$500 <sup>d</sup>	April 1997	Cash (EBT). Payments may be made to vendors or protective payee on a case-by-case basis.	No time limit. Recipients with a disability are provided assistance throughout the duration of their disability.
Delaware	\$123	\$166	\$224	1989	Cash	No time limit.
District of Columbia	\$239	\$298	\$379	February 1997	Cash	No time limit.
Florida	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)					
Georgia	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)					
Hawaii	\$340	\$459	Not applicable	July 1997	Cash. Payments may be made to vendors under special circumstances.	No time limit. Assistance provided for duration of disability.
Idaho (Ada County)	No maximum benefit. All “reasonable” costs are covered.			Not available	Voucher/Vendor	No time limit.

State (Focal County)	Maximum Monthly Benefits			Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form <sup>a</sup>	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons			
Illinois (City of Chicago) 1. Transitional Assistance  2. Family and Children Assistance	1. \$100  2. \$212	1. Not applicable  2. \$278	1. Not applicable  2. \$377	1996	Cash	No time limit. Assistance provided with redetermination required every five months.
Indiana (Center Township of Marion County)	Rent: \$450 <sup>e</sup> Food: \$122 Household supplies: \$20	Not available	Rent: \$511 Food: \$321 Household supplies: \$33	1998	Voucher/Vendor. Payments are made for rent, food, utilities, clothing, transportation, household supplies, medication, and burials.	No time limit. Assistance is renewable 30 days at a time for up to six months at which time recipients must reapply. Renewals are up to the discretion of the trustee.
Iowa (Polk County)	\$1,029/year <sup>f</sup>	\$1,083/year <sup>f</sup>	\$1,278/year <sup>f</sup>	August 1989	Voucher/Vendor. Payments are made for rent, utilities, food, clothing, transportation, medical needs, burials, furniture, and major repairs.	No time limit. Recipient must reapply for each new need. Benefit maximum is in effect for one year starting from the date of application.
Kansas <sup>g</sup>	\$196	\$268	Not applicable	December 1993	Cash (EBT)	No time limit. Assistance provided until SSI is granted.
Kentucky	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)					
Louisiana	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					
Maine	Varies by county. Average: \$387	Varies by county. Average: \$453	Varies by county. Average: \$580	October 1997	Voucher/Vendor	No time limit. Assistance provided for 30 days (unlimited renewals).

State (Focal County)	Maximum Monthly Benefits			Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form <sup>a</sup>	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons			
Maryland	\$113	Not applicable	Not applicable	May 1998	Cash (EBT). Benefits for drug-addicted recipients are made to a protective payee or vendors.	SSI applicants: assistance provided until final SSI determination is made. Persons ineligible for SSI: duration of medical disability, up to a maximum of 12 months in a 36-month period.
Massachusetts <sup>h</sup>	\$339	\$430	\$522	October 1991	Cash (EBT). Payments may be made to vendors at recipient's request.	No time limit.
Michigan	\$246 <sup>i</sup>	\$401	Not applicable	One person: October 1991  Two persons: July 1997	Cash. Payments may be made to vendors at recipient's request.	No time limit.
Minnesota	\$203	\$260	Not applicable	1988	Cash. Payments may be made to vendors at recipient's request. If recipient is chemically dependent or has other problems, counties have the option to provide vendor payments at their discretion.	No time limit.
Mississippi	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					
Missouri	\$80	\$160	Not applicable	July 1985	Cash	No time limit. Assistance provided for duration of disability.

State (Focal County)	Maximum Monthly Benefits			Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form <sup>a</sup>	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons			
Montana	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)					
Nebraska 1. State Disability Program  2. County General Assistance <sup>j</sup>	1. \$645  2. \$225	1. Not applicable  2. \$280	1. Not applicable  2. \$350	1. 1996  2. 1986	1. Cash  2. Voucher/Vendor. Payments are made for food, housing, utilities, medical expenses, clothing, transportation, personal care, etc.	1. No time limit. Assistance provided for duration of disability or until SSI is granted.  2. No time limit. Assistance provided for three months (unlimited renewals).
Nevada (Clark County)	\$277	\$372	\$466	1991	Cash and Voucher/Vendor. Payments are made to landlords.	No time limit. Assistance provided for 30 days (unlimited renewals).
New Hampshire (City of Manchester)	No maximum			1977	Voucher/Vendor. Payments may be made for food, rent, utilities, medication, and other basic needs.	No time limit. Assistance is generally for short-term emergencies, but it may be used long term if necessary.
New Jersey <sup>k</sup>	\$140 employable, \$210 unemployable	\$193 employable, \$289 unemployable	Not applicable	1987	Cash	60-month lifetime limit. Recipients may be eligible for a 12-month extension if they meet extension criteria. Noncitizens are limited to 6 months of assistance. <sup>l</sup>
New Mexico	\$231	\$310	\$389	1995	Cash (EBT)	No time limit.

State (Focal County)	Maximum Monthly Benefits			Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form <sup>a</sup>	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons			
New York	\$352 <sup>m</sup>	\$468	\$577	January 1990	Cash, except for the following: individuals or families with individuals unable to work due to substance abuse; families with individuals who fail to comply with substance abuse requirements; families that reach the 60-month TANF time limit; individuals who reach the SNA 24-month time limit.	24-month lifetime limit for cash assistance with exceptions. No time limit for noncash assistance.
North Carolina	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)					
North Dakota	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)					
Ohio	\$115	\$159	\$193	1991	Cash	No time limit. Redetermination occurs every six months.
Oklahoma	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					
Oregon 1. General Assistance 2. Temporary Assistance Program	1. \$298 <sup>n</sup> 2. \$275	1. \$596 2. \$550	1. Not applicable 2. Not applicable	1. July 1998 2. January 1998	1. and 2. Cash	1. No time limit. Assistance provided until final SSI determination. 2. No time limit.

State (Focal County)	Maximum Monthly Benefits			Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form <sup>a</sup>	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons			
Pennsylvania	\$215	\$330	\$421	1990	Cash. Payments may be made to vendors at recipient's request.	Temporarily disabled: assistance provided for duration of disability. Persons in a drug or alcohol treatment program and victims of domestic violence: nine months in a lifetime. All other categories of assistance: no time limit.
Rhode Island	\$200	Not applicable	Not applicable	1994	Cash	No time limit. Assistance is provided until final SSI determination.
South Carolina	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					
South Dakota (Minnehaha County)	Benefit depends on the degree of need. There is no overall maximum on benefits. \$350 maximum for utilities, \$450 maximum for rent. <sup>o</sup>			September 1998	Voucher/Vendor. Payments are made for rent and utilities.	No time limit. Assistance is provided throughout duration of emergency need.
Tennessee	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					
Texas	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					

State (Focal County)	Maximum Monthly Benefits			Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form <sup>a</sup>	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons			
Utah 1. GA—Self Sufficiency  2. GA—Working Toward Employment	1. \$261  2. \$306 (\$261 benefit plus \$45 work allowance)	1. \$362  2. \$407 (\$362 benefit plus \$45 work allowance)	Not applicable	July 1998	Cash (EBT)	1. No time limit. Assistance is provided until recipient overcomes barrier or receives SSI.  2. 7 months out of an 18- month period. Individuals may reapply at the end of the 18-month period (unlimited renewals).
Vermont	\$449 in Chittenden County; \$404 rest of state	\$554 in Chittenden County; \$508 rest of state	\$656 in Chittenden County; \$611 rest of state	July 1997	Voucher/Vendor and Cash. Vendor payments are made for rent, utilities, doctor visits, and prescriptions. Cash is provided for groceries and personal needs.	No time limit. Recipients must apply for each new need. Duration is usually monthly based on need, but additional applications may be granted as long as the need exists. Recipients in a drug treatment program may only receive 36 months of assistance in a lifetime under this category of assistance.
Virginia (Fairfax County)	\$220	\$294	\$354	July 1996	Cash. If recipient is alcoholic or drug dependent, then payments are made to a protective payee or vendors.	Unemployables: 9 out of 12 months.  Unattached children: No time limit.

State (Focal County)	Maximum Monthly Benefits			Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form <sup>a</sup>	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons			
Washington	GA-U: \$339 GA-S: \$349 GA-H: \$349	GA-U: \$428 GA-H: \$440	GA-H: \$546	GA-U: 1991 GA-S and GA-H: 1993	Cash. Vendor payments may be made on a case-by-case basis. If recipient is drug or alcohol addicted, payments are made through protective payees.	GA-U: Assistance is provided through the duration of the disability. GA-S: Assistance is provided until third trimester. GA-H: No time limit.
West Virginia	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					
Wisconsin (Dane County)	\$247	Not applicable	Not applicable	1986	Cash. Vendor payments may be made for shelter costs.	No time limit. Assistance is provided for three months with unlimited renewals.
Wyoming	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.					

**County GA Programs**

State (Focal County)	Maximum Monthly Benefits			Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons			
Colorado GA (City and County of Denver)	No dollar maximum. Benefits depend on category of recipient and specific needs.			1983	Voucher/Vendor. Payments are made for shelter, food, transportation, personal needs, and burial expenses.	Depends on specific voucher

State (Focal County)	Maximum Monthly Benefits			Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons			
Florida (Miami-Dade County)	\$220	\$268	\$300	July 1995	Cash. Payments may be made to vendors for rent.	Short-term assistance: 90 days, once every three years. Interim assistance: After 90 days of short-term assistance, if SSI approval is likely, assistance is provided for nine months. <sup>p</sup>
Georgia (Fulton County )	\$225	\$337	Not applicable	March 1983	Cash. Payments to vendors may be made in some circumstances.	No time limit. Assistance is provided through duration of disability.
Kentucky (Jefferson County)	\$305 <sup>q</sup>	\$320	Not applicable	August 1997	Voucher/Vendor. Payments are made to landlords, mortgage companies, and utility companies.	Recipients with a temporary disability: 6 months. Recipients awaiting SSI determination: 12 months.
Montana (Yellowstone County)	\$272	\$366	Not applicable	July 1998	Voucher/Vendor. Payments are made for rent, utilities, and personal needs.	No time limit. Recipients with a temporary disability are provided assistance for the duration of their disability. Recipients awaiting SSI determination are provided assistance until granted SSI.
North Carolina (Durham County)	Maximum benefits determined on a case-by-case basis. (In general, \$125 shelter and boarding, \$30 maximum for prescription drugs, plus other needs.)			1996	Voucher/Vendor. Payments are made for rent, utilities, food, medical needs, etc.	Three months in any year, but may be longer on a case-by-case basis. Duration for prescription drugs is limited to four months in any one year.

State (Focal County)	Maximum Monthly Benefits			Date Benefit Levels Took Effect	Payment Form	Duration of Assistance
	One Person	Two Persons	Three Persons			
North Dakota (Cass County)	\$225 <sup>r</sup>	Not applicable	Not applicable	1991	Vendor/Voucher. Payments are limited to rent.	6 months out of 12-month period (lifetime limit).

Source: Urban Institute 1998

- a. Vouchers and vendor payments typically cover rent, utilities, and food. States may also cover transportation, clothing, burial, household supplies, and other items.
- b. Alaska. Individuals in a nursing home receive a maximum benefit of \$75 per month.
- c. Arizona. The maximum monthly benefit for an individual not paying rent is \$108, and the maximum monthly benefit for a couple not paying rent is \$145.
- d. Connecticut. Benefit levels for families vary according to living costs in three regions of the state. The information shown here is for Region B, which includes approximately 90 percent of the caseload.
- e. Indiana (Center Township of Marion County). Benefit maximums for rent assume that utilities are included in the rent. For a three-person family, benefit maximum for rent also assumes a two-bedroom apartment. Benefit maximums differ by number of bedrooms.
- f. Iowa (Polk County). Benefits are determined on a case-by-case basis depending on need. Maximum benefit levels are set at the income guidelines (\$343 for individual, \$361 for couple, \$426 for family of three) for a period of one year. However, exemptions can be made on a case-by-case basis so that recipients can potentially receive three times the income guideline level as in the table.
- g. Kansas. There are four different income limit and benefit schedules throughout the state, which are based on the cost of living in each county. The majority of recipients are in counties with the maximum benefits listed here.
- h. Massachusetts. There are eight different income/payment standards based on the following living arrangements: (1) individuals in public or private housing; (2) individuals living with a TAFDC (Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children) family; (3) residents in a halfway house, institution, or nursing home; (4) persons living in a shelter; (5) persons living in a rest home; (6) persons living in a therapeutic community center; (7) persons living in a detox center; and (8) persons in public or private housing living with spouse applying for EAEDC.

- i Michigan. For individuals living in residential substance abuse treatment centers, maximum benefit is \$44/month (incidentals allowance only). The cost of the facility is paid for by the Center for Substance Abuse Services (CSAS). For individuals living in adult foster care or county infirmary, maximum benefit is \$608/month for personal care, and \$537/month for domiciliary. For individuals living in a home for the aged, maximum benefit is \$383/month.
- j. Nebraska. Information represents the guidelines developed by the Nebraska Association of County Officials and the state Department of Social Services used in the administration of the General Assistance programs for the 56 of 93 counties that elect to contract with the state.
- k. New Jersey. In addition to cash benefits, GA recipients are also eligible for Housing Assistance if they fall into one of the following three categories: (1) housing destroyed by fire or natural disaster; (2) require housing due to domestic violence; or (3) evicted or about to become evicted; and if they demonstrate a lack of realistic capacity to plan for substitute housing (e.g., they don't have enough time to find housing or funds are exhausted due to other expenses). For those in temporary housing (hotel or motel) the maximum benefit is \$35 per day for an individual, \$45 per day for two persons. The maximum benefit for permanent housing is \$250. Housing benefits may be increased depending on the degree of need and are paid directly to the vendor. Housing benefits are limited to 12 months.
- l. New Jersey. Twelve-month extension criteria include: unable to care for themselves; age 60 or older; mentally or physically ill; pending SSI and disabled for over one year; terminally ill; poor work history; contracted HIV or AIDS. Recipients who reached their 60-month lifetime limit by June 30, 1998, might be eligible for further assistance if they meet the hardship eligibility criteria and complete an approved Individual Response Plan.
- m. New York. Values shown are for New York City. Benefit levels may vary by county based on shelter and heating costs.
- n. Oregon. Maximum board room rate for persons in long-term care is \$281/month plus \$39 for personal needs. Persons in a nursing home receive \$30 for personal needs.
- o. South Dakota (Minnehaha County). Maximum rent payment of \$450/month is for a four-bedroom apartment. Apartments with fewer bedrooms have lower maximums.
- p. Florida (Miami-Dade County). Short-term assistance includes individuals, couples, and families with a short-term disability. Interim assistance includes individuals, couples, and families awaiting SSI determination. After 12 months, as long as the client's SSI claim is at the Hearing or Appeals Council stage, the case may be extended at the director's discretion. Extensions beyond 12 months are usually in 6-month increments.
- q. Kentucky (Jefferson County). Benefits may be increased up to double the maximum amount if the maximum financial assistance amount will not alleviate the recipient's crisis.
- r. North Dakota. If rent does not include heat, the maximum benefit is \$175 per month.

**Table 8: General Assistance Medical Assistance Programs**  
(Summer 1998)

**State GA Programs**

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Persons Eligible for GA Medical Assistance Program<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>GA Medical Assistance Program Benefits<sup>b</sup></b>
Alabama	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.	
Alaska	Persons who meet General Relief Assistance eligibility requirements and have an emergency medical need and no prior medical resource are eligible for the Chronic and Acute Medical Assistance program (CAMA).	Inpatient hospitalization for up to eight days per year; physician services (12 visits/year); prescription drugs for terminal illnesses, chemotherapy, diabetes, seizure disorders, chronic mental illnesses, and hypertension; and nursing home care.
Arizona	The state does not have a medical assistance program, but all GA recipients are eligible for county-operated medical assistance programs.	Not available
Arkansas	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.	
California (Los Angeles County)	All General Relief recipients are eligible for the General Relief Healthcare Program.	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, and prescription drugs.
Colorado	No GA medical program.	
Connecticut	All indigent persons meeting medical income eligibility requirements. Medical income limits for Region B: \$476/month for an individual, \$633/month for a two-person household, \$776/month for a family of three.	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, and prescription drugs.
Delaware	All GA recipients plus others without medical insurance and with income below the federal poverty level are eligible for coverage under the Diamond State Health Plan (Medicaid waiver).	
District of Columbia	All GA recipients are eligible for Medicaid.	
Florida	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)	
Georgia	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)	
Hawaii	All GA recipients and others are eligible for QUEST (Medicaid Waiver).	

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Persons Eligible for GA Medical Assistance Program<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>GA Medical Assistance Program Benefits<sup>b</sup></b>
Idaho (Ada County)	County residents of at least 30 days, who are in emergency medical need and have no resources to cover medical costs.	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, prescription drugs, and nursing home care. <sup>c</sup>
Illinois (City of Chicago)	All Family and Children Assistance (FCA) and Transitional Assistance (TA) recipients, unless they receive Medicaid (persons under 18, persons with pending SSI applications).	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care (only for FCA recipients over age 18), physician services, prescription drugs if required for life maintenance or to avert a life-threatening situation.
Indiana (Center Township of Marion County)	No GA medical assistance program. <sup>d</sup>	
Iowa (Polk County)	No GA medical assistance program. <sup>e</sup>	
Kansas	All GA recipients are eligible for the GA MediKan program.	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, prescription drugs, and nursing home care.
Kentucky	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)	
Louisiana	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.	
Maine	All GA recipients and others who meet GA income eligibility requirements. Recipients must be in medical need.	Benefits are provided for prior-approved treatment of life-threatening conditions. Covered services include physician services and prescription drugs. (Inpatient and outpatient hospital services are covered by charity-based FreeCare.)
Maryland	About half of Transitional Emergency Medical and Housing Assistance (TEMHA) recipients are eligible for Medicaid. The remaining TEMHA recipients plus others who meet medical income eligibility requirements are eligible for Maryland Primary Care (MPC) and Maryland Pharmacy Assistance Program (MPAP).	MPC: physician services. MPAP: limited list of prescription drugs.
Massachusetts	All Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC) recipients are eligible for the Mass Health Program (Medicaid program).	

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Persons Eligible for GA Medical Assistance Program<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>GA Medical Assistance Program Benefits<sup>b</sup></b>
Michigan	All State Disability Assistance (SDA) recipients who are ineligible for Medicaid plus others who are not disabled according to SDA criteria but meet SDA income and asset eligibility requirements.	Outpatient hospital care, physician services, and prescription drugs.
Minnesota	All GA recipients, plus others who are not eligible for GA or Medicaid but meet GA income and asset eligibility requirements, are eligible for General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC).	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, and prescription drugs.
Mississippi	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.	
Missouri	All General Relief recipients.	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, and prescription drugs.
Montana	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)	
Nebraska 1. State Disability Program (SDP) 2. County General Assistance <sup>f</sup>	<p>1. All SDP recipients.</p> <p>2. Persons meeting the following income eligibility requirements are eligible for County Medical (CM) assistance: For an individual, gross income may not exceed \$2,680 and net income may not exceed \$1,700 over a six-month period; if gross income is less than \$2,680 and net income between \$1,700 and \$2,680 over a six-month period, the person is responsible for paying the medical costs in excess of \$283/month. For a family of three, gross income may not exceed \$4,560 and net income may not exceed \$2,700 over a six-month period; if gross income is less than \$4,560 and net income between \$2,700 and \$4,560 over a six-month period, the family is responsible for paying the medical costs in excess of \$450/month.</p>	<p>1. Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, prescription drugs, and nursing home care. Coverage is comparable to Medicaid.</p> <p>2. Covered services include only those that are required to prevent morbidity or institutionalization.</p>

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Persons Eligible for GA Medical Assistance Program<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>GA Medical Assistance Program Benefits<sup>b</sup></b>
Nevada (Clark County)	Persons meeting medical income and resource eligibility requirements are eligible for the Medical Assistance Service (MAS). Income limits: \$522/month for an individual; \$740/month for a couple; \$928/month for a family of three. Income exemptions: \$400 for an individual or couple; \$450 for a family of three or four; \$100 for rent if the recipient is elderly, disabled, or employed; \$300 in child care costs for one child or \$500 for two or more children. Resource limits: \$500; \$1,000 for an individual disabled at least 3 months; \$2,000 for an individual age 65 or older and/or disabled at least 12 months; \$3,000 for a couple or family of three age 65 or older and/or disabled at least 12 months.	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, prescription drugs, and nursing home care.
New Hampshire (City of Manchester)	All City Welfare (CW) recipients and any persons in need of medical assistance.	Physician services and prescription drugs. (Hospitals accept needy patients free of charge. Nursing home care is covered by Medicaid.)
New Jersey	All Work First New Jersey (WFNJ)/GA recipients.	Physician services and prescription drugs.
New Mexico	No GA medical assistance program.	
New York	SNA recipients are eligible for state Medicaid waiver programs.	
North Carolina	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)	
North Dakota	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)	
Ohio	All Disability Assistance (DA) recipients, plus able-bodied medication-dependent persons who meet the income and eligibility criteria and would become incapacitated if stopped taking medicine.	Physician services and prescription drugs. (Inpatient and outpatient hospital care covered by Ohio Hospital Care Assurance program.)
Oklahoma	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.	

State (Focal County)	Persons Eligible for GA Medical Assistance Program <sup>a</sup>	GA Medical Assistance Program Benefits <sup>b</sup>
Oregon	<p>GA: All recipients are eligible for coverage under the Oregon Health Plan (Medicaid waiver).</p> <p>Temporary Assistance Program (TAP): Qualified immigrants eligible for Medicaid are covered under the Oregon Health Plan (Medicaid waiver). All other immigrants are eligible for the Citizen Alien Waiver Emergency Medical program.</p>	Citizen Alien Waiver Emergency Medical program: life-threatening emergency medical services only.
Pennsylvania	<p>All GA recipients; persons meeting GA eligibility requirements but not receiving GA; persons taking health-sustaining medication; and persons meeting Medically Needy Only (MNO) criteria are eligible for medical assistance.</p> <p>MNO eligibility criteria: Persons ages 59 to 64, custodial parents of a child under age 21, persons ages 21 to 58 who are employed at least 100 hrs/month, and pregnant women. Income limits: \$425/month for an individual, \$442/month for a couple, and \$467/month for a family of three. Resource limit: \$2,400 for an individual, \$3,200 for a couple, and \$3,500 for three persons. (No asset limit if a child is in the household.)</p>	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, and physician services. GA recipients are eligible for prescription drugs, but MNO recipients are not. Nursing home services may be available if assessed as best option. There is a copay for most services and a \$150 deductible.
Rhode Island	All GPA recipients plus other persons temporarily or permanently disabled with income less than \$327 per month.	Physician services and prescription drugs. (Hospitals are required to cover the costs of inpatient and outpatient care.)
South Carolina	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.	
South Dakota (Minnehaha County)	All Poor Relief (PR) recipients plus others meeting state medical eligibility requirements. <sup>8</sup> Recipients must be in medical need.	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, prescription drugs, and nursing home care.
Tennessee	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.	
Texas	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.	

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Persons Eligible for GA Medical Assistance Program<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>GA Medical Assistance Program Benefits<sup>b</sup></b>
Utah	All GA recipients, plus other single or married adults without children who meet the GA income and eligibility criteria.	Acute care required in life-threatening situations (e.g., emergency room visits) and some prescription drugs.
Vermont	All GA recipients in catastrophic circumstances are eligible for medical assistance. (Able-bodied and uninsured adults who are ineligible for Medicaid may be eligible for the Vermont Health Access Plan, a Medicaid waiver program.)	Emergency physician services and prescription drugs.
Virginia (Fairfax County)	All GR recipients plus other residents who are citizens and have an emergency medical need for which they are unable to pay.	Physician services, prescription drugs, nursing home. All services must be related to an emergency medical need. Hospital care is covered by the State and Local Hospital Program.
Washington	Unemployable recipients are eligible for medical benefits under the state-funded Medical Care Services program. (Pregnant women recipients and children with guardian recipients are eligible for benefits under the state Medicaid program.)	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, prescription drugs, and nursing home care.
West Virginia	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.	
Wisconsin (Dane County)	All GR recipients.	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, prescription drugs, and nursing home care for up to 30 days.
Wyoming	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.	

#### **County GA Programs**

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Persons Eligible for GA Medical Assistance Program</b>	<b>GA Medical Assistance Program Benefits</b>
Colorado GA (City and County of Denver)	No GA medical program.	
Florida (Dade County)	No GA medical assistance program.	

State (Focal County)	Persons Eligible for GA Medical Assistance Program	GA Medical Assistance Program Benefits
Georgia (Fulton County)	No GA medical assistance program. <sup>h</sup>	
Kentucky (Jefferson County)	No GA medical assistance program. <sup>i</sup>	
Montana (Yellowstone County)	General Relief recipients with a critical medical condition.	Inpatient and outpatient hospital care (up to \$10,000), physician services, and prescription drugs.
North Carolina (Durham County)	All GA recipients.	\$30/month for prescription drugs and medical supplies, limited to four months per year.
North Dakota (Cass County)	No GA medical assistance program. <sup>j</sup>	

Source: Urban Institute 1998

- a. Some General Assistance recipients may be eligible for Medicaid. In such cases, recipients would receive medical assistance through Medicaid rather than through the GA medical assistance program.
- b. Survey respondents were asked whether the medical assistance program covered inpatient and outpatient hospital care, physician services, prescription drugs, and/or nursing home care. Although some programs may cover additional services, additional information is not included for consistency.
- c. Idaho (Ada County). The county covers the first \$10,000 of medical expenses per case. The state covers any additional expenses.
- d. Indiana. The township trustee has discretionary powers to handle medical needs on a case-by-case basis.
- e. Iowa (Polk County). Recipients are referred to the county hospital, which has an indigent care program. In addition, some medical needs that are not covered by the indigent care program on a case-by-case basis may be covered through General Assistance.
- f. Nebraska. Information represents the guidelines developed by the Nebraska Association of County Officials and the state Department of Social Services used in the administration of the General Assistance programs for the 56 of 93 counties that elect to contract with the state.
- g. South Dakota (Minnehaha County). The state sets the medical eligibility rules and determines the benefit levels using a method that considers the federal poverty standards, household expenses, and income.

- h. Georgia (Fulton County). GA recipients are referred to the Georgia Partnership for Care program, which provides care through a network of volunteer providers. Income eligibility limit is 100 percent of the poverty level.
- I Kentucky (Jefferson County). Recipients are referred to local hospitals that provide medical services for indigent persons.
- j. North Dakota (Cass County). Persons are referred to federally funded clinics.

## **GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM CASELOADS AND EXPENDITURES**

It is particularly difficult to obtain data on General Assistance caseloads and expenditures that are comparable across states. Statewide caseload and expenditure information was obtained from most states with uniform statewide GA programs, but from few others. For most of the state GA programs that vary by county, data were either available only for the specific county we surveyed or not available at all. For the seven county programs, data was collected from the particular county we contacted. Statewide program data are included in table 9 state GA program data limited to a particular county are included in table 10 and data on the county programs are included in table 11.

It is necessary to apply caution when comparing the caseload and expenditure data across states. As indicated, reporting periods vary across states. Also, some states have implemented program changes since these dates, and the caseload and expenditure data may not reflect current program design. Reporting methods also vary across states. Some states record their caseloads as the number of recipients while others record them as cases, in which a single case may include a family of three. While we have tried to separate the data on the number of recipients from the data on the number of cases, this was not possible in all states. In addition, some caseload and expenditure figures include medical assistance recipients while others do not, and most interim assistance expenditures do not reflect any federal reimbursements from SSI.

### **Statewide Program Data**

Among state GA programs in which state caseload data was obtained, caseloads and

expenditures vary widely (table 9). Average monthly caseloads range from 92 cases in Oregon's Temporary Assistance Program to 190,000 cases in New York. However, when compared to the total state population, the population in poverty, or participation in other safety net programs, the number of persons assisted by GA is quite small. Most of the states with General Assistance programs provide GA benefits to less than 15 percent of the number of persons served by TANF assistance in their state. In New York, which has the most extensive program as a percent of the total population, GA program recipients represent less than 8 percent of those living in poverty. GA is also small compared with other federal assistance programs. In New York, the number of GA recipients is less than one-quarter of the number of recipients receiving TANF and about one-third of the number of SSI recipients.

Annual spending on General Assistance ranges from about \$2.8 million in Delaware to almost \$738 million in New York. Average monthly benefits range from \$80 in Missouri per individual to \$520 per individual in Nebraska, although most states have average monthly benefits between \$100 and \$350 per case.

### **County Program Data**

Table 10 contains information for the focal county in state GA programs where we were unable to obtain statewide data. Table 11 contains information on county programs. Although intrastate variability of county-based GA programs makes interstate comparisons of these programs less appropriate, available caseload and expenditure information may provide some indication of how many persons are served by GA in each state.

**Table 9: General Assistance Program Caseloads and Expenditures, State General Assistance Programs, Statewide Data**  
(Summer 1998)

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Reporting Period</b>	<b>Average Monthly Caseload</b>	<b>Annual Expenditures</b>	<b>Average Monthly Benefit (per Case)</b>
Alaska 1. General Relief Assistance  2. Interim Assistance	Fiscal year (FY) ending June 1997	1. 221 cases  2. 900 cases	1. \$933,906  2. \$3,008,142	1. \$353 (\$164 excluding burials)  2. Not available
Arizona	Calendar year (CY) 1997	2,731 cases	\$5,337,343	Not available
California (state)	FY ending June 1998	122,765 cases 127,399 recipients	\$326,623,158	Not available
Colorado Aid to the Needy Disabled	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Connecticut	April 1997–June 1998	Cash only: 1,500 cases Cash and Medical: 3,000 cases Medical only: 9,000 cases	Approx. \$70 million	Not available
Delaware	CY 1997	1,951 cases 1,966 recipients	\$2,809,656	\$120
District of Columbia <sup>a</sup>	FY ending September 1997	General Public Assistance for Children (GAC): 639 cases GPA: 1,619 cases	GAC: \$2,051,105 GPA: \$3,391,271	GAC: \$267 GPA: \$259
Hawaii <sup>b</sup>	FY ending June 1997	Singles: 6,516 cases Families: 701 cases	Singles: \$27,047,944 Families: \$5,352,968	Singles: \$320 Families: \$636

State (Focal County)	Reporting Period	Average Monthly Caseload	Annual Expenditures	Average Monthly Benefit (per Case)
Kansas <sup>e</sup>	FY ending June 1997	Disabled adults: 2,299 persons Families: 1,136 persons	Disabled adults: \$4,348,868 Families: \$1,672,378	Not available
Maine	CY 1997	2,838 cases 5,267 recipients	\$7,519,927 (includes household and medical, excludes burial costs)	\$220.81 (includes household and medical, excludes burial costs)
Maryland	Not available	Not available	Not available	\$100 <sup>d</sup>
Massachusetts	FY ending June 1997	16,895 cases	Cash assistance: \$52.5 million Medical assistance: \$32.4 million	\$327
Michigan 1. State Disability Assistance  2. State Family Assistance <sup>e</sup>	FY ending September 1997	1. 8,518 cases 8,525 recipients <sup>f</sup>  2. 1,688 cases 2,084 recipients	1. \$23.6 million  2. \$4.6 million	1. \$231  2. \$222
Minnesota	FY 1997	11,425 cases	\$44,180,753	\$246
Missouri	FY 1997	5,738 cases	\$5,394,170	Individual: \$80 Couple: \$160
Nebraska 1. State Disability Program  2. General Assistance	CY 1997	1. 117 recipients (approx.)  2. Not available	1. \$8,400,000  2. Not available	1. \$520 (approx.)  2. Not available

State (Focal County)	Reporting Period	Average Monthly Caseload	Annual Expenditures	Average Monthly Benefit (per Case)
New Jersey	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
New Mexico	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
New York	CY 1997	190,289 cases 231,819 recipients	\$737,843,786	\$323 <sup>g</sup>
Ohio	FY 1997	13,636 cases 14,620 recipients	Cash assistance: \$20,085,646  Medical assistance: \$36,057,760	Cash assistance: \$123
Oregon 1. General Assistance  2. Temporary Assistance Program	1. CY 1997  2. January–May 1998 <sup>h</sup>	1. 2,700 cases  2. 92 cases	1. \$10,218,001  2. \$126,775 <sup>h</sup>	1. \$289  2. \$275
Pennsylvania	FY ending June 1997	Cash assistance: 68,613 cases 79,487 recipients  Medical assistance: 126,683 cases 148,913 recipients	Cash assistance: \$150.3 million  Medical assistance: \$511.2 million	\$197
Rhode Island	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Utah	FY ending June 1997	GA-SS: 1,000 cases GA-WTE: 150 cases	GA-SS: \$3,000,000 GA-WTE: \$330,000	\$250
Vermont	FY ending June 1997	1,113 cases	\$3,508,469	Not available
Virginia (state)	FY 1997	56,147	\$8,924,867	Not available

State (Focal County)	Reporting Period	Average Monthly Caseload	Annual Expenditures	Average Monthly Benefit (per Case)
Washington 1. GA-U 2. GA-S 3. GA-H	FY 1997	1. 16,798 2. 1,832 3. 162	1, 2 and 3. \$59,200,000	1. and 3. \$318.47 2. \$314.97

Source: Urban Institute 1996

- a. District of Columbia. The General Public Assistance program (GPA) ended in May of 1997. Information included on the GPA program is from October 1996 to May 1997.
- b. Hawaii. General Assistance families were removed from the GA program into the Temporary Assistance to Other Needy Families (TAONF) program beginning in December 1996, with complete removal effective July 1997. Prior to the shift of the GA families, the average number of family cases per month was 1,200 and the average monthly family payment was \$630.
- c. Kansas. Families are no longer eligible for assistance. All family recipients have been transferred to the state TANF program.
- d. Maryland. All recipients receive a flat rate of \$100.
- e. Michigan. The State Family Assistance (SFA) program was eliminated and all SFA cases were closed in November 1997. Eligible cases were transferred to the Family Independence Program (FIP), Michigan's TANF program.
- f. Michigan. Prior to July 1997, all State Disability Assistance cases were single individual cases, even for married couples. Beginning in July 1997, married couples were combined into a single case.
- g. New York. The average monthly benefit for a one-person case was \$300 and the average monthly benefit for family cases was \$460.
- h. Oregon. The TAP program was created in January of 1998. Data is available for only the first five months of 1998.

**Table 10: General Assistance Program Caseloads and Expenditures, State General Assistance Programs, County Data**  
(Summer 1998)

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Reporting Period</b>	<b>Average Monthly Caseload</b>	<b>Annual Expenditures</b>	<b>Average Monthly Benefit (per Case)</b>
Idaho (Ada County)	Fiscal year (FY) 1997	398 cases	\$4,347,552	Not available
Illinois (City of Chicago and approx. 60 other localities receiving state funds) 1. Transitional Assistance 2. Family and Children Assistance	Calendar year (CY) 1997	1. 8,790 cases (and persons) 2. 1,082 cases	\$19,984,258	1. \$100 2. One child: \$102 One adult, one child: \$278 Family of three: \$377
Indiana (Center Township of Marion County)	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Iowa (Polk County)	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Nevada (Clark County)	FY 1997	Cash assistance: 6,634 (total cases) Medical assistance: 6,793 (total cases)	Cash assistance: \$1,787,380 Medical assistance: \$36,134,091	Not available
New Hampshire (City of Manchester)	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
South Dakota (Minnehaha County)	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Wisconsin (Dane County)	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available

Source: Urban Institute 1996

**Table 11: General Assistance Program Caseloads and Expenditures, County General Assistance Programs**  
(Summer 1998)

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Reporting Period</b>	<b>Average Monthly Caseload</b>	<b>Annual Expenditures</b>	<b>Average Monthly Benefit (per Case)</b>
Colorado GA (City and County of Denver)	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Florida (Dade County)	Calendar year (CY) 1997	574 cases	\$1,515,360	Individual: \$220 Couple: \$268 Family of three: \$300
Georgia (Fulton County)	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Kentucky (Jefferson County)	January–May 1998	373 households	\$1,144,440 (FY 1997)*	\$265
Montana (Yellowstone County)	Fiscal year (FY) 1997	27 cases	\$68,367	\$212
North Carolina (Durham County)	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
North Dakota (Cass County)	1997	71 (total cases)	\$55,790 (\$4,060 excluding, burials)	Not available

Source: Urban Institute 1996

- a. Kentucky (Jefferson County). Annual expenditure information is for FY ending June 1997. This is the latest year for which complete information is available.

## **MAJOR CHANGES TO GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS SINCE 1996**

The last major survey of General Assistance programs conducted by the Urban Institute in the summer of 1996 coincided with the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). Since then, General Assistance programs have undergone a multitude of changes, many of which are related to changes made to the federal welfare system as a result of PRWORA. Of the 35 state General Assistance programs, 33 have made a change since 1996 in one of the program areas surveyed in this report. Of the seven county programs surveyed, five have undergone changes since 1996. In addition, one county surveyed in 1996 (Harris County, Texas) made such substantial changes to its General Assistance program since 1996 that the program no longer meets the definition of General Assistance for this report. All of the major changes are described in state-by-state comparisons in table 12, which categorize the changes into three groups: (1) benefit level changes, (2) eligibility changes, and (3) miscellaneous other changes.

### **Benefit Level Changes**

Few states or counties increase GA financial benefits to adjust for inflation, with the result that most benefit maximums have remained unchanged since 1996. In other words, benefits have decreased in real terms. Of the few changes that did occur, though, most were increases. Seven of the 35 state GA programs and two of the seven county programs increased benefit maximums. Among the 35 state GA programs, Hawaii enacted the largest percentage increase in benefit maximums, increasing benefit maximums by about 27 percent. Among the seven county

programs, Jefferson County, Kentucky, enacted the largest percentage increase in benefit maximums, increasing benefit maximums by 118 percent for individuals. In addition, New Jersey increased the housing benefit maximum for GA recipients who are eligible for housing assistance. Two of the seven state GA programs lowered benefit maximums, while none of the county programs lowered benefits. The District of Columbia lowered benefit maximums for an unattached child by about 9 percent, and Connecticut lowered benefit maximums by about 8 percent.

### **PRWORA's Impact on GA Eligibility**

The majority of changes in General Assistance provisions captured by this survey were changes to eligibility criteria, many of which were related to changes PRWORA made to federal assistance programs. Although PRWORA did not specifically address General Assistance programs, it nonetheless made an impact on General Assistance programs because of the new restrictions it placed on federal assistance, especially regarding immigrants, and the flexibility it provides states to expand TANF assistance to two-parent families and pregnant women.

The new restrictions on federal cash assistance stipulated in PRWORA are numerous, including a limitation of federal TANF assistance to 60 months per family, restrictions on immigrant eligibility for federal TANF assistance, and restrictions on immigrant eligibility for SSI assistance. The impact of these new restrictions on each state GA program differed based on a number of factors, including whether populations no longer eligible for federal assistance as a result of PRWORA would have become eligible for a state GA program as of August 1996 and whether a state chose to provide benefits to those groups no longer eligible for federal assistance.

For those states that chose to provide benefits to groups no longer eligible for federal assistance, the effect on GA also depended on whether states chose to provide assistance to these groups through their GA program or through an alternate state-funded program.

Of the new eligibility restrictions, the immigrant restrictions have had the greatest impact on General Assistance program policy in the states, especially the immigrant restrictions on SSI applicants. As previously noted, PRWORA dramatically altered immigrant eligibility for federal SSI, which appears to have resulted in considerable changes to GA program policies. Before PRWORA, most state GA programs provided benefits to immigrants in accordance with the federal SSI or AFDC rules, granting eligibility to most legal immigrants. Those programs that provided interim assistance to persons applying for SSI, for instance, determined the eligibility of immigrants according to the same criteria that would be used in determining their SSI eligibility. With the passage of PRWORA and the creation of new restrictions on immigrants, GA programs that provided assistance to aged and disabled individuals thus faced the prospect of providing assistance to immigrants who were now ineligible for SSI, but still eligible for GA. Many states chose to avoid an increase in their GA caseload and costs by imposing parallel eligibility for GA. Eighteen of the 34 states that provide assistance to aged, disabled, or other unemployable persons increased restrictions on immigrant eligibility.

States that chose to provide assistance to immigrants who are no longer eligible for SSI did so in a variety of ways, such as providing General Assistance that was already available to these populations, creating or expanding GA programs to serve immigrants no longer eligible for SSI assistance, or providing these immigrants the optional state supplement to SSI (despite the fact that immigrants would not receive the federal SSI benefit). The state of Washington, for

instance, made no changes to its immigrant eligibility GA requirements, which allowed citizens and most legal immigrants to obtain benefits. As a result, the program now serves legal immigrants who are no longer eligible for SSI. Oregon decided to limit eligibility for its GA program to those immigrants whose immigrant status does not make them ineligible for SSI, but also created a separate GA program for some disabled legal immigrants who are no longer eligible for SSI.

The new restrictions on eligibility for TANF have had a lesser impact on GA programs. This is partly because most of the new restrictions to *federal* TANF assistance do not apply to *state* TANF Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds.<sup>20</sup> Thus, states that chose to provide assistance to those families ineligible for federal TANF assistance (because of the new immigrant restrictions, time limits, or other restrictions) did not need to change their GA program policy to accommodate this new population, but instead could provide TANF assistance to these families using state funds that count toward the MOE requirements. However, three states (Alaska, New Mexico, and New York), which chose to continue benefits to at least some of the families ineligible for federal TANF assistance, provide assistance to such families through their GA programs. In both cases, funding for these families' benefits count toward the MOE requirements in these states.

Although there was some speculation after the passage of PRWORA that families now ineligible for federal TANF assistance would apply for General Assistance programs, most states do not provide GA to families, as noted in "General Assistance Eligibility Criteria and Program Requirements." Those that do provide General Assistance to families often provide it to only very specific categories, such as families with unattached children. Therefore, many states that chose

not to continue assistance to families ineligible for federal TANF assistance, such as immigrant families, did not need to make changes to their General Assistance programs. Most immigrant families ineligible for TANF assistance would not be eligible for General Assistance based on other categorical requirements. Still, some states were providing assistance to a wide range of families ineligible for federal assistance at the time PRWORA passed, and some of these states chose to follow the federal lead and increase their eligibility restrictions based on immigrant status. In addition, some states changed immigrant eligibility for GA families to provide consistency across programs. Although PRWORA did not require states to use the federal TANF immigrant eligibility requirements when providing GA to children ineligible for TANF, such as unattached children, some states did just that. In the District of Columbia, for example, the immigrant restrictions for unattached children were changed to match the immigrant restrictions for TANF families so that children are subject to the same immigrant eligibility criteria, whether they are living with a relative and receiving TANF or living with a nonrelative and receiving GA. Eleven of the 24 programs that provide assistance to children or children in families increased the restrictions on immigrants.

Since most GA programs have only one policy regarding citizenship and eligibility requirements, most changes states made to reflect SSI immigrant eligibility criteria or TANF immigrant eligibility criteria affected all categories of assistance. Overall, 19 of the 35 state GA programs increased eligibility restrictions based on immigrant status.

Although PRWORA placed new and significant restrictions on federal assistance, PRWORA also allowed states to expand eligibility for federal cash assistance to families with children to include some groups that were previously ineligible for AFDC. While the eligibility

expansions have received little attention, they have made notable impacts on GA program policy in some states. These lesser-known provisions of PRWORA allow states to shift some populations that may have received General Assistance in the past to the new TANF program created under PRWORA. Under AFDC, two-parent families were ineligible for assistance unless they met specific work history and unemployment requirements. In addition, pregnant women were eligible for assistance under AFDC, but only during the third trimester of pregnancy. A number of states thus provided General Assistance to two-parent families and pregnant women ineligible for AFDC. Under TANF, however, all two-parent families and pregnant women are categorically eligible to receive federal assistance. They are not entitled to assistance, but states may choose to use federal TANF funds and/or state MOE funds to provide assistance to these groups.

Some states that traditionally provided General Assistance to pregnant women or two-parent families ineligible for AFDC are continuing to provide these groups assistance through their GA program. In doing so, these states may count the funding for these groups toward the TANF MOE requirement. Washington State and Ohio, for instance, continue to provide assistance to pregnant women through their GA program, and such assistance now counts to these states' MOE requirements for TANF. In addition, although Pennsylvania still excludes pregnant women from its TANF program, it expanded its GA eligibility criteria to include pregnant women. Other states that have traditionally provided assistance to these groups have moved these populations into their state's TANF program or a TANF MOE program, both of which generally provide a higher benefit. Nine states, in fact, changed the GA eligibility criteria for two-parent families and/or pregnant women, transferring responsibility for these populations

to their TANF or TANF MOE program.

### **Other Eligibility Changes**

As often noted, PRWORA allows states to set time limits and impose durational residency requirements on federal TANF assistance. State interest in these issues seems to have spilled over to General Assistance programs. Four of the 35 state GA programs and 1 county program established or increased time limits, including both California and New York. In addition, Harris County, Texas, imposed a new time limit on assistance allowing receipt of benefits in 1 month out of a 12-month period. As a result, its program no longer meets the qualifications of a GA program for this report. Two states, however, removed time limits for disabled persons. Three of the 35 state GA programs and 1 county program increased or established durational residency requirements. Two states, Illinois and Pennsylvania, eliminated their durational residency requirements, although this was primarily the result of court findings that the durational residency requirements were unconstitutional.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s many states have tightened nonfinancial eligibility requirements for GA, some eliminating GA programs altogether. A few eligibility changes to General Assistance programs between 1996 and 1998 appear to have no relationship with changes at the federal level, but continue this trend of tightening nonfinancial eligibility requirements. Connecticut eliminated a category of assistance of employable persons without children, although it did create an additional category for persons with an impairment that interrupts employment. The District of Columbia eliminated its General Public Assistance program for persons awaiting SSI, and Fulton County, Georgia, eliminated assistance for elderly persons. Two states, Hawaii

and Connecticut, lengthened the time a person must be disabled in order to qualify for General Assistance as temporarily disabled. Pennsylvania now bars persons receiving health-sustaining medication from cash assistance, although the state still provides medical assistance to this category of persons.

Finally, most income eligibility limits and resource limits remained unchanged, failing to adjust for inflation. However, eight of the state GA programs and two of the county programs did increase income limits, and one state decreased income limits. In addition, six state GA programs increased resource limits, seven states increased the exemption for an automobile, and four states altered their earned income disregards.

### **Other Miscellaneous Changes**

Considerable speculation has occurred since the passage of PRWORA concerning “second-order devolution,” that is, devolution of administrative and policy control of safety net programs from states to counties. While counties are already more likely to have greater authority over GA programs than TANF programs, we found no evidence that states are devolving more authority to their counties in the area of General Assistance. One state, in fact, made changes in the opposite direction. Connecticut, the only state to make a major change in the administration of its GA program, is now moving from a county-administrated system to a state-administrated system.

Eight states indicated making changes to their work program within the past two years, including five states that eliminated their work program. In each of these five states, however, the work program was removed because the GA program no longer serves employable persons in

families with children (such as two-parent families) because of transferring the responsibility for these persons to their state TANF program, as described earlier.

Six states report changes to their medical assistance programs, including the elimination of GA medical assistance in Indiana and the creation of a medical assistance program for immigrants in Oregon.

Finally, one state GA program added a fingerprinting requirement and three state GA programs added a drug screening or treatment requirement.

**Table 12: Major Changes to General Assistance Programs Since 1996**  
(Summer 1998)

**State GA Programs**

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Benefit Changes</b>	<b>Eligibility Changes</b>	<b>Other Major Changes</b>
Alabama	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		
Alaska	None	Immigrant eligibility restricted to current qualified immigrants only. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible.	The Chronic and Acute Medical Assistance (CAMA) program replaced the General Relief Medical Program, effective July 1998. Pregnancy-related services are no longer covered.
Arizona	None	Immigrant eligibility restricted to qualified immigrants only. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible.	All applicants must now be fingerprinted, effective July 1998.
Arkansas	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		
California (Los Angeles County)	None	The time limit of 5 months out of a 12-month period for employables was implemented in February of 1998.	Recipients are now screened for drug use and required to participate in treatment, effective January 1997.
Colorado	None	None	Applicants and recipients are periodically tested for drug use, and recipients whose primary disability is drug or alcohol addiction are required to participate in a treatment program, effective January 1997.

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Benefit Changes</b>	<b>Eligibility Changes</b>	<b>Other Major Changes</b>
Connecticut	Benefit maximums for a family of three in Region B decreased from \$543/month to \$500/month, effective April 1997.	Employable persons without children are no longer eligible for assistance, effective July 1997. A new category of "transitional individuals" was created for persons with an impairment that will interrupt employment. Individuals with impairments lasting fewer than two months are no longer eligible for financial assistance, effective July 1998. However, they are still eligible for medical assistance. Immigrant eligibility restricted to qualified immigrants only. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible. Immigrant recipients are also now required to apply for citizenship, and certain immigrants are required to reside in the state for six months before becoming eligible for assistance, effective July 1998.	The county-administered General Assistance program in Connecticut changed to the State Administered General Assistance program in April 1997 as the state Department of Social Services began to assume administration of General Assistance. By July 1998, only the city of Norwich remained locally administered. The work program was eliminated, effective July 1997. (Employable persons are no longer eligible for assistance.) Persons no longer have to be recipients of SAGA cash assistance to receive medical assistance; all persons who do not meet Medicaid categorical requirements qualify.
Delaware	None	Immigrant eligibility restricted to current qualified immigrants and new qualified immigrants after five years. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible.	None
District of Columbia	Benefits were lowered in 1997 (e.g., from \$262/month to \$239/month for an individual child).	General Public Assistance for disabled adults awaiting SSI determination was eliminated in May 1997. Immigrant eligibility restricted to qualified immigrants. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible.	None
Florida	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)		
Georgia	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)		

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Benefit Changes</b>	<b>Eligibility Changes</b>	<b>Other Major Changes</b>
Hawaii	The benefits increased July 1997. For an individual, benefits increased from \$268/month to \$340/month; for a couple, benefits increased from \$362 to \$459.	Two-parent families are no longer eligible for GA, effective July 1997. These families are now eligible for assistance, along with noncitizen families, under new state TANF program called Temporary Assistance to Other Needy Families. The length of time a disability must preclude employment in order to be eligible was increased from 30 days to 60 days.	The work requirement was eliminated as a result of the change in family eligibility. There is no longer any time limit. Length of assistance is now based on disability.
Idaho (Ada County)	None	The maximum duration of assistance for able-bodied adults and families of able-bodied adults was decreased from 3 months out of 12 months to 1 month out of 12 months, effective July 1998.	The 30-day county residency requirement for GA and GA medical assistance was implemented July 1998.
Illinois (City of Chicago)	None	Pregnant women in first two trimesters are no longer eligible for FCA; they are now covered under TANF. TA and FCA: Immigrant eligibility restricted to current qualified immigrants and new qualified immigrants after five years. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible.	The durational residency requirement was eliminated by court order.
Indiana (Center Township of Marion County)		Immigrant eligibility restricted to current qualified immigrants and new qualified immigrants after five years. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible.	The GA medical program was eliminated in 1997.
Iowa (Polk County)	None	None	The program name was changed from General Relief to General Assistance.

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Benefit Changes</b>	<b>Eligibility Changes</b>	<b>Other Major Changes</b>
Kansas	None	Families, pregnant women, and unattached children are no longer eligible for GA; all are now eligible for Kansas's TANF program. The two-person eligibility category was created in 1997. Immigrant eligibility restricted to current qualified immigrants and new qualified immigrants after five years. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible.	There are no longer work requirements as a result of changes in categorical eligibility.
Kentucky	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)		
Louisiana	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		
Maine	Benefit maximums are increased each October to reflect the HUD fair market housing guidelines.	Immigrant eligibility restricted to legal immigrants. Previously, benefits were available regardless of immigrant status.	None
Maryland	Benefits increased from \$100/month to \$113/month, effective May 1998.	The General Assistance for Pregnant Women program was eliminated in 1997. Those previously eligible for General Assistance for Pregnant Women now receive assistance under the state's TANF program.	None
Massachusetts	None	None	Immigrants are required to apply for citizenship, effective July 1997. All EAEDC recipients were transferred to the Mass Health Program (Medicaid program), effective July 1997.

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Benefit Changes</b>	<b>Eligibility Changes</b>	<b>Other Major Changes</b>
Michigan	None	Michigan eliminated its State Family Assistance (SFA) program and closed all SFA cases November 1997. All cases, except for foster parents and emancipated minors, were transferred to Michigan's TANF program. Immigrant eligibility restricted to qualified immigrants who arrived before 8/23/96. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible. A 12-month time limit on assistance was eliminated.	None
Minnesota	None	Families and pregnant women are no longer eligible for GA; both categories are now eligible for Minnesota's TANF program. Immigrant eligibility restricted to qualified immigrants. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible.	The work requirements were eliminated as a result of changes in categorical eligibility. Immigrants must now make an effort to become citizens.
Mississippi	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		
Missouri	None	None	None
Montana	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)		
Nebraska	None	SDP: Immigrant eligibility restricted to qualified immigrants. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible.	None
Nevada (Clark County)	None	None	None
New Hampshire (City of Manchester)	None	Immigrant eligibility restricted to qualified immigrants. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible.	None

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Benefit Changes</b>	<b>Eligibility Changes</b>	<b>Other Major Changes</b>
New Jersey	For housing assistance, the maximum benefit level for permanent housing increased from \$200/month to \$250/month per individual.	Immigrant eligibility restricted to current legal immigrants. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible. A 60-month time limit was imposed on citizens, and a 6-month time limit was imposed on noncitizens. Previously, assistance was provided without a time limit.	The program name was changed from General Assistance to Work First New Jersey/General Assistance. The work requirements were expanded.
New Mexico	None	Categorical eligibility was expanded to include immigrant families who arrived after 8/22/96 and are not eligible for TANF.	None
New York	None	Eligibility restricted to citizens and legal immigrants effective January 1998. Prior to change in Safety Net Assistance, there were no citizenship requirements. A new 24-month time limit on cash assistance was imposed, after which recipients may receive non-cash assistance without a time limit, effective January 1998. Previously, cash assistance was provided for 6 months with unlimited renewals.	The program name was changed from Home Relief to Safety Net Assistance, effective January 1998. Substance Abuse screening was implemented. The residency requirement was increased from 6 months to 12 months.
North Carolina	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)		
North Dakota	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See county GA programs.)		
Ohio	None	Two-parent families and children with insufficient work histories are no longer eligible for GA; they are now eligible for TANF. Immigrant eligibility restricted to current qualified immigrants. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible.	None
Oklahoma	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Benefit Changes</b>	<b>Eligibility Changes</b>	<b>Other Major Changes</b>
Oregon	Benefit maximums increased from \$286/month to \$298/month for an individual and \$572/month to \$596/month for a couple, effective 7/1/98.	Immigrant eligibility restricted to current qualified immigrants. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible. The Temporary Assistance Program for disabled qualified immigrants arriving after 8/22/96 was created in January 1998.	Aliens who are ineligible for Medicaid are eligible for the new Citizen Alien Waived Emergency Medical program.
Pennsylvania	None	GA categorical eligibility requirements were expanded to include pregnant women ineligible for the state's TANF program. Persons taking health-sustaining medication who were previously eligible for cash assistance are now only eligible for GA medical assistance, unless they meet other GA eligibility criteria.	The durational residency requirement was eliminated by court order.
Rhode Island	None	Two-parent families are no longer eligible for GPA; they are now eligible for TANF. Immigrant eligibility restricted to current qualified immigrants. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible.	The work requirements were eliminated as a result of changes in categorical eligibility.
South Carolina	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		
South Dakota (Minnehaha County)	The benefit maximum for rent increased from \$350/month to \$450/month, effective September 1998.	None	None
Tennessee	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		
Texas	No state General Assistance program or requirements. (See County GA programs.)		

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Benefit Changes</b>	<b>Eligibility Changes</b>	<b>Other Major Changes</b>
Utah	Income limits and benefit maximums increased from \$245 to \$261 for an individual and from \$342 to \$362 for a couple, effective July 1998.	The few families with children who were receiving GA-WTE are no longer eligible; they are now eligible for TANF. Immigrant eligibility restricted to current qualified immigrants. Previously, all legal immigrants were eligible.	None
Vermont	Benefit maximums increased, effective July 1997 (e.g., income limits and benefit maximums increased from \$436/month to \$449/month for an individual in Chittenden County and from \$636/month to \$656/month for a family of three in Chittenden County).	None	None
Virginia (Fairfax County)	None	None	None
Washington	None	None	None
West Virginia	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		
Wisconsin (Dane County)	None	None	None
Wyoming	No state General Assistance program or requirements. No county General Assistance programs.		

**County GA Programs**

<b>State (Focal County)</b>	<b>Benefit Level Changes</b>	<b>Eligibility Changes</b>	<b>Other Major Changes</b>
Colorado GA (City and County of Denver)	None	None	None
Florida (Dade County)	None	None	None
Georgia (Fulton County)	None	Elderly persons are no longer eligible for assistance.	None
Kentucky (Jefferson County)	Benefit maximums increased, effective August 1997. For an individual, the maximum benefit increased from \$140/month to \$305/month.	A six-month time limit on temporary disability cases was established, effective February, 1998.	None
Montana (Yellowstone County)	Benefit maximums increased, effective July 1998. For an individual-income limits and benefit maximums increased from \$261/month to \$272/month.	None	None
North Carolina (Durham County)	None	None	A three-month residency requirement was established.
North Dakota (Cass County)	None	None	None
Texas (Harris County)	The General Assistance Program was renamed Community Assistance and a 1-month out of 12-month time limit was imposed. Previously, assistance was provided for disabled persons for the duration of the disability or until the final SSI determination.		

Source: Urban Institute 1998

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**L. Jerome Gallagher** is a research associate with the Urban Institute's Income and Benefits Policy Center. His research interests include welfare reform, general assistance, and poverty. For the *Assessing the New Federalism* project, he conducted case studies on income support and social services in Mississippi and Texas. He is also the co-author of *One Year after Federal Welfare Reform: A Description of State Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Decisions as of October 1997*.

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## ENDNOTES

1. States with a state GA program are Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.
2. States without a state GA program, but with at least one county with a county GA program, are Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Montana, North Carolina, and North Dakota.
3. States with neither a state GA program nor a county GA program are Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, and Wyoming.
4. Caution is advised, however, when comparing the generosity of states in providing benefits to some populations served by General Assistance programs, especially families with children, because some states may serve these populations through other assistance programs (e.g., TANF and TANF Maintenance of Effort programs).
5. The 1996 General Assistance Survey follows similar studies conducted in 1992, 1989, 1982, 1978, 1969, and 1959.
6. Nebraska, which has a uniform state GA program for disabled individuals, also requires counties to provide General Assistance to needy residents not covered by the state GA program.
7. Colorado has a statewide uniform General Assistance program for disabled persons, but no other requirements for a GA program. However, some counties provide General Assistance to needy residents not covered by the state GA program.
8. State officials were asked if any counties in the state provided county-based General Assistance. In addition, county officials from the largest counties in states without state GA programs were asked if their county provided General Assistance. If more than one county in the state was identified as having a General Assistance program, information from the largest county with a program was included in this report.
9. Two of these 10 states (Alaska and Nebraska) have a GA program with categorical eligibility requirements in addition to a GA program without categorical eligibility requirements.
10. Individuals eligible for GA with a permanent disability may also be awaiting determination for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). Throughout the report, however, only SSI will be referenced, because individuals with a permanent disability who meet the generally low GA income eligibility limits are more likely to receive SSI than SSDI.
11. While some states provide assistance for immigrants no longer eligible for SSI through a GA program, some states also provide assistance to immigrants through SSI state supplement programs that are not included in this report.
12. Some GA programs also provide limited assistance to families that are currently receiving TANF, but usually only in emergency situations.
13. The 1969 Supreme Court case *Shapiro v. Thompson* found that denying benefits to new residents was unconstitutional, and most state attempts to impose durational residency requirements since then have been struck down. Many of the durational residency requirements for General Assistance are currently being

challenged in state and federal courts, and as a result, some may no longer be in effect.

14. PRWORA created the new categories of “qualified” and “unqualified” immigrants. Qualified immigrants include legal permanent residents, refugees, asylees, and some other categories of immigrants. Unqualified immigrants include illegal immigrants and the categories of legal immigrants referred to as PRUCOL (Persons Residing Under Cover of Law) immigrants. Legal immigrants include all qualified immigrants plus other legal immigrants excluded from the category of qualified immigrants, such as PRUCOLs, but do not include temporary aliens, such as students or tourists, or illegal or undocumented aliens.
15. For more information on immigrant eligibility for state and federal assistance programs, see Zimmermann and Tumlin.
16. PRWORA mandates that all states use EBT accounts for Food Stamp benefits by the year 2002.
17. States that provide a cash benefit include the 24 states that provide a cash benefit to all recipients and the 3 states that provide a cash benefit to some categories of recipients. States that provide voucher or vendor payments or a mix of voucher vendor payments and cash to all recipients are excluded. The percent of poverty is calculated using the 1998 poverty guidelines (\$8,050 per year for one person in the 48 contiguous states).
18. Combined SSI and state supplement benefit maximums are as of January 1998 as reported in *State Assistance Programs for SSI Recipients, January 1998*, Social Security Administration, Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics, Washington, DC, June 1998. TANF benefit maximums are as of January 1998 as reported in Falk et al.
19. Programs that provide assistance on a one-time basis, or for only 1 month in a 12-month period, are considered Emergency Assistance programs and are not included in this report.
20. However, the restrictions on providing assistance to children who are not living with a parent or relative caretaker do apply to state funds that count toward the Maintenance of Effort requirements.